Annual Report, 2003 - 2004

Our Second Year

As the second year of the Asilomar Institute for Information Architecture comes to a close, we can look back to see an organization that has grown beyond our early expectations. Building on the accomplishments of our first year, our membership has grown 37% in the past year, to over 560 people from over 40 countries. We also continued to build more services and events to promote information architecture (IA) and educate practitioners.

The community's efforts to promote information architecture have worked. The Institute and our president, Peter Morville, received prominent mention in a Wall Street Journal article (registration required) on May 4th. The term *information architecture* is now more common as well. For example, in January, 2003 a search for the term on Google returned about 40,000 results, and a year and half later the same search returned over 60,000 results.

Events

The Institute illustrated our participation in the content management arena by partnering with CMS Watch and organizing the Content Management for Information Architects workshop held at the 2004 IA Summit. Organized by Donna M. Fritzsche and John O'Donovan, it included workshop leaders such as Bob Boiko, Joseph Busch, Tony Byrne, Ann Rockley and Paula Thornton. Over 45 people attended the event.

Our Event Sponsorship Program which strives to promote and grow the IA community on a regional basis sponsored events in Chile, Denmark, and England. The Institute also co-sponsored the Enterprise Search Summit in New York and the IA Summit in Austin, Texas. At the Summit we reached people who hadn't heard of us and gave away some very heavy prizes.

Our F2F (face-to-face) meetings brought together smaller groups of Institute members from Washington to Paris to Tokyo.

Projects

The 2004 Goals Survey enabled the Institute's administration to listen to members and form a set of goals for the year.

Our new membership pricing system introduced three-tiers of fees that offers members from developing countries substantially lower membership rates. In some cases membership is free of charge. This change is helping AIfIA meet its goal of promoting information architecture around the world.

The IA Job Board has connected employers and job seekers through over 300 job postings, and is currently being redesigned in a new, automated form.

The IA Library, launched in April, is a categorized selection of over 200 references to IA resources in English, Spanish, French, Italian, and Japanese.

Our Translations Initiative produced 29 newly translated documents in Danish, Dutch, English, French, Italian, Japanese, Portugese, and Spanish. The group is in the process of adding three new languages: German, Bahasa Indonesian, and Russian.

The Education Curriculum Initiative surveyed educators, finding interest in a published set of core IA competencies. Toward that end the group is doing research and compiling a survey to measure current IA competencies.

The member directory re-launched with enhanced search capabilities and the ability for members to edit their own profiles.

The collection of IA Tools more than doubled, adding document templates and educational materials.

The newly-formed Mentoring Initiative aims to improve the skills of current and future information architects by providing them with the opportunity to be mentored by an experienced information architect. The group is working on a mentoring agreement and a survey to generate feedback from interested mentors and mentees.

The goal of the Local Groups Initiative is to promote and assist the coordination of and participation in local groups with interest in information architecture. The group has conducted a survey on supporting local IA groups and is preparing to publish a current list of groups and supporting material.

Administration

We firmly established a management and operations volunteer staff that works diligently behind the scenes and welcomed a distinguished board of advisors. The board of directors grew with the additions of Livia Labate and Samantha Bailey, both active and prominent IA practitioners. This year two seats on the board become vacant and we look forward to elections producing two new directors with creativity, energy, and vision.

Finances

AIfIA continues to maintain a strong financial position, especially considering that the Institute is a volunteer-driven non-profit that is less than two years old. At the end of the most recent fiscal year (July 1, 2003 through June 30, 2004), AIfIA was firmly in the black, with assets of US$32,502.97 (all cash), and no outstanding debt.
During the past fiscal year, AIfIA's financial position continued to improve thanks to two major factors: 1) a steady flow of revenue from new and renewed memberships (US$19,905.97); and 2) income from AIfIA's pre-conference seminar at the 2004 IA Summit, which netted US$8,646.68.

AIfIA's primary expenses included US$5,029.09 for pre-conference seminar production costs and promotion; US$2,700.00 for conference call fees; and US$2,097.50 for professional fees (including legal, accounting, and bookkeeping).

Assuming AIfIA maintains this predictable level of revenue growth and contained expenses, we feel that the Institute is well-positioned to invest in its own growth. Careful, limited outlays, such as obtaining the services of a part-time marketing professional, will serve AIfIA's goals while maintaining The Institute's good financial standing.

Challenges

As a volunteer-driven organization, the Institute accomplishes a great deal while remaining nimble and low-cost. But we have encountered growing pains in attempting to operate solely with volunteers. Given that income has comfortably outpaced our expenses, we are addressing our resource shortfall by establishing a part-time, paid staff position to improve our marketing and communications activities.
We have similarly outgrown some of our Internet hosting services, provided for free, and have starting migrating to a service with more flexibility and higher responsiveness for a nominal cost.

Given our specific focus within the larger user experience community, we are considering how to better integrate our activities with those of other groups. Neither a perception nor a practice of insularity will benefit information architecture practitioners who work alongside other professionals. Towards this goal, we have started to reach outside our practice when selecting partners and advisors, and have recently expressed our support for the emerging UXnet. Our organizational model is serving as an example for the content management and interaction design communities who are working on similar efforts.

Thank You

Many individuals have helped the Institute this year, and this short report cannot adequately recognize all those who contributed to our success. Volunteers built the Institute into what it is today, and we wish to thank everyone who has contributed in even the smallest way.

Sincerely,

The AIfIA 2003-2004 Board of Directors:
  Peter Morville, President
  Lou Rosenfeld, Treasurer
  Victor Lombardi, Secretary
  Samantha Bailey
  Livia Labate

Photo credits: Top: John O'Donovan presents at the CMS seminar by Victor Lombardi. Middle: Dan Willis wins a pile of books by James Spahr. Bottom: Select members of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board by Javier Velasco.