

AM I AN INFORMATION ARCHITECT?

Many people have asked themselves this question. We often find ourselves alone at the office wondering why we can't fit into any specific department or, after so many evaluations, feel like we're just not doing what it is that we really want to.

The questions below may help you. Once you have completed the form we will recommend some steps that you can take to further your interests, find support and join a community of like-minded people.

1. When looking at a web site, do menus that hold no meaning to you whatsoever leave you in a bad mood?
2. Do you feel that something elusive has been overlooked when your team sketches an entire website on a white board in a one-hour meeting and then promptly leaves to go and build it?
3. Do you sound like a stuck record, always recommending the above meeting (your team members sigh and roll their eyes)?
4. Upon moving to a more strategic department did you feel that you were getting closer to what you needed to do, but missed the hands-on stuff? Did you carry on drawing connected circles, boxes and arrows on sketch pads?
5. Do you find yourself running between the designers, the programmers, the writers and the account executive trying to hold a unified vision together (your creative director only had a one-hour time slot between meetings with the designers, but you didn't cover everything)?
6. As frustrating as it was in point 5, did you actually enjoy it?
7. Your project manager eventually became insecure about you running around between the teams and pulling things together?
8. You are the project manager. But beyond Microsoft Project you're drawing web pages in Word and joining boxes and arrows?

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9. You enjoy drawing web pages in Word more than working in Project. You feel shy and lacking words to explain your ideas to the designers (who are rolling their eyes again)?
10. You're the only one loving the meeting where you slave for three hours trying to make a product table work in a 300 pixel width space? You swapped the column and row content three times and worked on it some more at home because the solution just didn't seem right?
11. Do you leave a web site fuming when the words that are used to describe sections have nothing to do with the content that is found there?
12. After your 50th web site project do you find yourself concocting a grand unifying theory for web sites in your company, which has nothing to do with the visual design or the programming?
13. Are you the one asking the secretary and the security people to test your web sites during lunch?
14. Do you feel that the important stuff in the web site you're building is somehow between the pages as well as on the pages?
15. Do you feel that there isn't a department or job title that suits you? You just don't seem to fit, so you begin work on the grand unifying theory mentioned in point 12 during lunch?
16. When deadlock over a design is reached in meetings are you the only one recommending point 13?
17. The 'Polar Bear' book has been recommended to you several times, but you could never find it on Amazon.com? (Hint: O'Reilly's *Information Architecture for the World Wide Web* by Peter Morville and Louis Rosenfeld)

So, are you an information architect?

By now you should have a good idea whether or not you may be an information architect - and help is at hand. Many people have started their careers as IAs in just this way. They have gone on to enjoy many happy years getting paid to do

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just what they wanted to do, becoming more formalised and proficient along the way.

Here's how we can help:

The Information Architecture Institute website has a number of useful resources (<http://iainstitute.org/>):

- Events calendar, newsletter & email discussion list
- IA Library & educational resources
- Job board
- Tools
- Member directory
- Resources for starting a local community
- Mentoring program
- Progress grants
- Volunteer opportunities

Getting started: available in our library

- Introduction to Information Architecture
- Information Architecture Tutorial
- Information Architecture Glossary
- The Elements of User Experience
- What an Information Architect Does

There is enormous satisfaction to be gained just from participating in a community. We would love your voice to be added to ours.

About the IA Institute

The Information Architecture Institute is an international organization committed to advancing and promoting the concept, craft and community of information architecture. Visit us at <http://iainstitute.org>.