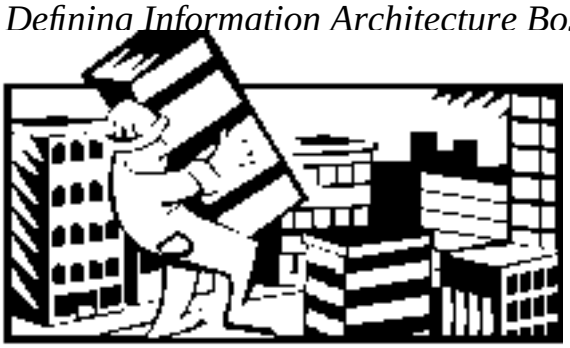
Volume 37, Number 2 Winter 2000

ASIS Summit 2000

Defining Information Architecture Boston, Massachusetts April 7 - 9



Who Should Attend

Anyone who works in information architecture or related fields, or is considering joining the field, will benefit from attending "Defining Information Architecture". This conference offers a great opportunity to help shape an emerging field and join its growing community.

Who will be Speaking

"Defining Information Architecture" features practicing information architects and experts representing perspectives from the following fields: Anthropology, Graphic Design, Information Design, Interface Design, Markup Languages Technical Communications, Data Modeling, Human Computer Interaction, Information Retrieval, Librarianship, Meta-Data, Usability Engineering

Conference Goals

While every information system has an architecture by default, planned information architectures are more effective at enabling users to find the information they need by supporting quality searching and browsing. Planned information architectures, when combined with supporting policies and procedures, also serve as structures that help organizations manage their content more effectively.

As the Web matures, many organizations are realizing that a quality information architecture is an absolute requirement for successfully bringing together users and content while meeting organizational goals and resource constraints. As a result, many organizations are attempting to hire information architects. However, the field is relatively new and ill-defined; there is no consensus regarding the disciplinary background, skill sets, and expertise that validate information architects. This ASIS-sponsored conference looks to provide the first inter-disciplinary venue for:

- Exploring definitions for Information Architecture.
- Outlining the types of expertise that should contribute to the practice of Information Architecture.
- Understanding the role of the Information Architect within different settings.
- Bringing together the broader community of information architects.

For more information, go to http://www.asis.org/Conferences/Summit2000/index.html.■

Inside This Issue

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From the Chair's Desktop | *by Marianne Afifi*

Happy New Year! The end of the year always brings with it reflections about past events and speculation about the future. 1999 was special in that we looked toward the past and thought about the last 100 or 1000 years, not only the last year. The future somehow takes on a different cachet when it begins with the year 2000, an arbitrary number, but one that conveys to us new possibilities, hopes and worries. As I write this column, it seems clear that we have survived the turning of Y2K and all the predicted technological disasters. We can optimistically look forward toward new centuries and millennia. I think it's not too early to start preparing for the year 10,000.

In thinking back, what struck me was how radically technology has changed the world in the last 100 years and even more so in the last 10 years. It is difficult to predict what will happen in the next 10 or 100 years, but it is fun to imagine and dream about it. Just this week I was reading an article about a computer that is worn on the head and linked to the global positioning system. Out of the corner of your eye you can monitor the news, read articles, or check your e-mail and the latest stock quotes. Amazingly, this wearable computer was assembled with fairly readily available parts. What is of interest to me is that these computers can be used to easily store and retrieve information where it normally would be difficult to do so, for example in out of the way places. I can think of students wandering to class as they retrieve journal articles and read them on their way, or of busy executives, querying their company's knowledge management system in the airport between flights. I can also imagine information professionals walking around and providing services "on the go."

I think I would like to have such a computer, perhaps it would not be the most fashionable addition to my wardrobe, but it certainly would be convenient. Much of this new kind of computer gear seems strange to us now, but it is highly likely that the fashion industry will collaborate with the computer industry to make wearable computers ubiquitous and the absolute "must" fashion item in less than 10 years.

Finally, I hope that all your hopes and dreams for the 21st century will be fulfilled, regardless of where the technology leads us and how we choose to use it to make a better life. ■

New for the Searcher's Toolbox | *by Linda Rudell-*

SurfWax http://www.surfwax.com/ is a metasearch tool that is now available on the web. It is directly accessible via the browser; no additional software is required. At its most basic, SurfWax sends one search statement to ten search resources, retrieves the top ten hits from each, collates citations, removes duplicates and alphabetizes the document objects by title. Metasearching is a timesaving tool – and SurfWax has value-added features that can save the searcher even more time.

My favorite is the "SiteSnaps" feature. SurfWax divides the browser into three frames: one frame is available for the search box, a second is for the search results and the third is occupied by either a context-sensitive help page or when activated, a "Site Snap." A SiteSnap serves as a valuable preview of a selected page. The page statistics are provided at the top of the pane and defining concepts extracted from the web document are presented in abstract format. The pane then presents "focus words," terms that have been extracted from the page's text that may be added to your existing search with one click.

You may also refine your search by using the focus feature. Search statements containing common terms are linked to a thesaurus based on WordNet from the Cognitive Science Laboratory at Princeton University. Clicking on the focus option next to your search words will take you to a pane that displays broader and narrower expressions of your terms. These may be added to your existing search with - again - one click.

There is an option to customize the features and to save your preferences. For researchers needing to plumb the depths of a subject, this is a welcome option. Likewise, those who just need a quick search can set options to run fast and return basic information.

SurfWax gets high marks for its clean interface, understandable help pages, its intelligent use query refinement options and on-the-fly abstract creation. It is a must-have metasearch tool.

WordNet 1.6 http://www.cogsci.princeton.edu/~wn/ ■

LACASIS/SLASCC Holiday Dinner Report

by Louisa Toot

The annual LACASIS/SLASCC Holiday Dinner took place this year on Tuesday, December 14th at the Caltech Athenaeum. Dr. Alan Kay gave his entertaining and thought-provoking presentation, "The Computer Revolution Hasn't Happened Yet."

An abbreviated version of Dr. Kay's explanation on why the computer revolution hasn't happened yet is that it all boils down to toys. TOYS? Yes, toys. Blame it on your parents, your teachers, whomever, but apparently we have all been given the wrong toys to play with while growing up. Toys that have failed to encourage a creative yet scientific and skeptical way of thinking which will ultimately produce the REAL computer revolution.

Okay, if your brain hasn't quite made the jump from toys to computer revolution, don't worry, blame it on those Fantastic Four figures you use to play with or simply read on….

Kay began by talking about ideas and creativity. He likened human thought to an ant crawling around on a pink plane. The ant can go in any direction, changing direction at will, but is unaware that it is only thinking "pink thoughts" on the same plane. However, there are those who occasionally have an "A HA!" moment, bringing forth an idea that breaks out of that pink plane. Many of the ideas created in the "A HA!" moment, although not of the same plane, are also not really "good" ideas that would cause a revolution to occur. The key is to create a way of thinking that not only encourages the mental flexibility which allows "A HA" ideas but also gives one a means to detect whether the idea is workable.

He proceeded to explain how most of what appears to be "new" technology, for example, palm pilots, laptops and the use of a stylus instead of a mouse, are actually not new at all but were created back in the early 60's. Even a lot of the so-called "new" scripting languages of computers such as JAVA have been around a while. There has been nothing really revolutionary in computer science since the time the computer was created; in fact, even the look of the personal computer came about through the look of the time-sharing stations that were attached to mainframes. There is really no good reason for computers to look the way they do except for the mere imitation of what already existed. Kay then explained how this correlates to the history of the book and movable type. The creation of the book was revolutionary but it took about 150 years before it was used in a truly "revolutionary" way. For example, Dr. Kay explained how Newton's Principia was like no other book written before it; and when Tomas Paine's political essay "Common Sense" was written, most people did not have the wherewithal to read or grasp the complex arguments presented. The same could be said of computers. Our purpose in using computers today is largely derived from the "paper culture" that existed previously and from which we have all come. There is a gap between the technology and the powerful potential of its media.

Dr. Kay argues that true "computer literacy" requires a change in stance about knowledge. He urges librarians to learn more about computers because he feels that librarians are in the best position to help advance the sort of computer literacy which requires a change in our current paper culture, "pink plane" thinking.

How can we accelerate the coming of the computer revolution? This is where science and toys come in to play (no pun intended). Kay argues that scientific method has the strongest influence over our thoughts and ability to discover new things. Not only do the scientific method and its mathematical "scaffolding" aid in our understanding of what is, they also assist in communicating their limitations, or what they are unable to deal with. Science allows us to stand back and see the world through different eyes, similar to the "change in stance" concept mentioned previously. Science goes a step further, however, to identify whether our "change in stance" is valid. Kay cited a study finding that the ability to develop this scientific mind occurs very early in childhood, before the age of 10. This is where toys come in, thanks to the Montessori Method. If we can create toys which encourage children to think scientifically then perhaps we can enable them to lead the way for the true computer revolution, using computers in ways that we could never dream possible.■

In Memorium

We are sad to announce the passing of JoAnn Clifton, a long time ASIS and SLA member. JoAnn will be sorely missed by all those whose lives she touched. ■

Meeting Report by Dudee Chiang

Dudee Chiang shares highlights from two sessions she attended at the 1999 ASIS Annual Meeting, Knowledge Creation, Discovery, and Management in Washington, D.C.

Knowledge Discovery through Citation

Henry Small, Director of Contract Research at the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) and pioneer in citation analysis, shared his essay entitled "Knowledge Discovery through Citation." In his paper, Dr. Small described how co-citation pattern analysis empowers scientists to develop hypotheses they may not otherwise consider. This co-citation analysis is especially useful in interdisciplinary studies.

Of course, when linking two previously unassociated topics together, there may be many potential connections. How does one determine which of the connections is most likely to yield fruitful results? This is where information science ends and subject expertise begins.

Dr. Small suggests new roles for information professionals involved in research teams:

1. Researchers must be analyzers of published literature
2. Researchers must be collectors and organizers of potential links.

MSWeb: a Case Study of Library-operated intranet portal

Vivian Bliss of Microsoft Information Services described Microsoft's recent internal portal project she has been involved with, "MSWeb." She shared a few of the new features associated with the latest redesign of the MSWeb project:

Buckets to Icons

The Information Services department has transitioned from a buckets-style approach of information organization and presentation to the use of several effective icons. The main splash page displays icons which link to vital news and other items of corporate interest. The categories, or 'buckets' have been moved to a left frame. News items are updated frequently, drawing corporate users to the site again and again.

Database Searching

To the end-users, there is one single search interface. On the back end, there are four separate databases: 1) Best bets; 2) I need to; 3) Related terms; and 4) Full text searching. The project team created the first two databases based on the anticipated topics of interests or frequently asked questions, such as the status of Windows 2000, MS litigation with the Department of Justice, or information on medical benefits. "Related terms" is a thesaurus that associates user terms with their internal controlled vocabulary; the full text search consists of all words that comprise the web pages. When a user enters a search term, the search engine automatically searches all four databases; if there are matches from the first two databases, they will be displayed before the results from the third or

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Chiang Report *from page 6*

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Meeting Report by Marianne Afifi

Marianne Afifi shares her report about the session entitled “Knowledge Management or Library 101: Is There a Difference?” sponsored by both the Management and Knowledge Management SIGs.

The two main reasons I attended this session are one, I wanted to learn more about knowledge management, and two, the title was catchy and I was eager to learn more about the responses to the question posed.

The first speaker, Elizabeth Orna from Orna Stevens Associates, UK, presented an overview of the difference between Knowledge Management and Library 101. Simply put, she believes that information brings value to the organization when people transform it into knowledge. She elaborated further on how we can go about this transformation. Specifically, she discussed the types of questions that need to be asked, in addition to the issues in need of consideration for approaching the matter in the most appropriate way. All things considered, Ms. Orna considers knowledge management to be quite different from Library 101.

The next speaker was Mary Durham from Context Integration, a national IT consulting firm, who described the way her company handles knowledge management. The staffing requirements of this company are such that a mobile, distributed workforce has to communicate and work quickly in a dynamic environment. In addition, the subject matter is often highly specialized, current, with relatively scarce supporting information. The solution at this company was to create a knowledge management system, which they call the "Intellectual Assets Network". The system allows the consultants to communicate with each other across time and space. Everyone in the firm is encouraged to contribute to the system, which supplies the company’s intellectual capital. Contributions to the system are also linked to a reward system, which I found interesting, because it encourages communication and sharing of information and knowledge. Ms. Durham concluded by describing the system details.

The third speaker was Margaret Latch from the Ernst and Young Center for Business Knowledge. Ms. Latch described the “behind the scenes” activities of the center, which serves approximately 80,000 people and manages approximately 900 databases. She discussed issues of dissemination, tradeoffs of content versus technology, and measurement and metrics. For example, how does one measure the effect of the bottom line of knowledge? We know that subject expertise should be shared, but how do you make contributors accountable for what they share?

In my mind, the question posed in the title of the session was not completely resolved. Each participant had her own point of view, but not a “black and white” answer. The first two speakers made a good case for the differences between knowledge and information management, offering solid examples to support their claims. The last speaker, Margaret Latch, found more similarities

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Molecular Biology Information Resources Workshop Report | *by Dudee Chiang*

Dudee shares an overview of a workshop she recently attended, "Molecular Biology Information Resources."

On January 25, 2000, the UCLA Biomedical Library hosted a workshop entitled "Molecular Biology Information Resources." The course was presented by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a branch of the National Library of Medicine (NLM). Participants included librarians and information professionals from the greater Los Angeles area. There are two versions of the course, one for librarians (8 hours), and another other for scientists (3 hours). The course material for both versions is located on the Internet:

Librarians: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Class/MLACourse/
Scientists: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Class/FieldGuide/

NCBI is primarily focused on serving the needs of scientists, researchers, and their associated colleagues. Their resources assume varying degrees of familiarity with the subjects of molecular biology and genetics. The instructor shared a few resources suitable for a general audience:

Genes and Disease

[http://www.ncbi.nih.nlm.gov/disease/]
This site provides an introduction to the relationship between genetic factors and human disease, offering summary information for approximately 60 genetic diseases with links to related databases and organizations.

OMIM - Online Mendelian Inheritance in Man

[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/omim/]
OMIM is a continuously updated catalog of human genes and genetic disorders, with links to associated literature references, sequence records, maps, and related databases. OMIM provides an effective summary for each related genetic disorder.

NCBI site map

[http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/Sitemap]
The site map contains an excellent overview of NCBI's resources. It contains both alphabetic and categorical listings, with accompanying source descriptions for each entry. The site map can be used as a directory of resources on its own.

The focus of NCBI's site is information retrieval and gene sequencing. It does not offer a wide range of tools and resources for genetic sequence analysis. Users are encouraged to look elsewhere for analytical software tools and services.

The workshop focused on two main sources: ENTREZ and BLAST. ENTREZ is a tool used for entering bibliographic and descriptive information, while BLAST a tool used for sequencing.

More specifically, users use ENTREZ to enter words — combinations of the English alphabet that make sense to human eyes and brains. Conversely, users make use of BLAST to enter numerous alphabetic combination sequences that would otherwise be meaningless to untrained eyes. Incidentally, the new PubMed system is the ENTREZ system; one can search GenBank and other databases via the PubMed interface.

There are many databases on the NCBI site; the course web site offers an excellent overview and set of examples.[1] Here is a high-level overview of the issues discussed in the Workshop:

- GenBank, EMBL, and DDBJ (DNA Databank of Japan) basically contain the same records. Researchers can submit their discoveries to any one of the three, and at the end of the day, new records added to one will be automatically updated to the other two. However, the search software and interface are different, so users may have a preference as to which one to use and which one to submit.
- GenBank (and EMBL, DDBJ) are considered comprehensive and repository databases, containing DNA sequence information for more than 58,000 organisms. Editors at the three organizations responsible for these databases only do minor/format editing; neither comments nor annotations are available for the records in these databases.
- Compared to "comprehensive" databases, there are organism-specific databases such as those for humans, mice, etc.

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Compared to "repository" databases, there are "curated"

- and "peer-reviewed" databases. Curated databases contain comments/annotations from the database's editor or editorial board. Records in peer-reviewed database are open to the scientific community for comments.
- There are databases containing 3-D structures of sequences, and users need additional viewing tools to examine and manipulate the structures. NCBI site has a couple of public-domain viewers available for download; however, commercial software is also available for this purpose.

In conclusion, the course web site contains a lot of useful, well-organized material. It serves as an effective starting point for locating and making sense of molecular biology resources.

The workshop presentation was also logical and well organized, without assuming previous experience in or knowledge of molecular biology. I highly recommend this workshop to those who work with Molecular Biologists, or interface in any way with faculty, students, or the general public interested in science-related subjects.

■

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Calendar | *Help for your planning*

February 28 - March 1 Intranets 2000. San Jose http://www.intranets2000.com/

March 6-9 TechEd 2000. Technology in Education International Conference and Exposition. “Teaching & Learning in a Networked World.” Palm Spring Convention Center. http://www.teched2000.org/

March 8-10 International Conference on Learning With Technology. “Does Technology Make a Difference?” Temple University, Philadelphia. http://www.temple.edu/iclt/

March 14-18 Computers in Libraries 2000. Washington, DC.http://www.infotoday.com/

April 4-5 Knowledge Management and Intranet Solutions. London. http://www.knowledge-management.co.uk/km00/

April 6-9 Association of Independent Information Professionals (AIIP) Annual Conference. Washington, DC. http://www.aiip.org/

April 7-9 ASIS Summit 2000. “Defining Information Architecture.” Hilton Hotel at Logan International Airport, Boston, MA. http://www.asis.org/Conferences/Summit2000/index.html

April 9-15 National Library Week. http://www.ala.org/

April 10-11 Search Engines Meeting. Boston, MA. http://www.infonortics.com/searchengines/

April 16-19 Museums and the Web 2000.

Minneapolis, MN. http://www.archimuse.com/mw2000/

May 5-11 Medical Library Association Annual Meeting. Vancouver. http://www.mlanet.org/

May 10-13 American Society of Indexers Annual Meeting. Albuquerque, NM. http://www.asindexing.org/

May 16-18 National Online Meeting and IOLS 2000 (Integrated Online Library Systems). New York City. http://www.infotoday.com/

June 2-6 Digital Libraries. San Antonio, TX. http://www.dl00.org/

June 10-15 Special Libraries Association Annual Conference. Philadelphia. http://www.sla.org/

July 6-13 American Library Association Annual Conference. Chicago. http://www.ala.org/

July 10-13 Sixth International ISKO Conference (International Society for Knowledge Organization). "Dynamism and Stability in Knowledge Organization." Toronto, Canada. http://www.hud.ac.uk/schools/cedar/isko.html

August 13-18 International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) General Conference. Jerusalem, Israel. http://www.ifla.org/

September 13-15 KMWorld 2000. "Knowledge Nets: Defining and Driving the e-Enterprise." Santa Clara, CA. http://www.kmworld.com/00/

September 18-20 Online World. San Diego. http://www.onlineinc.com/

October 16-19 Global 2000 Worldwide Conference on Special Librarianship. Brighton, United Kingdom. http://www.slaglobal2000.org/

October 20-23 Documation Canada. Toronto, Canada. http://www.interdoc.ca/conference/documation/doctor2000/index.htm

November 6-8 Internet Librarian. Monterey Convention Center. http://www.infotoday.com/

November 11-14 California Library Association. Santa Clara. http://www.cla-net.org/

November 13-16 ASIS Annual Meeting. "Knowledge Innovations: Celebrating Our Heritage, Designing Our Future." Sheraton Hotel & Towers, Chicago.

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fourth databases. This search feature has been in production since May of this year. According to user feedback, most people report their searches yield far better results with this new technology.

Metadata and Structured Vocabularies

The Information Services department has also been involved in the creation of metadata and structured vocabularies used by other web sites within Microsoft's Intranet. Like other corporations, Microsoft's corporate Intranet links to multiple units and web servers, claiming no single point of ownership. By offering a collection of "suggested" metadata and vocabularies for other units to use, the Information Services department "encourages" others to adopt their terminology and schema, thereby creating a level of consistency and cohesion. ■

Afifi Report *from page 7*

than differences to the traditional library paradigm with regard to the way her company manages knowledge.

I think the answer to the question of whether there is a difference between Knowledge Management and Library 101 is "it depends." Some organizations go beyond traditional library services and transform management of the intellectual capital they create to serve them better in achieving their goals. Others are not yet ready to change, or have created hybrid systems. ■