



## OVERDUE | INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

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Librarianship overlaps heavily with a category of work known as information architecture. To better understand information architecture, I looked at several definitions, but one stood out to me:

“Information architecture (IA) is the discipline of making information findable and understandable. It includes searching, browsing, categorizing and presenting relevant and contextual information to help people understand their surroundings and find what they’re looking for online and in the real world.”

This definition captures the breadth of IA in both technical and non-technical settings. In technical roles, think user experience (UX) design, taxonomies, and data architects. In non-technical roles, think content strategy, business analysis, and librarianship.

The more I learn about IA, the more I realize how much of my own career has revolved around it without me fully recognizing it at the time.

In one role, I built and maintained SharePoint Online sites that housed sales information used by employees to sell software and services. I also created tags and taxonomies for those sites and their documents. Applying metadata improved search visibility and made information easier to discover.

In another role as a content strategist, my job was to make support content easier for customers to find and use. I accomplished this by reviewing user feedback, listening to support staff discuss their experiences with customers, and analyzing how content performed to better understand what people actually needed.

Now imagine you're standing in a library looking for signs of information architecture. Look around because it's everywhere.

You search an electronic catalog for a book about gardens, and the system returns a call number showing where the book is located. Alongside it, you may also see books about horticulture, trees, and greenhouses because related subjects were intentionally connected to help users discover more information.

When you walk to the shelves, you notice books on similar topics grouped nearby because library systems were designed to keep related subjects together.

Libraries are often described as places that store information, but I've realized that misses the point. A library is not just a storage system. It is a retrieval system.

The shelves, metadata, catalogs, taxonomies, databases, and even the librarians themselves are all part of a larger structure designed to answer a single question:

“How do we help people find and understand what they need?”

That, at its core, is information architecture.

This has been OVERDUE. Come back next week to keep your account in good standing.

#Libraries #Librarians #Librarianship #InformationScience #LifelongLearning