# **Information Architecture**

Databases and Web Applications Laboratory (LBAW) Bachelor in Informatics Engineering and Computation (L.EIC)

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#### Outline

- Defining Information Architecture
- → Elements
- → Process
- → Deliverables

#### → LBAW: "A3. Information Architecture" artefact

### Defining Information Architecture

#### Context

- attention in the face of a decreasing "signal-to-noise" ratio.
- information from its container, no longer 1-1.
- tackled by the field of information architecture.

→ We live in information societies, where information services and systems are pervasive and abundant in everyday life, and increasingly essential to the operation of multiple businesses.

-> A growing volume of information is available to us, which resulted in a problem of managing

The proliferation of applications and electronic devices, multiplied the number of channels through which we can access the same information. This resulted in a decoupling of

 $\rightarrow$  Both problems — information overload and the multiplication of access channels — are



#### Places Made of Information

- where people go for different tasks: learn, shop, connect with other people, etc.
- menus, descriptions, buttons, links, visual elements, and content.
- them (or not!) be more efficient in accomplishing their tasks and goals.

→ Information architecture considers these information-rich spaces and its design for maximizing their effectiveness, whatever the users' goal.

 $\rightarrow$  Information products and services are perceived by as "places made of information",

 $\rightarrow$  User experience in these places is defined by a familiar vocabulary consisting of labels,

→ Different uses of this language will make them "distinct" places to the user, and will help



#### Information Architecture

- $\rightarrow$  Multiple definitions, each highlighting a particular aspect.
- → Richard Wurman (1996) emphasizes organization and presentation:
  - $\rightarrow$  (1) The individual who organizes the patterns inherent in data, making the complex clear.
  - $\rightarrow$  (2) A person who creates the structure or map of information which allows others to find their personal paths to knowledge.
  - $\rightarrow$  (3) The emerging 21st century professional occupation addressing the needs of the age focused upon clarity, human understanding, and the science of the organization of information.
- → Rosenfeld and Morville (2015) introduce multiple perspectives:
  - $\rightarrow$  The structural design of shared information environments.
  - > The synthesis of organization, labeling, search, and navigation systems within digital, physical, and cross-channel ecosystems.
  - > The art and science of shaping information products and experience to support usability and findability, and understanding.
  - An emerging discipline and community of practice focused on bringing principles of design and architecture to the digital landscape.



#### Context of Information Architecture

- → The evolution of the web and digital tools brought many opportunities and challenges to users and designers.
- → The pervasiveness of digital spaces in everyday life increasingly blurs the distinction between physical and digital.
- → Information Architecture is needed to organize these spaces, specifically:
  - Connecting information objects and intended users;
  - → Identify concepts and pathways for access and navigation;
  - → Creating tools and systems for people to organize information;
  - → Connect various information spaces, applications, platforms, and channels.
- → Tackling these challenges requires skill from multiple fields, e.g. usability, design, information.
- → User Experience (UX) Design is an umbrella under which these areas converge.



#### Related Disciplines

- the users to accomplish their tasks.
- $\rightarrow$  Information Science a broad interdisciplinary field focused on theories, applications, and technologies related to the creation, organization, retrieval and use of information.
- and work environments.
- as colors, shapes, spacing, alignment, etc.
- the user and the system.

→ Usability Engineering — focus on human computer interaction and how user interfaces can allow

→ Human Factors Engineering — ergonomics and physical factors in designing products, processes,

 $\rightarrow$  Visual Design — aesthetics and communication of information, using visual language elements such

 $\rightarrow$  Interaction Design — how a system works in response to user inputs, i.e. the dynamics between



#### Summary

- $\rightarrow$  Information architecture is a central element in user experience design.
- $\rightarrow$  It deals with the process of planning, designing and building information spaces.
- $\rightarrow$  Its goal is to improve information access, management and use, through the design of meaningful, functional and effective information spaces.
- $\rightarrow$  Is a field of growing importance, as frontiers between physical and information spaces blur.

- $\rightarrow$  Information architecture is relevant for an Informatics Engineer, because:

  - $\rightarrow$  Contributes to the development of better prototypes and products.

→ Improves work in the context of multidisciplinary teams, i.e. understand the language and the artefacts;

#### Elements of Information Architecture

#### Elements of Information Architecture

- → The main components of an information architecture include:
  - → Organization systems how information is categorized;
  - → Labeling systems how information is represented;
  - → Navigation systems how you can move through the information;
  - Searching Systems how information can be searched for.

## Organization Systems

## Organizing Information Spaces

- $\rightarrow$  Well-organized information is easier for people to find and work with.
- $\rightarrow$  Organizing things is hard, it is necessary to deal with ambiguity, heterogeneity, different perspectives, politics, etc.
- of those items.

They can either be exact organization schemes or <u>ambiguous organization schemes</u>.

 $\rightarrow$  The way things are organized impacts its meaning, i.e. the way they are perceived.

An organization scheme defines the shared characteristics of items and the grouping.





## Exact Organization Schemes

- and mutually exclusive sections.
- $\rightarrow$  These scheme are relatively easy to design and maintain.
  - items, examples include: person directory, services directories, libraries.

  - items, examples include: house or rental listings, transportation.

 $\rightarrow$  In exact organization schemes, information elements are divided into well-defined

→ Alphabetical scheme, where alphabetical ordering is used to layout information

-> Chronological scheme, where time-based factors are central in organizing information items, classic exemples include: calendars, tasks lists, news (?).

→ Geographical scheme, where place is the key factor in organizing information



## Ambiguous Organization Schemes

- $\rightarrow$  Language and concepts are ambiguous in nature.
- they are looking for, but harder to design and maintain.
  - Examples: newspapers, academic courses, books.
  - networks, search engines.
  - depending on the audience. Examples: intranets, academic services.

-> Ambiguous organization schemes are important because people don't always have an exact definition of what

-> Categorical schemes, where topics, themes are the factors considered in organizing information items. These properties have subjective interpretations, depending on the knowledge, viewpoints, etc of users.

→ Hierarchical schemes, where information items are organized according to value, from most to lest or vice-versa. The key aspect is that it requires value to be assigned to the information. Examples: social

-> Audience-specific schemes, make sense when multiple audiences exist. This can result in breaking an information space into smaller audience-specific sub-spaces, or including more or less information



### Labeling Systems

## Labeling Systems

- $\rightarrow$  Labeling is a form of representation.
- $\rightarrow$  Labels can either be textual or iconic (more ambiguous).
- $\rightarrow$  Textual labels include: contextual links, headings, navigation systems choices.
- use for searching).

→ Just as words represent concepts and ideas, labels represent parts of information in information spaces. Example: "About" or "Contact Us" are well-established labels.

-> Labels can be designed looking at existing information environments (what is used in other contexts or by others in similar contexts) or search logs (what language users)



## Navigation Systems

#### Embedded Navigation Systems

- $\rightarrow$  The purpose of navigation is to help users move around.
- $\rightarrow$  A good navigation system should help the user answer the following questions:
  - $\rightarrow$  Where am I?
  - $\rightarrow$  What can I do?
  - $\rightarrow$  Where can I go from here? (up, down, parallel)

 $\rightarrow$  Navigation systems provide context and a sense of control to users as they explore.



### Types of Navigation Systems

- $\rightarrow$  There are various types of navigation systems, three common ones are:
  - system. A central element in the overall usability of a space.
  - explore and navigate the immediate subsection.
  - link to related items in different areas.

→ Global navigation systems, it is intended to be present in every page, often implemented as a navigation bar at the top, allow direct access to key areas of the

→ Local navigation systems, complement the global system and allow users to

Contextual navigation systems, support navigation through the association of concepts that exist in the content being presented. Examples include "see also" or





## Types of Navigation Systems

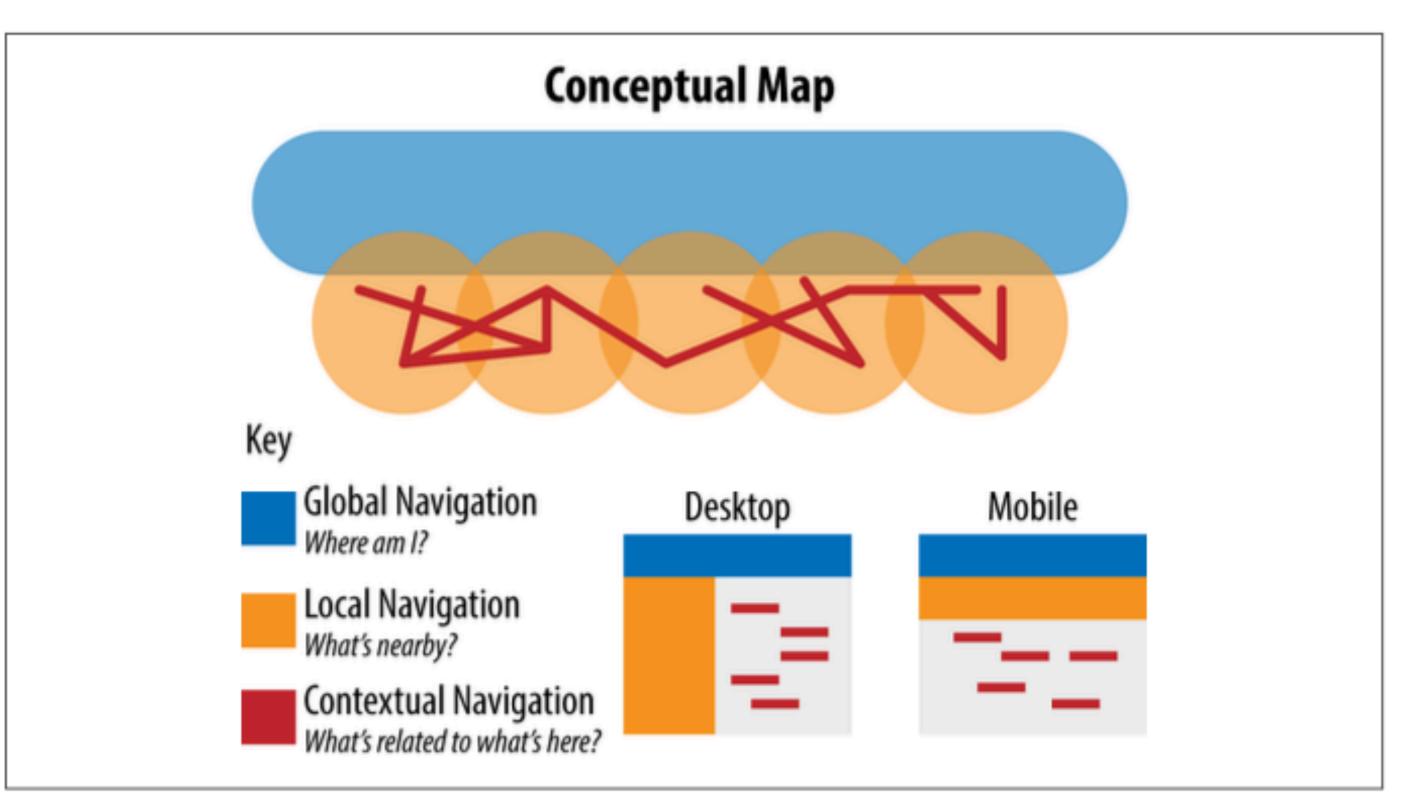


Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)

Figure 8-1. Global, local, and contextual embedded navigation systems

·		

## Supplemental Navigation Systems

- Supplemental navigation systems are external to the basic hierarchy of a system and provide complementary ways of finding content and completing tasks.
- → Examples include: sitemaps, site indexes, breadcrumb trails, FAQs, tutorials, search.
  - → Sitemaps provide a broad view of the content in the system and facilitates random access to individual items.
  - → Breadcrumbs are dynamic and represent the path followed by the user or, alternatively, the location of the content within the hierarchy.
  - → Search, is a central mechanism for navigation, it provides users a direct access to the content they are looking for.



# Sitemap

🔹 Store Ma	ac iPhone Watcl	h iPad iPod	iTunes Suppo	ort Q
Apple Sitemap				
Apple Info >				
News and Events Hot News RSS Feeds Apple Events Apple Live User Groups	About Apple Contact Us Support and Service Product Feedback Website Feedback Public Relations Investors Working at Apple Diversity Environment Recycling Working with Apple Procurement Supplier Responsibility Legal Information Choose your country or region	Where to Buy Where can I buy Apple products? Apple Online Store Apple Store for Business Apple Store for Education Apple Online Store Country Selector Apple Retail Find a Reseller Apple Financial Services Apple Rebates		
Mac >				
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Mac Pro	AirPort Express	iPhoto	Overview	
Mac mini	AirPort Extreme	iMovie	Technologies	
MacBook Air	AirPort Time Capsule	GarageBand	Program	
MacBook Pro	Which Wi-Fi are you?	Pages	Resources	
iMac	Servers	Numbers	WWDC	
iMac with Retina 5K display	Servers Overview	Keynote	Markets	
Compare Mac Models	OS X Server	Aperture	Creative Pro	
		Final Cut Pro X		

Figure 8-16. Apple's sitemap

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)



## Advanced Navigation Solutions

- $\rightarrow$  Advanced solutions for navigation, include:
  - → Personalization, serve information based on a model of the user, e.g. based on behavior, navigation, profile. Example: personalized recommendations in a shopping website.
  - $\rightarrow$  Customization, give the user direct control over content and navigation options, e.g.visible options, preferences. Example: ordering or labels in a webmail application.
  - → Visualization, provide navigation mechanisms based on visual properties of information items. Example: a visual search engine in a e-commerce website.
  - → Social navigation, organize content access or navigation based on users' input. Example: ranking content by votes from other users (e.g. Reddit), or using users' tags to provide navigation features (e.g. Stackoverflow).





#### Search Systems

#### Search Systems

- $\rightarrow$  Search is an advanced navigation mechanism.
- $\rightarrow$  An apparently simple interface masks a complex system (covered later).
- $\rightarrow$  Opting for a search system requires evaluation considering multiple issues, including:
  - → Amount of content in the "information space".
  - Time and know-how to optimize the search system.
- and can 'cut across' the existing structure.
- perform, which additional filtering criteria to consider.

 $\rightarrow$  Users expect search: it's a familiar tool, where users control of the vocabulary to find information,

→ Multiple decisions are required, including which content fields to index, what text processing to



#### Search User Interface

- In designing the user interface, it is nece to include in the search results.
- Complementary sorting options can be provided, e.g: relevance ranking, chronological, alphabetically, popularity, etc.
- Faceted search is an advanced mechanism commonly used in stores and complex information contexts.

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)

#### → In designing the user interface, it is necessary to decide which information components

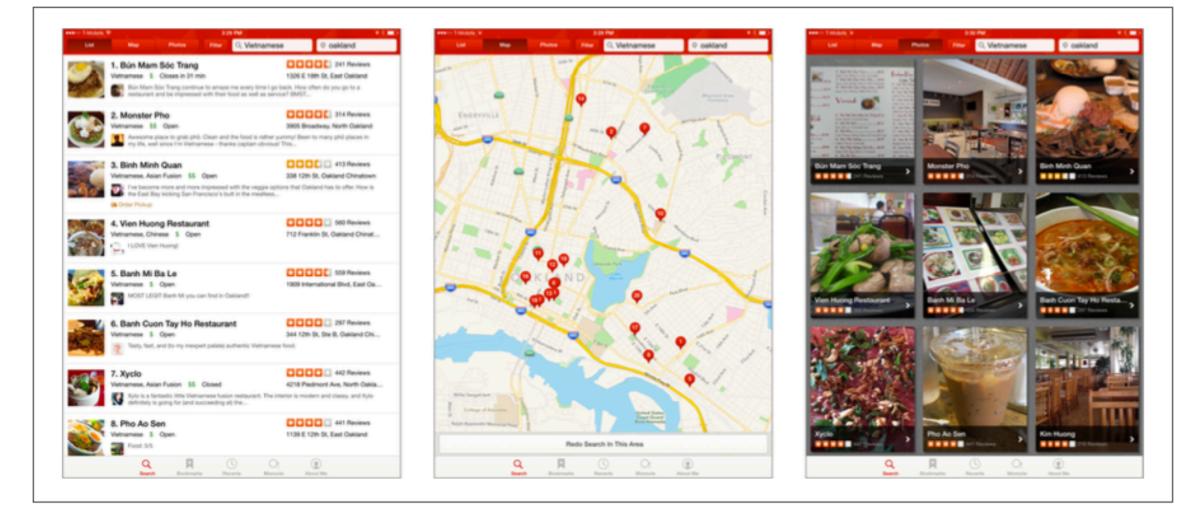


Figure 9-11. The Yelp iPad app allows users to select three different ways of viewing search results: as listings, as locations on a map, or as images

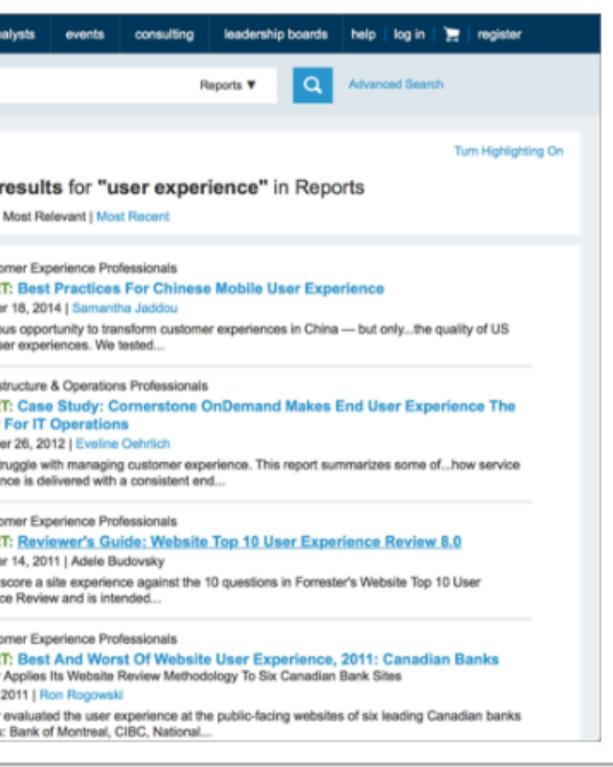


#### Faceted Search

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Total Economic Impact (TEI) (15)		assets:

Figure 9-21. Forrester contextu experience"

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)



#### Figure 9-21. Forrester contextualizes search results for the query "user



#### Best Practices in Search

- → Support autocomplete
- → Support query operators
- → Provide context
- → Allow query reformulation
- → Support additional filters
- → Support alternative rankings
- → Customize snippets
- → Highlight matched search terms

The New York Times	Search	Most Popular Searc
Your Search	edward snowden Go	
Date Range	Sort by: Newest   Oldest   Relevance 1-10 of about 3,526 Res	ults
All Since 1851	Chip Maker to Investigate Claims of Hacking by N.S.A. and British Spy	
Past 24 Hours	Agencies	
Past 7 Days	encryption codes. The claims — reported on a website called The Intercept — were based on documents from 2010 provided by Edward J. Snowden, the former N.S.A. contractor. The American and British intelligence	
Past 30 Days	February 21, 2015 - By MARK SCOTT - World - Print Headline: "Chip Maker to Investigate Claims of Hacking	
Past 12 Months	by N.S.A. and British Spy Agencies"	
Specific Dates	Canada Agency Monitors File-Sharing, Reports Say downloaded them — as part of an antiterrorism effort involving the United States and other allies, a document leaked by Edward J. Snowden indicates. The project, to detect possible extremists by monitoring visits	
Result Type	January 29, 2015 - By IAN AUSTEN - World - Print Headline: "Canada Agency Monitors File-Sharing, Reports Say"	
All Types		
Article	British Court Says Spying on Data Was Illegal and American intelligence agencies have used a program known as Prism — first	
Biogpost	revealed by the former N.S.A. contractor Edward J. Snowden — and others like it to gain access to individuals' Internet	
Multimedia	February 07, 2015 - By MARK SCOTT - World - Print Headline: "British Court Says Spying on Data Was	
Video	llegal"	
Author	British Spies Seized Emails to Reporters from a single intercept — is contained in a cache of British documents that are among the classified trove leaked by Edward J. Snowden, the former contractor for the National Security Agency. There is no	
All Authors	January 20, 2015 - By JAMES GLANZ - World - Print Headline: "British Spies Seized Emails to Reporters"	
Specific Author	F.B.I. Is Broadening Surveillance Role. Report Shows declassifications about government surveillance activities in response to leaks by the former intelligence contractor Edward J. Snowden. The report	

#### *Figure 9-32. All aspects of the search are restated as part of these search results*

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)





#### Information Architecture Process

#### Information Architecture Process

- → The design of information environments requires interdisciplinary teams, including other experts.
- → An information architecture process is structured in four general activities:
  - → **Research**, understands users, content, and context;

  - → Implement, solutions that adhere to the design and specifications produced;
  - → Evaluate, and improve the system throughout its life cycle.

interaction designers, software developers, content strategists, usability engineers, and

-> Design, specify the information architecture, creating detailed sitemaps, wireframes, etc;



#### Research and Research Methods

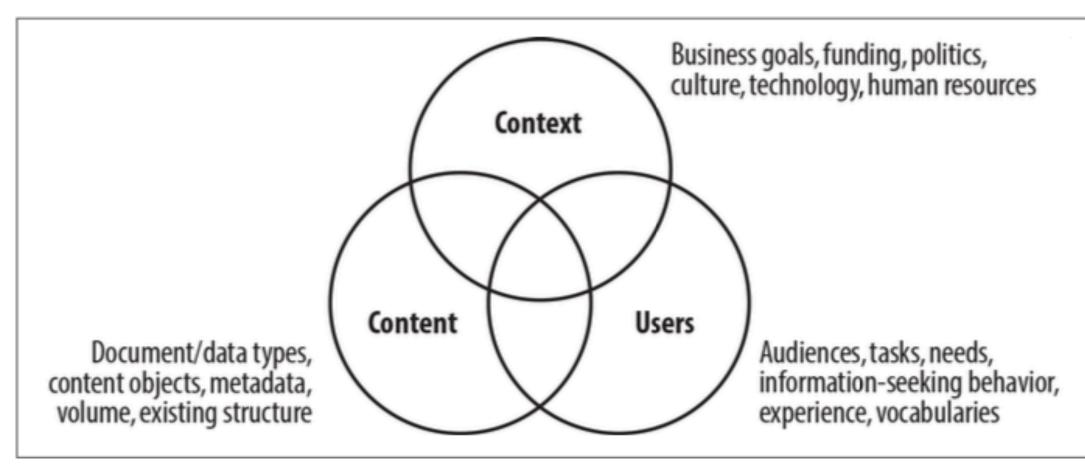
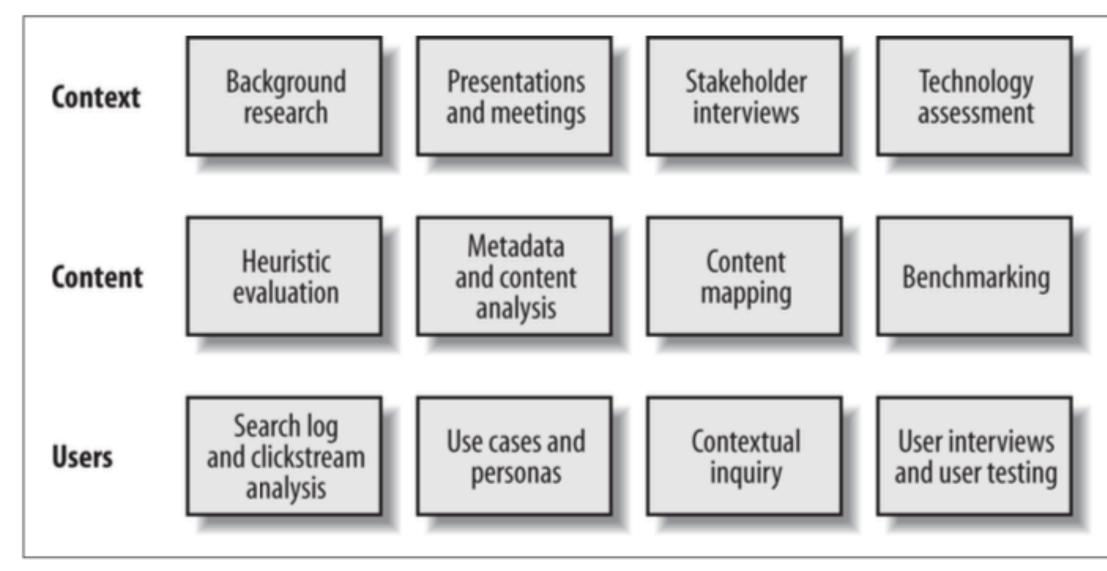


Figure 11-2. A balanced approach to research

Images from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)



*Figure 11-3. Tools and methods for research* 



#### Information Architecture Deliverables

#### Information Architecture Deliverables

- $\rightarrow$  Deliverables are essential for any well-structured process.
- $\rightarrow$  Visual diagrams contribute to define:

  - Connections between components, i.e. how components are linked.
- information architecture of a system.
- inventories, prototypes, design mockups, etc.

 $\rightarrow$  In multidisciplinary contexts, they work as "anchors" between teams and different project phases.

- Content components, i.e. what constitutes a unit of content, and how these are grouped.

→ Deliverables can provide multiple views, at different levels and for different audiences, over the

Commonly used deliverables are sitemaps and wireframes. Others include wireflows, content



#### Sitemaps

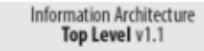
#### Sitemaps

- can be used to portray organization, navigation, and labeling systems.
- $\rightarrow$  High-level sitemaps are usually the result of a top-down design process.
- Sitemaps can be used to map specific areas or parts of a complex information environment.
- $\rightarrow$  Adopt vector based tools that support collaboration.

Sitemaps show the relationship between information elements, such as pages, and

 $\rightarrow$  It can be used to portray the content organization, the navigation system, and the labeling systems. It provides a condensed view for both developers and users.





#### NOTES:

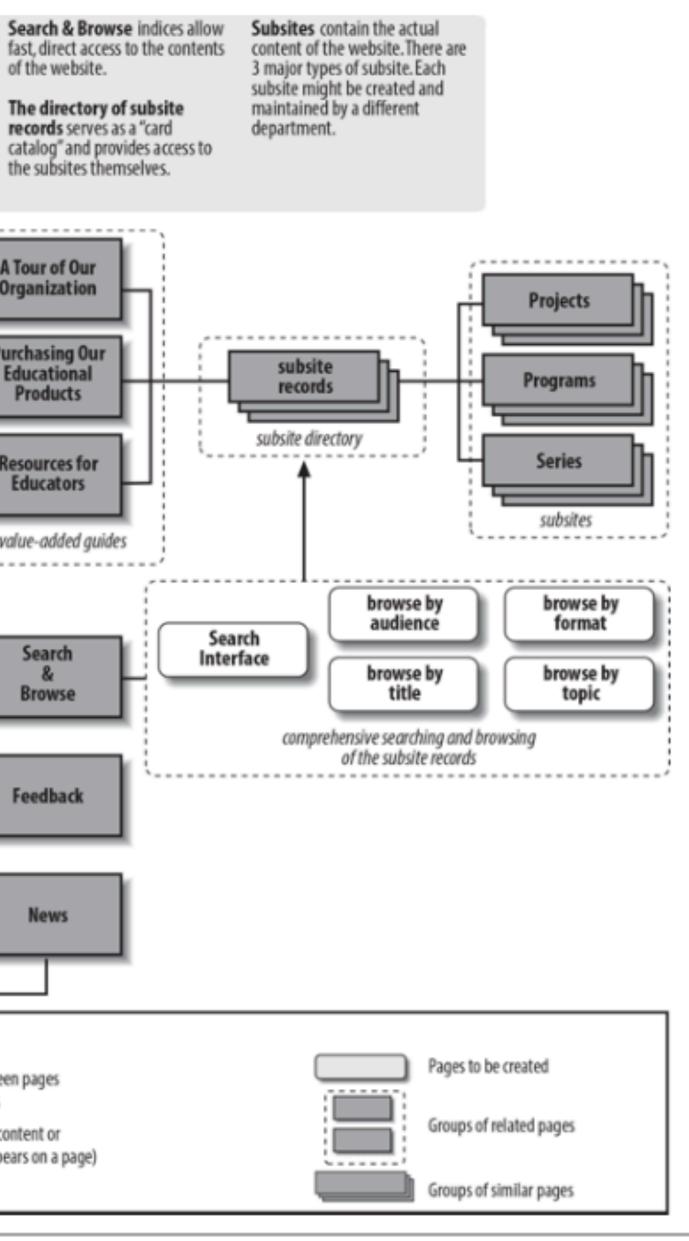
Guides are narratives or stories that introduce new users to the organization and to the website. fast, direct access to the contents of the website.

The directory of subsite records serves as a "card catalog" and provides access to the subsites themselves.

-----A Tour of Our Organization Purchasing Our Educational Products Resources for Educators value-added guides ~ - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - ' main page Search & Browse Feedback dynamic news billboard News billboard headlines link to articles in News area Legend Gateway to the site Relationships between pages and/or components Page components (content or application that appears on a page) Page

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture -For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)

Figure 13-1. A high-level sitemap





#### Wireframes

## Wireframes

- → Wireframes depict how an individual page or template should look from a structural and architectural perspective.
- $\rightarrow$  Wireframes are typically created for the system's most important pages or screens.
- $\rightarrow$  They are also used to describe templates that are consistently applied to many pages.
- $\rightarrow$  They are also a good way to explore the impact of different screen sizes on content layout.
- of the development lifecycle.

→ Wireframes forces to consider issues such as the location of navigation systems, the content hierarchy, content grouping, what to include and what to discards in each view of the system, etc.

→ Wireframes can vary in their "level of fidelity", from low-level to high-level, depending on the stage



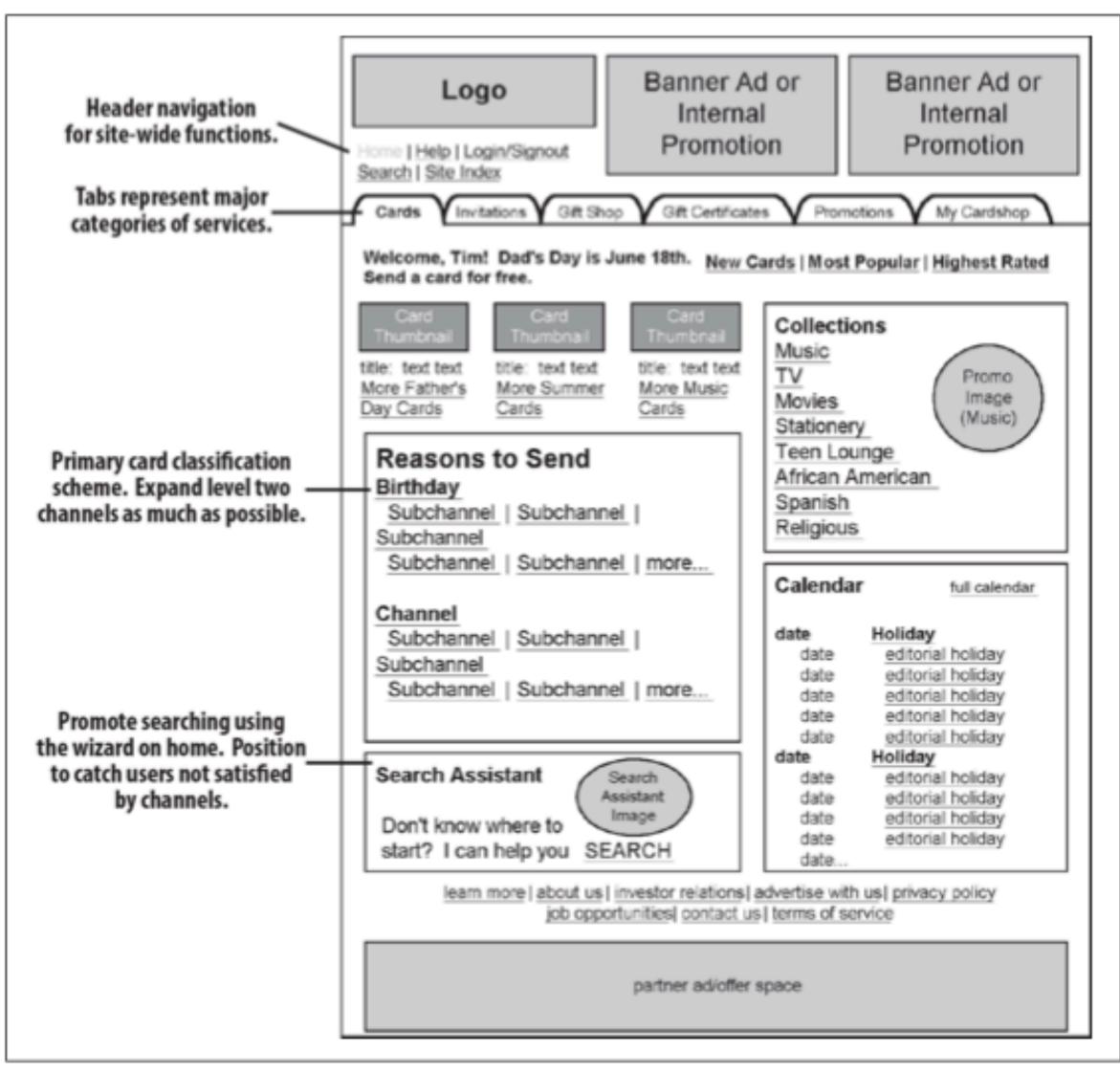


Figure 13-11. A wireframe of the main page of a greeting card site

Image from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture -For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)



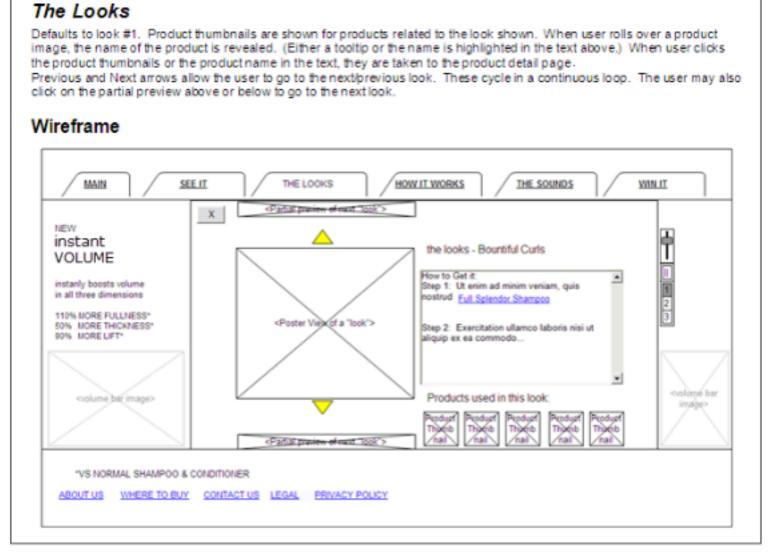


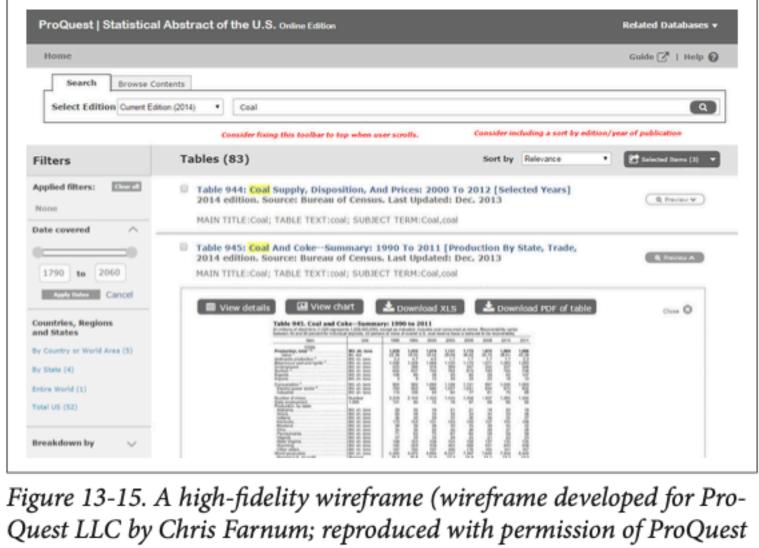
Figure 13-13. A low-fidelity wireframe; note that the focus is on layout of content and visual elements over content accuracy (wireframe developed for ProQuest LLC; reproduced with permission of ProQuest LLC *—further reproduction is prohibited without permission)* 

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Figure 13-14. A medium-fidelity wireframe by Chris Farnum and Katherine Root; more detail, more explanation, and more unique content (wireframe developed for ProQuest LLC; reproduced with permission of ProQuest LLC—further reproduction is prohibited without permission)

Images from: Rosenfeld et al. Information Architecture - For the Web and Beyond, O'Reilly (2015)

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## Wireflows

## Wireflows

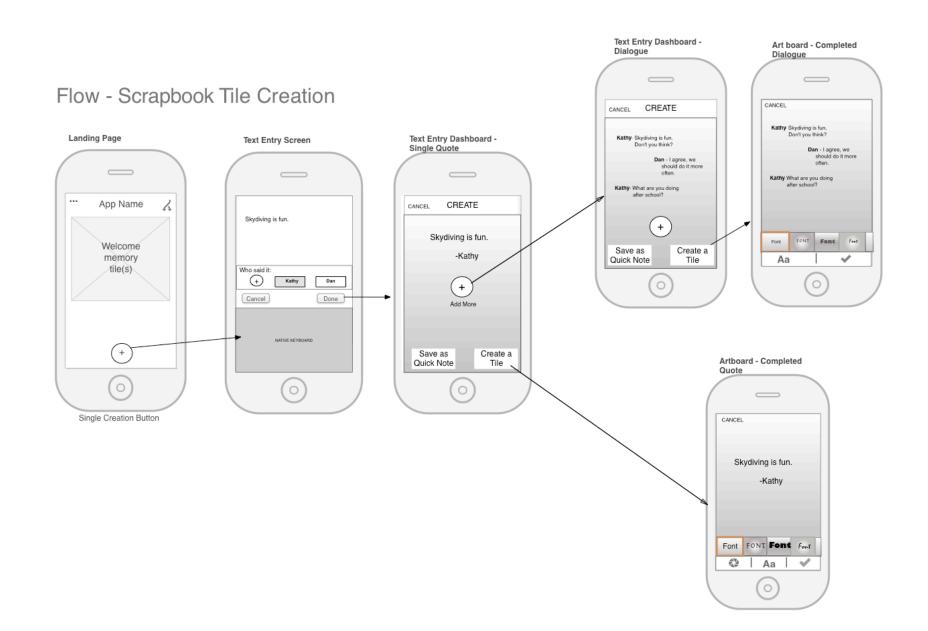
- Useful when documenting systems with few pages that dynamically change its pattern, particularly in mobile applications.
- $\rightarrow$  Wireflows document interaction.

Wireflows combine wireframes and flowcharts to provide both a view of page-level layout ideas (structure), and document complex workflows and user tasks (flux).

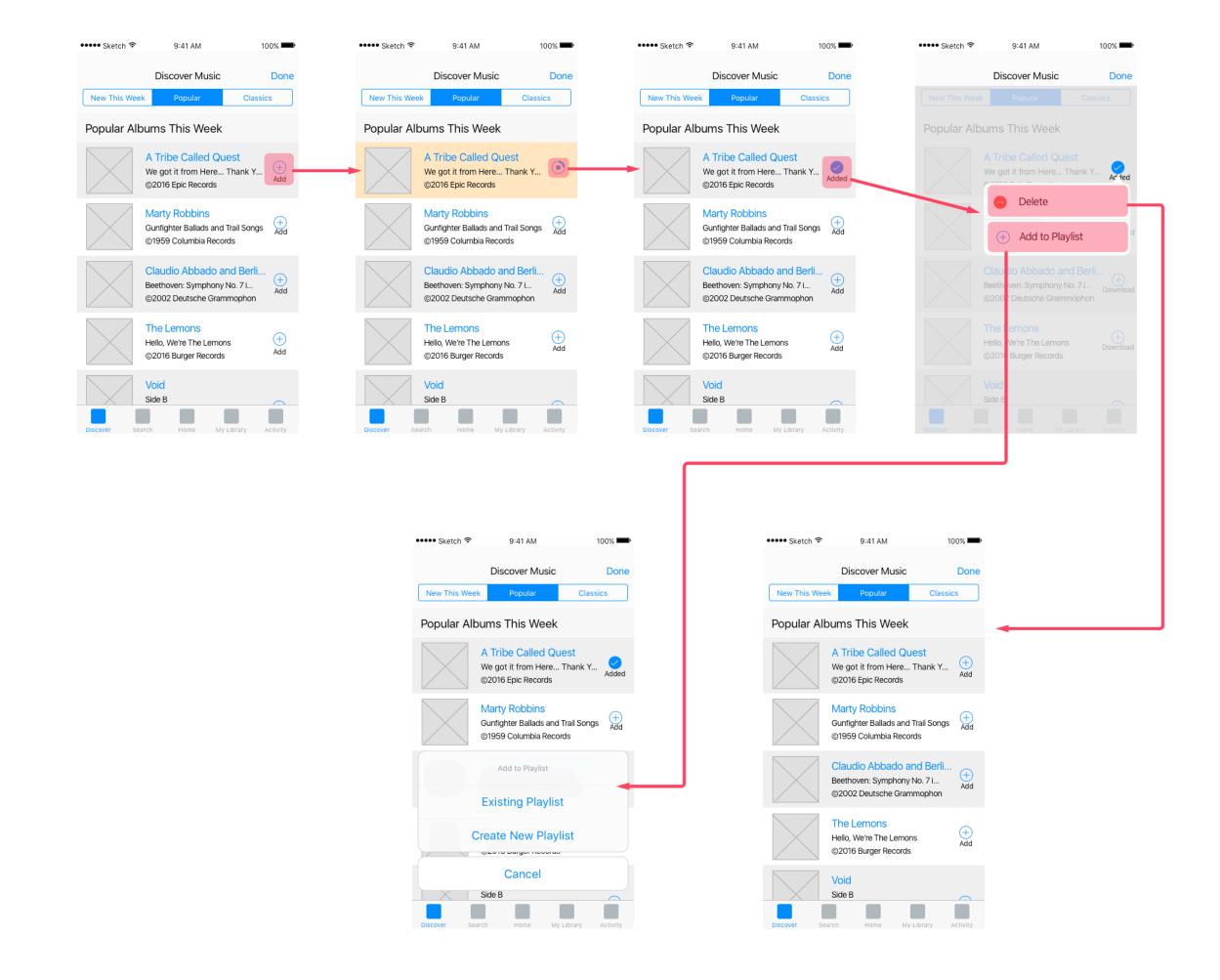
content and layout based on user interaction. This is an increasingly common



#### Wireflows



Images from: Laubheimer P. Wireflows: A UX Deliverable for Workflow and Apps. Nielsen Norman Group (2015)





## A3. Information Architecture

## A3. Information Architecture

- The Information Architecture artefact presents a brief overview of the information architecture of the system to be developed, and has the following goals:
  - $\rightarrow$  Help to identify and describe the user requirements, and raise new ones;
  - $\rightarrow$  Preview and empirically test the user interface of the product to be developed;
  - $\rightarrow$  Enable quick and multiple iterations on the design of the user interface.
- This artefact enables a brief exploration of the information architecture of the system to be developed, in particular the identification of the content, how it is organized and made available, and how it is presented.
- $\rightarrow$  Includes two elements: sitemap and wireframes.





#### A3. Sitemap

#### → Overview of the information architecture from the viewpoint of the users.

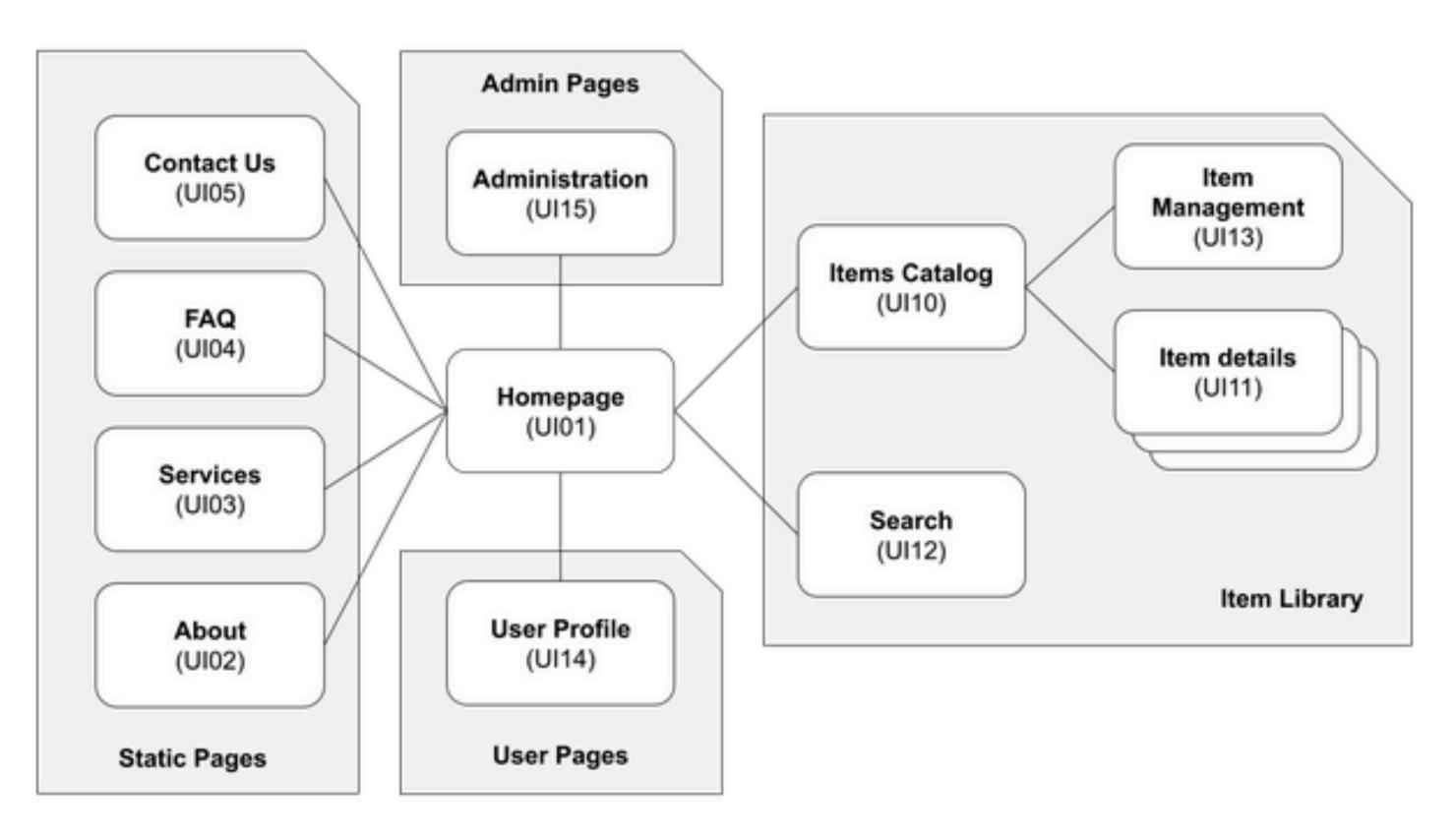


Figure 1: MediaLibrary sitemap.



## A3. Wireframes

Description and prioritization of the fur user interfaces.

	MediaLibrary Logo	About Services FAQ Contact John Doe •		
Breadcrumbs to help the user 1 navigate	Home + Items + Pulp Fiction	8 Keyword-based search		
Direct access to	Pulp Fiction [ edit ]	[ favorite   request for loan ]		
the search feature	<image gallery="" image="" link="" to="" with=""/>	Item information Name: Pulp Fiction Year: 1994 Owner: John Doe Type: DVD Average Rating: ★★★★ (4.2)		
is available except to the item owner	Description Loan History	Notes: —		
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Figure 2: Item Details (UI11) wireframe.

#### → Description and prioritization of the functionally and content of, at least two, main



#### A3. Checklist

Artefact	1.1	The artefact refer
Antelact	1.2	The goal of the a
	3.1	The sitemap is in
	3.2	Standard notation
	3.3	The sitemap iden
	3.4	Only main links b
	3.5	Home page is at
	3.6	Each page has a
Sitemap	3.7	Login is presente
	3.8	Search results pa
	3.9	About page is inc
	3.10	View/Edit own pro
	3.11	Administration are
	3.12	View project / Vie
	3.13	View category / V
	4.1	Wireframes are in
	4.2	Basic graphical e
	4.3	Wireframes are p
Wireframes	4.4	For each wirefram
	4.5	Headers and foot
	4.6	Navigation struct
	4.7	Page titles and he

A3. Information Architecture

rence and name are clear artefact is briefly presented (1, 2 sentences)

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n is used (lines, boxes and stacks of boxes)

ntifies pages, not functions or features

between pages are included

the top/center

unique reference

ed as a page (may be a page element)

age is included

cluded

ofile is included

rea and pages are included

ew question / View post / etc is included

View tag / etc is included

ncluded

elements are used (i.e. simple lines, few colors)

presented for at least two main screens

me, reference zones are indentified

ters are included

tures are included

eadings are included



#### References

#### Online Resources

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