Foreword

I am an information architect. I organize web sites so users can find what they need. This is how I introduce myself. This simple explanation seems to work. The implicit metaphor invokes a vision of blueprints and structure, thereby creating a bridge between physical and digital experience. And, as users, we all know how easy it is to get lost in a large web site. We can all see the value of findability.

Of course, the practice of information architecture is far from simple. The design of search and navigation systems that support both user needs and business goals can be alarmingly complex. How can we build taxonomies for content that grows? How should we deal with users who use the wrong keywords? How do we strike a balance between usability and aesthetics? These are common questions without universal answers. Every site presents a unique challenge.

During my career, I've had the good fortune to work on some of the world's most challenging web sites, and to speak with experienced information architects in many countries. Most recently, I visited Brazil. And it was in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo where I met some of the smartest, most passionate information architects I know.

Unfortunately, there are only a few. This is an urgent problem. How will a handful of people serve the rapidly expanding needs of such a massive population? The answer is simple. They won't. Brazil needs more information architects, and beyond that, more designers and communication and marketing professionals who understand at least the basic concepts and best practices of information architecture.

Education is the key to success. Only by sharing our knowledge can we hope to advance the discipline and build the community. This remarkable book by Luiz Agner is a great place to start. Buy it, read it, share it. That is the best way to become an information architect.

Peter Morville