Information Architecture
Student Originated Software – Winter 2002

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION
The main objective of this part of the program is an introduction to the emerging field of Information Architecture. We will start by exploring what exactly is information architecture and why is it needed. Our primary focus will be creating designs for usability: determining mission and vision, identifying the audience and their primary tasks, establishing a navigation scheme, deciding on content requirements, constructing a home page layout, and finally, getting feedback on the usability of the design. We will also look at examples of both good and bad web sites and web applications

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
BY THE END OF THE QUARTER, EACH OF US WILL BE FARTHER ALONG IN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF:
◊ Designing usable interfaces.

BY THE END OF THE QUARTER, EACH OF US WILL HAVE IMPROVED ABILITIES TO:
◊ Identify an audience and tasks.
◊ Create content specifications.
◊ Create a home page schematic.
◊ Design a navigation scheme.
◊ Develop and execute a usability test plan.

EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS:
To earn credit, students must attend weekly lectures, complete assignments and perform satisfactorily on final exam. Students will be evaluated on the basis of their understanding of information architecture theories and methods, as reflected in being able to explain key concepts through participation in discussions, pop quizzes, and exams. They will also be evaluated on the basis of their ability to implement these basic concepts through assignments.

LOCATION AND MEETING TIME
Feb 11 – Mar 14 (second five weeks of winter quarter)
Monday   10 – 12 (LH1)
Wednesday   10 – 11 (LH2)

TEXT
Information Architecture for the World Wide Web. By Louis Rosenfeld & Peter Morville.

ADDITIONAL READINGS: From Jakob Nielsen's Alertbox
Are Users Stupid?
Summary: Opponents of the usability movement claim that it focuses on stupid users and that most users can easily overcome complexity. In reality, even smart users prefer pursuing their own goals to navigating idiosyncratic designs. As Web use grows, the price of ignoring usability will only increase.
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010204.html

The 3Cs of Critical Web Use: Collect, Compare, Choose
Summary: According to a recent critical incident analysis, users' most important Web tasks involve collecting and comparing multiple pieces of information, usually so they can make a choice.
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010415.html

Search: Visible and Simple
Summary: Search is the user's lifeline for mastering complex websites. The best designs offer a simple search box on the home page and play down advanced search and scoping.
http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010513.html

The End of Homemade Websites

Summary: Web services will free individual site designers from having to program and design common features. This will decrease business costs, increase usability, and let designers focus on and improve features that are unique to each site.

http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20011014.html

Avoid PDF for On-Screen Reading
Summary: Forcing users to browse PDF files makes usability approximately 300% worse compared to HTML pages. Only use PDF for documents that users are likely to print. In those cases, following six basic guidelines will minimize usability problems.

http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20010610.html

The 10 Best Intranet Designs of 2001
Summary: The best intranets of 2001 emphasize iterative design and standardized navigation, and feature collaboration tools and content management systems. On average, companies saw intranet use increase by 98% following their winning usability redesigns.

http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20011125.html

Week		Topic	Readings
1	2/11	Introduction to Information Architecture. Audience Definition. Task-based Approach.	Chapters 1, 2, 7
2	2/18	Content Requirements and Search.	Chapters 3, 5, 6
3	2/25	Home page. Navigation	Chapters 4
4	3/4	Site Design. Global Audiences.	Chapter 8
5	3/11	Usability and usability testing. Technology selections.	Chapter 9, 10