

# A Tonic for the Busy Troops

by Stacy Merrill Surla, Guest Editor

## Information Architecture

Work life is intensive! My time clearance for reading trade publications – always restricted – has been elevated to a need-to-know basis. Every conference session or local event I attend, every article or book chapter I ever get to read is permitted only in response to a pressing need to learn how to do something **now**.

Pulling together the articles for this information architecture issue was motivated by the same criterion. I wanted to find out who's doing interesting, new IA work that very busy practitioners can use right now. At the ASIS&T IA Summit in Memphis I was able to attend a range of fascinating sessions and talk with the authors as well. As a result the articles in this issue all stimulate our thinking in useful directions, present practical problem-solving suggestions or both.

For instance, only days after the IA Summit I had a brainstorming session on my calendar to address “adding social computing” to the government portal we're currently building at work. I was able to easily apply the guidance from Christian Crumlish's “The Information Architecture of Social Experience Design” with the team. His framework and specific tips both accelerated and simplified our work and enabled us to draft recommendations on the spot for how we would proceed.

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Some time after that we had an urgent need to craft a set of “tone of voice” guidelines for the same project. Colleen Jones' “The Debut of Usable, Influential Content” provided an armature and specific direction for our content strategy.

In the coming months, as our project considers how to integrate mobile devices into its array of channels, we'll refer to John Pettengill's “An Internet Watered Down.” This work will allow us, for instance, to consider leveraging the unique geo-locational elements of web-enabled cell phones and other mobile devices. Similarly, as we design more interactive aspects of the site, Kellie Rae Carter's and Dominic La Cava's “Gaming the Design” will provide a strong reference for the smart and appropriate use of gaming tropes.

My two favorite thought pieces from this year's Summit are captured in Kate Rutter's and Miles Rochford's articles. In connection with a website translation/internationalization project, I've already had the opportunity to refer colleagues to the slidedeck of Rochford's “IA for the Rest of the World.” The notion of numeracy as well as literacy as an important consideration enables IAs to better design for access by all. And Rutter's “Lessons from Slime Mold” is simply brilliant. It's a smart and funny treatise on how to – as the subtitle says – “survive and thrive in ever-changing organizational environments.”

Enjoy these articles. As I have done, you will find yourself using them in unexpected ways, in your projects... and in your cocktail party chatter. ■