

What Research and Theory Inspires IA/UX, and How Can this Change Behavior and Help Make a Political and Humanitarian Difference?

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ABSTRACT

This session is a moderated panel discussion among senior IA/UX practitioners from the greater Washington, DC area. Its goal is to challenge and inspire the ASIST research community. Among themes the panel will discuss are: 1) how research and theory inspires client project work – what types of research is needed, and what would be considered accessible and practical research; and 2) how IA/UX (including content strategy, taxonomy, governance, etc.) can change behavior, and help make a political and humanitarian difference.

Keywords

Information architecture, user experience, applied research, ethics.

BACKGROUND

Since the IA Summit was first convened by ASIST in Boston in 2001, there's been an ongoing discussion about applying information science and human computer interaction (HCI) to information architecture and user experience design. Just as within ASIST the IA community has engaged in a discussion about research versus practice.

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Peter Morville (2004) posted a bibliography of information architecture research grouping the work into four broad categories –

- Information Seeking Behavior,
- Structure and Organization (e.g., depth vs. breadth),
- Navigation, and
- Search.

Karl Fast (2006) cautioned that IA research should not be done “by and for academics”. Resmini & Instone (2010) suggested that “there is no such thing as IA research by itself: there is HCI, IS or LIS research that IAs care about.” Ironically, Resmini (2009-2013) was the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Information Architecture* during its five year existence.

Rosenfeld & Morville (2d ed., 2002) include a chapter on ethical considerations of information architecture in their foundational book *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web* first published in 1998. The ethical issues include:

- Intellectual access,
- Labelling,
- Categories and classification,
- Granularity,
- Physical access, and
- Persistence.

Simply put, there are consequences of website design, how information is communicated, and whether it is found or obscured. This can have a great impact on what individuals believe, how they make decisions, and how they act.

The discussion about an IA research agenda, ethics and politics continues today with this panel of practitioners, who are also thought leaders and educators.

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