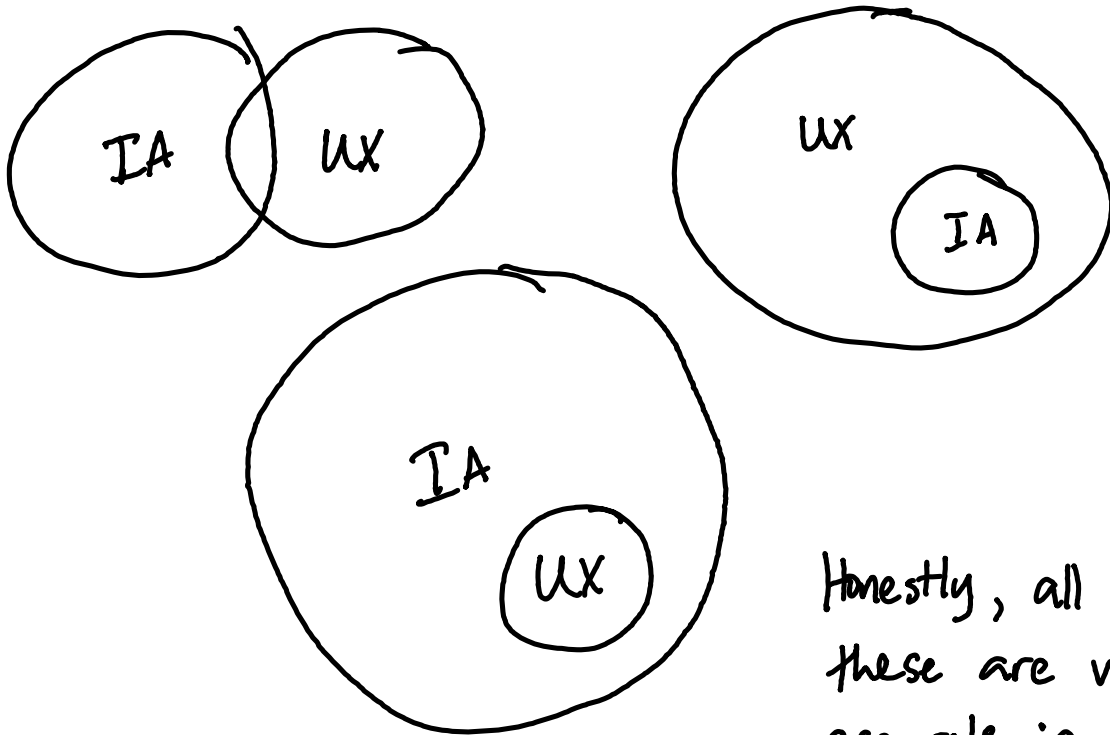


A Tale of  
*Information  
Architecture*

March 3, 2021

# Information Architecture

Depending on your perspective



Honestly, all of these are valid and accurate in different ways.

# Information Architecture



content  
data  
attributes  
meta-data  
descriptions  
labels  
help  
images  
video  
meaning

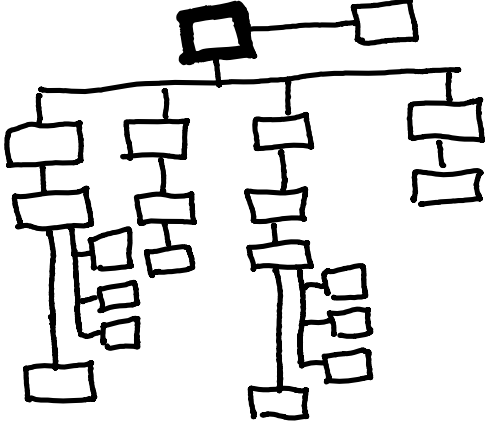


structure  
relationships  
organization  
models  
hierarchy  
taxonomy  
flow  
sequence  
database  
index

(not exhaustive)

# Information Architecture Deliverables

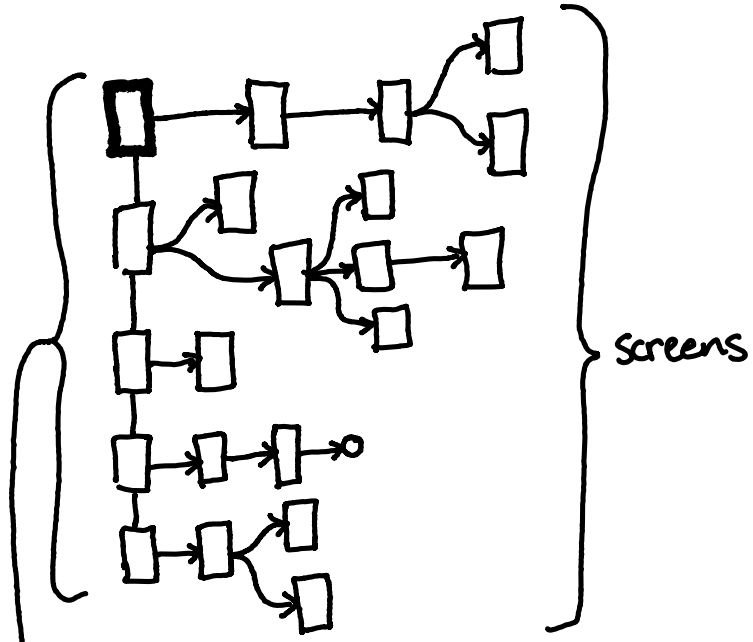
Sitemap



pages and sub-pages

"Bird's eye view"  
of a digital product

App Map



Sections

Paths



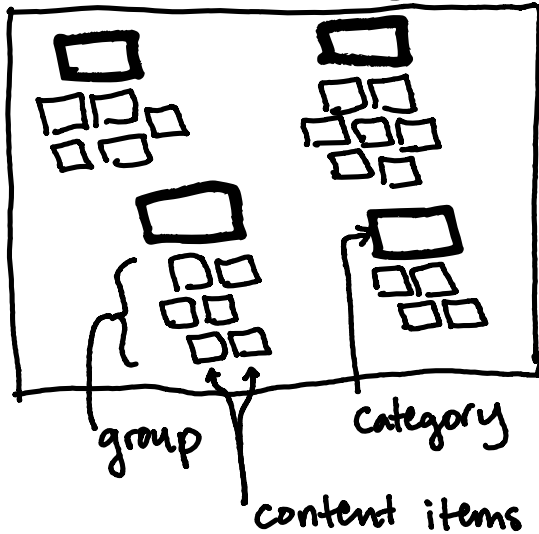
# Information Architecture Methods "Mental Models"

"How do users organize information?"

"Where do users look for information?"

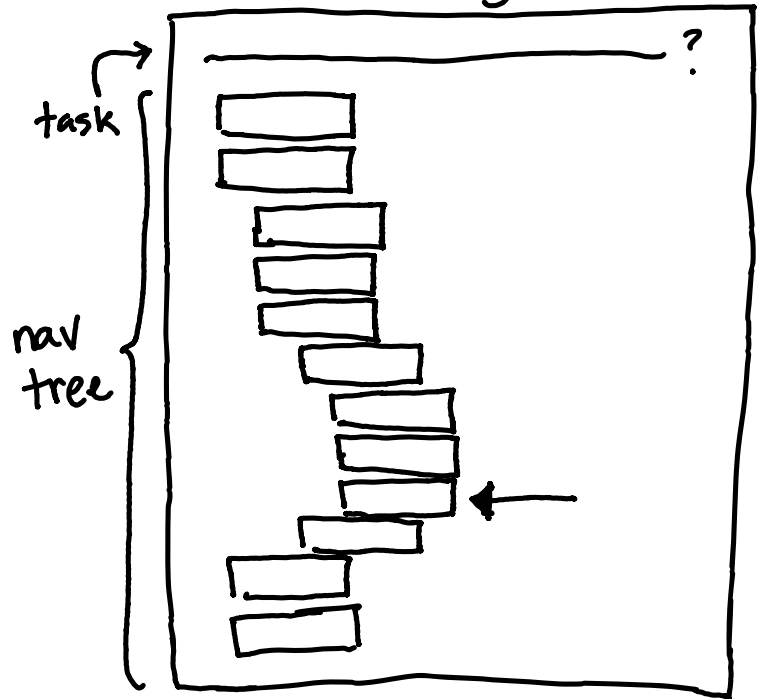
"How do users describe information?"

## Card Sorting



open vs. closed

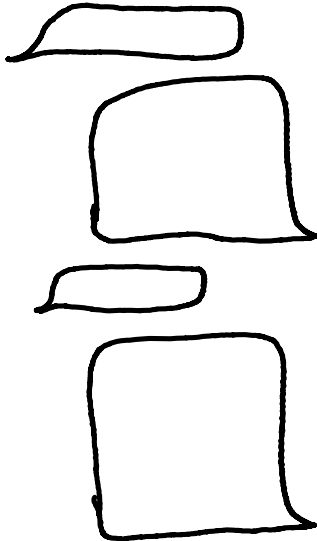
## Tree Testing



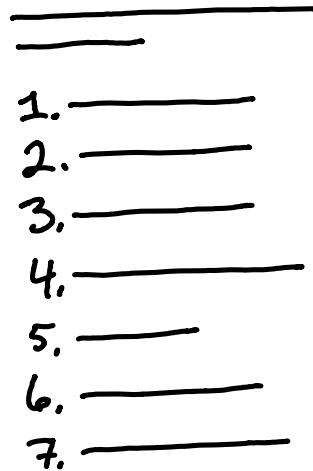
# Information Architecture Methods "Mental Models"

- "How do users name things?"
- "What are users trying to do?"
- "How do users perform tasks?"
- "How do users make decisions?"

## User Interviews



## Task Analysis



Let's imagine...

We are designing a new  
podcast app.



We've done some user interviews  
and heard things like...

"I mostly take recommendations from friends."

"I have a few shows I always listen to,"

"I generally look for podcasts on topics that interest me."

"I'm always behind. Episodes just pile up."

"Every so often I think about unsubscribing from a show I don't listen to very often, but I'm afraid of losing track of it in case there's an episode I don't want to miss."

What do users name things?

⑧ Find the nouns

"I mostly take recommendations from friends."

"I have a few shows I always listen to."

"I generally look for podcasts on topics that interest me."

"I'm always behind. Episodes just pile up."

"Every so often I think about unsubscribing from a show I don't listen to very often, but I'm afraid of losing track of it in case there's an episode I don't want to miss."

What are users trying to do?

1 Find the actions

"I mostly take recommendations from friends."

"I have a few shows I always listen to."

"I generally look for podcasts on topics that interest me."

"I'm always behind. Episodes just pile up."

"Every so often I think about unsubscribing from a show I don't listen to very often, but I'm afraid of losing track of it in case there's an episode I don't want to miss."

## Speak the users' language

Users should be able to:

- find a podcast/show by name  
(for example, based on a friend's recommendation)
- find a podcast/show by topic
- listen to an episode
- subscribe to a podcast/show
- unsubscribe from a podcast/show

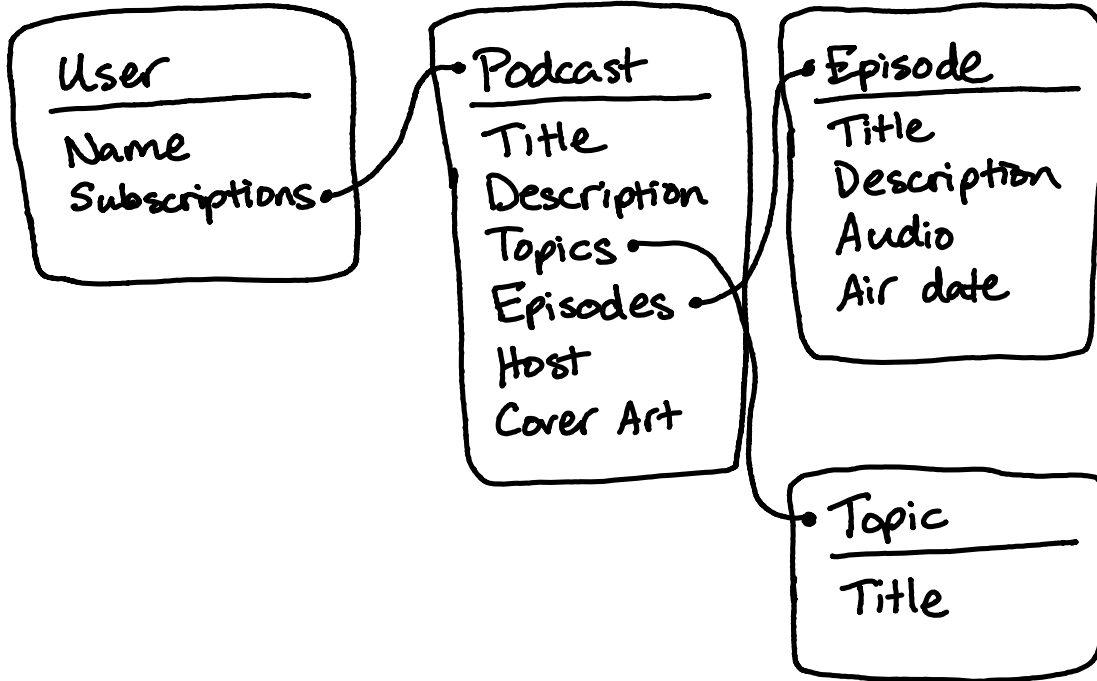
Maybe: (needs further investigation)

- "archive"(?) a podcast/show

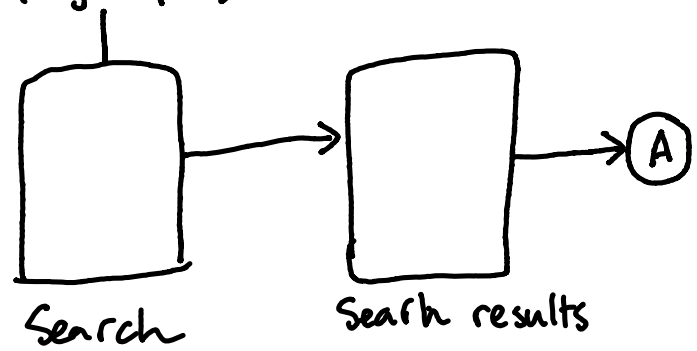
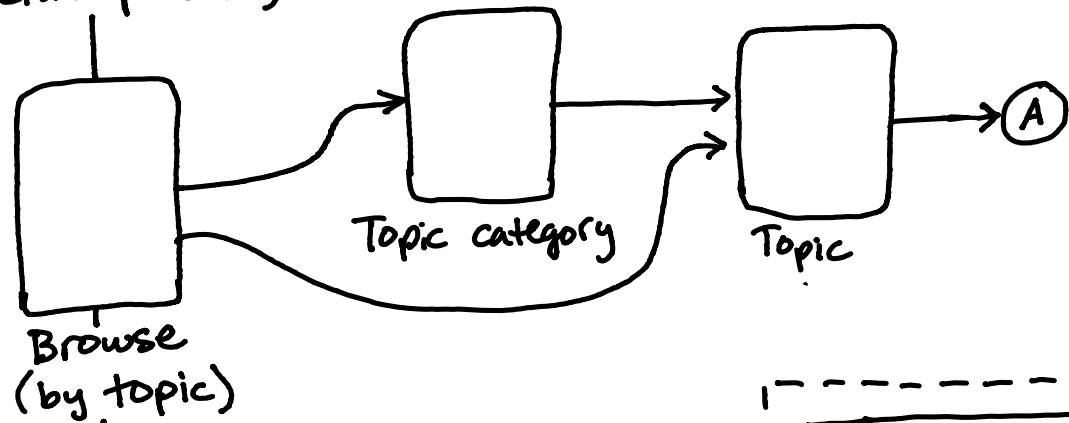
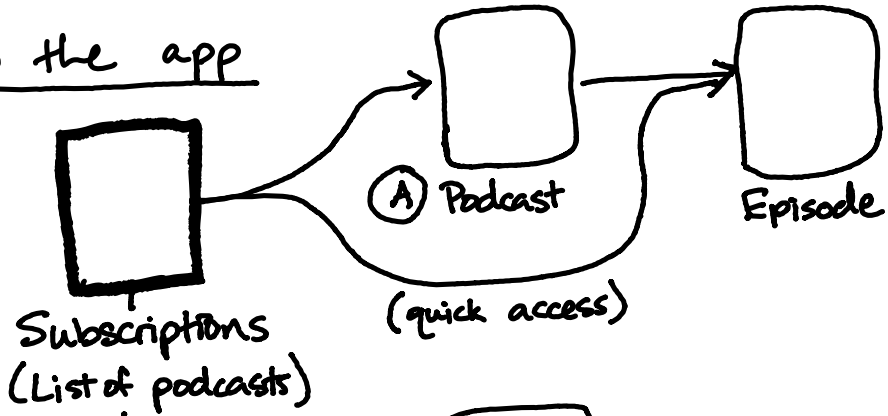
NOTE: Some users say "podcast" or "show" — sometimes interchangeably. Test this later.

→ Hypothesis: "podcast" less ambiguous than "show"

# Model the data



# Map the app



Player widget (example)  
available on every  
screen, after user  
has selected to play.

## Topics... I have more questions

- What topics would users look for?
- Are the topics flat or hierarchical?
- What should topics be named?

I have some options to help me answer these questions:

- Benchmarking — How do other podcast players and/or directories structure this information?
- Survey — “List your favorite podcast topics”
- Interviews — probe for topic-related info
- Card sorting — once I have a proposed list  
“Are there any topics you were expecting that aren't here?”

## Flat or hierarchical?

Even with more info, tough to say for sure at this stage

My rule of thumb is to stick to a flat structure if I don't yet have a compelling reason to use a more complex hierarchical structure



For now, let's use Apple Podcasts' categories

Topic taxonomy

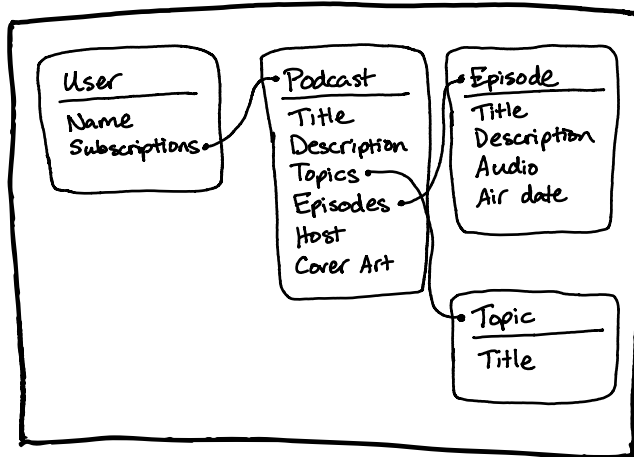
News  
Comedy  
Society + Culture  
Business  
True Crime  
Sports  
Health + Fitness  
Religion + Spirituality  
Arts  
Education  
History  
TV + Film

Science  
Technology  
Music  
Kids + Family  
Leisure  
Fiction  
Government

⊕ Even for a flat taxonomy like this, I could do some ranked card sorting to have some initial information about which topics are more popular with my users

# What do we have so far?

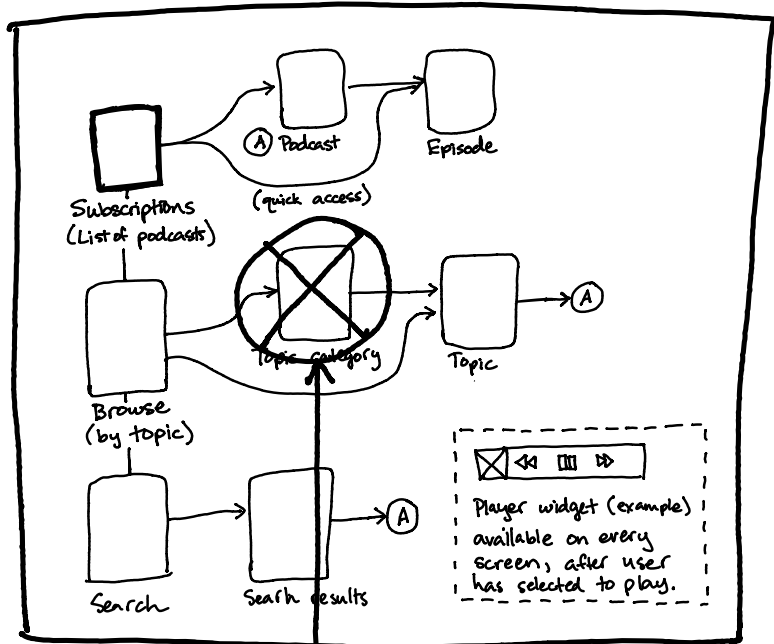
## Data Model



- gives designers guidance on what information can be shown to users
- gives developers a starting point for building the backend
- gives content folks a head start on what information will be needed

# What do we have so far?

## App Map



→ gives designers a starting point for interaction design

→ gives developers an early indication of the scope, complexity, and functionality of the product / feature

Based on our flat taxonomy, this section can be simplified.

# What do we have so far?

## Taxonomy

<u>TOPICS</u>	
News	Science
Comedy	Technology
Society + Culture	Music
Business	Kids + Family
True Crime	Leisure
Sports	Fiction
Health + Fitness	Government
Religion + Spirituality	
Arts	
Education	
History	
TV + Film	

→ gives designers content and structure to include as they prototype

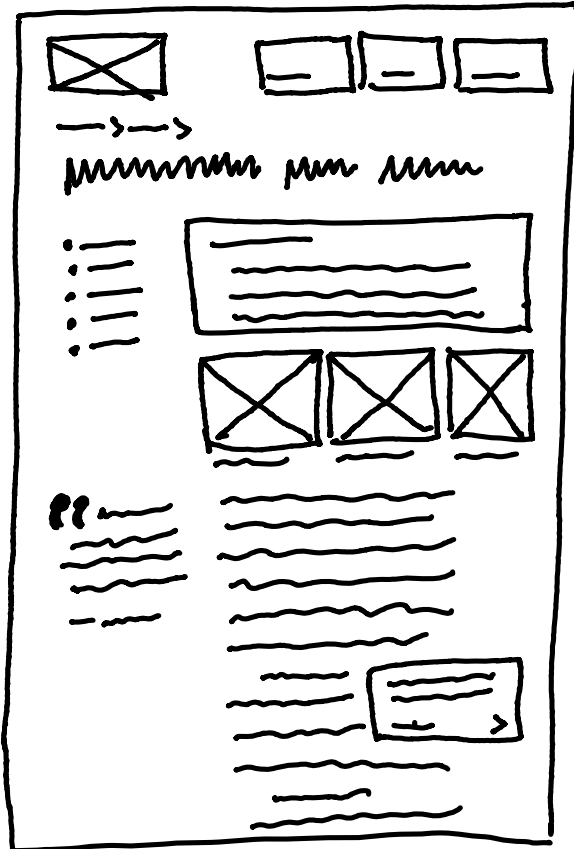
→ gives developers a data structure to start implementing

Pretty great, right?

One more thing...

Once upon a time,

Information Architecture gave us Wireframes 😊



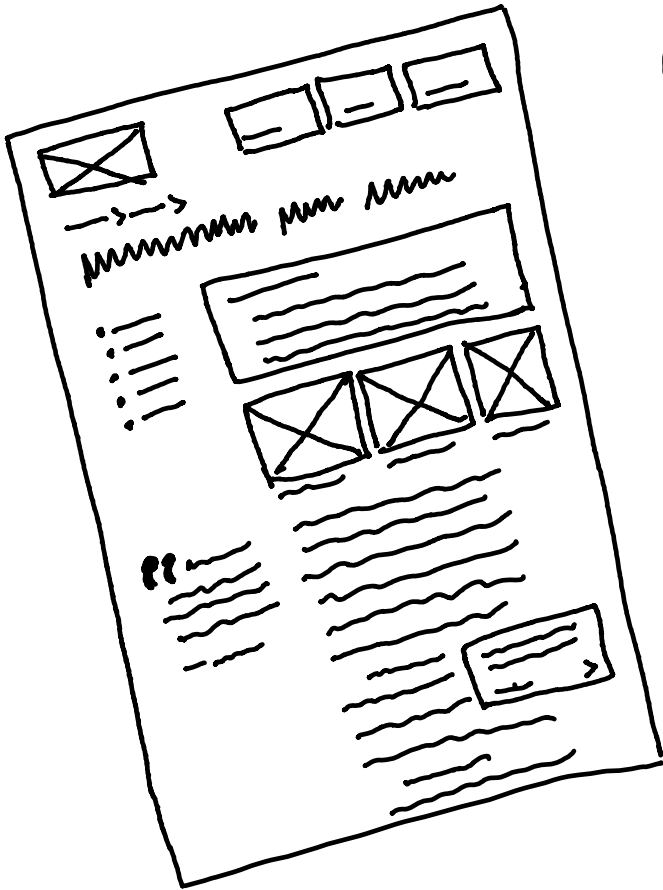
But! Information Architects were typically not considered "designers." In a back-bending effort to assuage the fragile egos of their designer colleagues and not step on their creative toes,

the humble information architect employed a common refrain.

“ Wireframes show information priority and hierarchy, and do not imply layout. ”



And designers were like:



WT actual F?

Tell me how on Earth THAT



“does not imply layout”

???

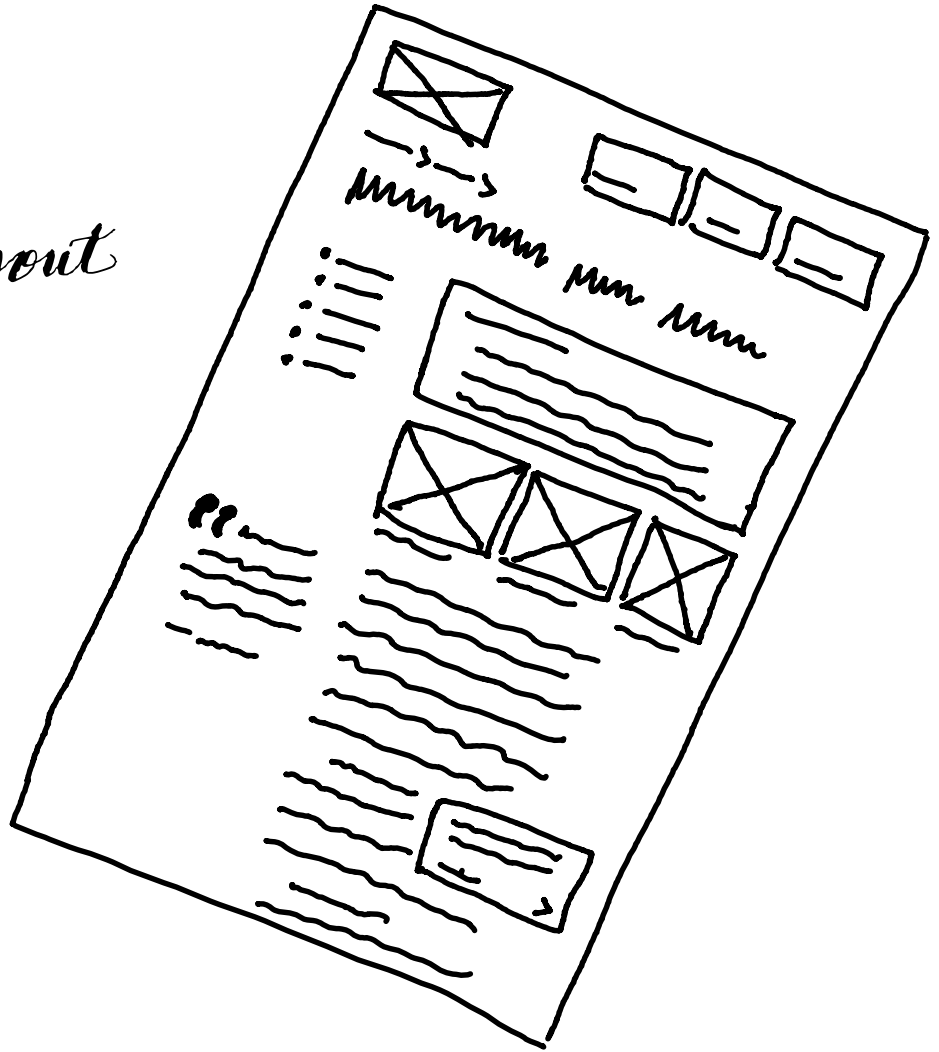
Eventually, as more professionals took to using the job title "UX designer," many information architects came to adopt the title as a more holistic description of what they did.

And fancy bonus! Now the humble professionals delivering wireframes were "designers".  
— It's right there in the job title.

To differentiate, the other designers they worked with came to be called "visual designers".

And eventually we  
all finally accepted  
what we secretly  
knew all along:

Wireframes  
do imply layout



Fin