

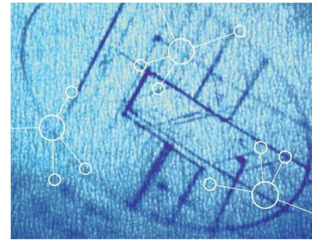
Review: Information Architecture

Peter Fitchett

Information Architecture

Blueprints for the Web Second Edition

By Christina Wodtke and Austin Govella
Published by: New Riders



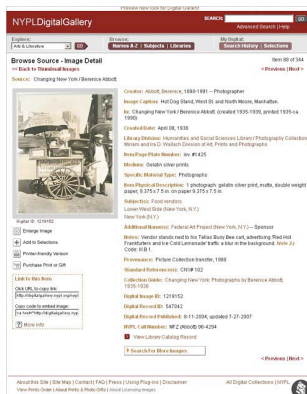
Information
@rchitecture
BLUEPRINTS FOR THE WEB
SECOND EDITION
Christina Wodtke and Austin Govella



It was with some trepidation that I picked up this book to read. I had read some reviews of the First Edition of the book, that appeared to express some concerns about different aspects of the subject matter. In spite of this, there were enough positive comments to enable me to settle down to see what I would find.

Just so that you don't get the wrong idea, let me start by telling you that the book is very readable, and the concerns expressed about the First Edition appear to have been completely addressed.

As I said, the book is very readable. It has a light almost chatty style that keeps your attention as it introduces you to the basic concepts of Information Architecture and usability - as they pertain to web sites. Yes, this book is an introductory text; not an academic tome; but it is complete with multiple examples of the principles explained. Well researched rules are acknowledged, however, plenty of latitude is granted to the new practitioner to invoke a more flexible approach to experiment and innovate. Well interspersed practical advice is, however, still dispensed to contain the overly enthusiastic.



When I first stumbled across Information Architecture, web sites were some 15 years in the future. The basic ideas appear to be similar, however, the terms and topics considered have been changed by the assimilation of the web requirements, technology, terminology, and a dollop of social research. In the same way, the basic concepts can also apply to writing a letter, report or book. There is a collection of data - information, ideas, etc., that contains many threads of inter-twined relationships; and there are a variety of people (or actors) that have different needs in the way they access, or want to access, that data. The goal of Information Architecture is to organise the data within the bounds of the current technology to

ensure that the needs of the actors are met. Simple, isn't it - if you say it quickly.

Looking at the book, the architecture is apparent in the Contents. The web-site focus is immediately apparent, and the first 2 chapters jump right in with 8 basic principles relating to usability and a discussion about who the users are. The book then moves to look at why data needs to be organised, and how. We can start building from the bottom up, but as we do, we need to reserve ways for searching and navigation for our different users (actors). Some special considerations relating to the more dynamic requirements of social spaces (profiles, forums, user-generated content (bulletin boards, blogs, wikis, twitter, etc.) and the more anti-social disturbances of trolls and flammers are then considered before we bring all the ideas together and briefly look at what is required to actually design a web site...

All things considered, I like this book, and would recommend it as a good introduction to Information Architecture for someone wanting to do a bit more than just create a basic web site; or someone who wants to appreciate what goes on in designing a successful site. And for the more advanced developer, the book is an enjoyable light read and a refresher that could well remind you of a few points that may make a difference.

Thanks to Peachpit Press for providing this book for review.

Ideas are like rabbits. You get a couple and learn how to handle them, and pretty soon you have a dozen.

-- John Steinbeck

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