

Taxarcana and Other Boons for Business

by Stacy Merrill Surla

Information Architecture

Business is increasingly recognizing the importance of bringing taxonomy and user experience together in projects where (strangely) they might not normally meet. Over the years the IA column has included a fair share of articles treating search, controlled vocabulary building, search engine optimization and associated topics. ASIS&T's Information Architecture Summit (www.iasummit.org) this March hosted numerous presentations and workshops representing the latest taxonomy-related thought and work. From among those presentations we bring you two articles that exemplify the current trends, an understanding of which should make it a bit easier to talk taxonomy in the business setting.

Tingting Jiang's and Sherry Koshman's "Exploratory Search in Different Information Architectures" offers cogent observations about exploratory search and better user experience. The authors describe how each of the four major search-result grouping structures calls for a different IA approach. That tagging is one of these four primary organizing strategies reflects a happy shift in present thinking about the role of folksonomy in categorization systems.

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This article pairs nicely with Gene Smith's "Tagging: Emerging Trends." His thoughtful and practical article describes how top-down hierarchies and bottom-up user-contributed classification are being structured to work together to achieve a powerful new approach.

The IA Summit program this year was filled with engaging, inspiring sessions for IA consultants. For instance, nearly every web design engagement includes an opportunity to redesign web forms. Luke Wroblewski's "The Information Architecture Behind Good Web Forms" outlines a straightforward and highly effective approach for coming up with forms that actually work. Nathan Curtis' "Audiences & Artifacts" takes a step back and considers design documentation from a business point of view. He offers priceless advice on designing deliverables that are both efficient to create and communicate effectively to our varied business audiences.

Leah Buley's "How to Be a User Experience Team of One" was so popular at the IA Summit that she had to deliver it a second time. Part article and part graphic novel, hers is that perfect blend of philosophy and applicability that IAs love so well.

I would like to thank all our contributors and hope that their insight and creativity will be an inspiration for all of us. ■