Introductions

Interaction Exercise:

Class defines IA, we document terms, then group them – an IA exercise. Our definition:

- **Architect** defined – the art and science of building (Merriam Webster's online)

- **Information** defined - Peter Drucker defines information as "data endowed with relevance and purpose."

- = **The art and science of building data endowed with relevance and purpose.**

- organization vs. grouping vs. hierarchy (relationship)

- **The house building analogy**

Where do IAs work? How?

Definitions of Roles, Popular Job Titles:
- **Information architect** – pure version is very relational and organizational focused on such things as *controlled vocabularies*, *indexing/searching strategies and structuring*, and taxonomy development. More of the information and library science approach.
- **Information designer/interaction designer**
- **Customer experience design** -
- **Information Ecologists** – employs elements of multiple IA roles, skills (reference book).
- Ref. ACIA's Venn diagram.
- Discuss other team members and their roles for a typical project.

Basic Skills:
- Ability to articulate and compromise; to mediate.
- Understand **visual design** and **technical** tools, terminology, appropriateness of use, and liabilities.
- Marketing and Business Knowledge
- Consultative Skills, Presentation skills
- Conflict resolution skills
- Like long walks on the beach
- **Subjective** nature of the discipline – hence the need for user testing

The IA Process—deliverables

coffee + procrastination + fear = energy!

1. **Usability Audit**
   - **Business Rules/Heuristics** defined via interviews with customers, marketing/sales, other existing documentation, log analysis, all to define the business and customer-centric goals. Many times our work during competitive analysis/best in class research will also add or refine this list.

   - A client's business rules are added to the "Jakobian Commandments" or **ten usability design heuristics** or rules of thumb. There is a give and take of these heuristics, of course—there's always compromise. I.e. **reconciliation** of both sets of rules.

   - Look for basic usability violations with business/content/user context

   - Reconcile **perceived goals vs. intended goals** – when a client has a business goal vs. customers' perceived goal of interaction choices/options available. *Customers will be viewing the site from a different perspective than the business is aware of* - cryptic error messages, prompting for unwanted/solicited informational exchanges, product comparisons or sales interaction where internal business rules conflict (such as where/how products are shipped, global/language/cultural considerations).

   - Audit and initial user testing are usually surprising to client.

   - **Audit can yield** document with major usability violations identified, ranking of severity, recommendations for improvements which may reference a site map produced for visual reference (Ref. quiver.com site map).

2. **User Flow Diagrams**
   - Recommended improved User or Customer Experience Flow Diagrams. Existing site map/customer experience flow compared to new, documented flow (sample from eHealhInsurance application).

3. **Content Map**
   - AKA Ingredients list or content model – documentation of all page elements, their importance/hierarchy, and purpose. For designer, client, etc.

4. **Site Map**
   - Build out of high-level elements in to a large, typically tree, structure (not always tree—Ref. Go.com, Snap, Yahoo!).

5. **Focus Group**
   - Not necessarily always here in the process.
   - Proof of concept (about what people *say* they want, not what they *do*).
   - Prototype testing of popular concepts.

6. **Prototype**
   - AKA Wireframe; can be paper, faux functional (no design) HTML, experiential (with design incorporated) HTML prototypes.
   - Rapid prototyping.
   - A visual representation of **functionality, layout, flow, navigation, and content placement** - minimal design until it becomes a design comp.

7. **User Testing**
   - An Analyst, an Administrator to coordinate test of an integrated concept and a User comprise one user test. We typically try and do five individuals per round of user testing, fix the problems which are identified (not all the details, but the major ones found consistently throughout these users), then do another round. (Ref. Jakob Nielsen's 5x5x5 iterative user testing article on useit.com.) Film it for reporting, documentation development for presentation to client, if necessary.

8. **Implementation**
   - Merge with design then build/produce
   - Consultative and troubleshooting with team.
   - Relationship with rest of team members.

Other Elements & Issues

- Navigation Naming and **Labeling** models/conventions – Sinage!

- Page, File Naming, **meta data** and search related content/structure development

- Indexing – i.e. search optimization.

- Tech coordination and consultation.

Future outlook for IA as a profession/academic discipline:

- Wireless, PDA, various new and developing information devices, languages/OS, culture/demographics of users.

Books & Web Sites referenced in our lecture:

Designing Web Usability: The Practice of Simplicity **Jakob Nielsen**
New Riders Publishing; ISBN: 156205810X
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/156205810X/qid=975291350/sr=1-1/107-8080711-0147757

Information Architecture **Lou Rosenfeld and Peter Morville**
O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN: 1565922824
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1565922824/o/qid=975291218/sr=2-1/107-8080711-0147757

Secrets of Successful Web Site: Project Management on the World Wide Web **David Siegel**
Hayden Books; ISBN: 1568303823
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1568303823/qid=s975290639/sr=1-1/107-8080711-0147757

Web Navigation: Designing the User Experience **Jennifer Fleming**
O'Reilly & Associates; ISBN: 1565923510
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1565923510/qid=975291283/sr=1-1/107-8080711-0147757

Webworks: Navigation **Ken Coupland, editor**
Rockport Press

http://www.useit.com — **Jakob Nielsen's Web site, with lots of articles and opinions**

http://www.argus-acia.com — Argus Center for Information Architecture

http://www.egroups.com/links/sc-ia — Local IA group founded by Scott Robinson