Approaches to User Experience Design

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This diagram builds on Jesse James Garrett's excellent "The Elements of User Experience" diagram <http://www.jjg.net/ia/> and his "five planes" model. As Garrett points out, the Web is a convergent medium, and its multi-dimensional nature has led to much confusion.

However, while Garrett's model sees the Web as strictly either a software interface or a hypertext system, this model also encompasses interactive multimedia. Likewise, the "surface" layer has been expanded beyond just visual design and seeks to clarify how visual and sensory design varies among each dimension. Finally, this model seeks to cover a broad range of things that have designed "user experiences," such as software, video games, and other interactive products.

As with Garrett's original diagram, the goal of this document is to define some of the key considerations that go into the development of a user experience and the relationships among these considerations. Any changes in portions of Garrett's original model are mine, and for better or worse, reflect my thinking rather than Garrett's.

Note: The terms "mise-en-scene" and "choreography" are a force-fit attempt to find commonality among the variety of terms used by the many disciplines involved in interactive multimedia to describe these considerations.

This picture is incomplete: As with Garrett's original model, this new model is not intended to cover other considerations, such as those related to technical and content development, which may influence decisions during the user experience development. Likewise, it retains the original model's assumption that content is information-oriented because that's what user experience professionals normally deal with. Obviously fiction is concerned with user/audience experience, and both hypertext and interactive multimedia have been used for storytelling and video gaming. Equivalent steps for fiction can be inferred from this model.

Immersion-oriented

Creator's Objectives: Business, creative, or other internally-derived goals for the site, software, or product.

User/Audience Needs: Externally-derived goals for the site, software, or product; identified through user research, ethno/techno/psychographics, etc.

Creative Brief: Defines the intended experiential and/or emotional aspects to be evoked, as well as particular mediums, genres, metaphors, imagery, etc. to be used.

Choreography: Overall design and structuring of planned sensory elements (graphic, audio, video, animation, tactile, etc.) and environments into a unified whole that supports the intended experiential and/or emotional effect.

Mise-en-Scene: As in the theatrical sense of "arranging the scene"—designing and arranging specific elements to evoke expressive qualities, such as mood, style and feeling.

Information Design: In the broad Tuftean sense, designing the presentation of information to facilitate understanding.

Visual/Sensory Design: The treatment of sensory components (graphics, audio, animation, video, etc.) used to stimulate the senses and/or emotions.

Typified by interactive multimedia

Task-oriented

Creator's Objectives: Business, creative, or other internally-derived goals for the site, software, or product.

User/Audience Needs: Externally-derived goals for the site, software, or product; identified through user research, ethno/techno/psychographics, etc.

Functional Specifications: The detailed descriptions of functionality from the feature set that must be included in order to meet user needs and creator's objectives.

Interaction Design: Development of application flows to facilitate user tasks, defining how the user interacts with functionality.
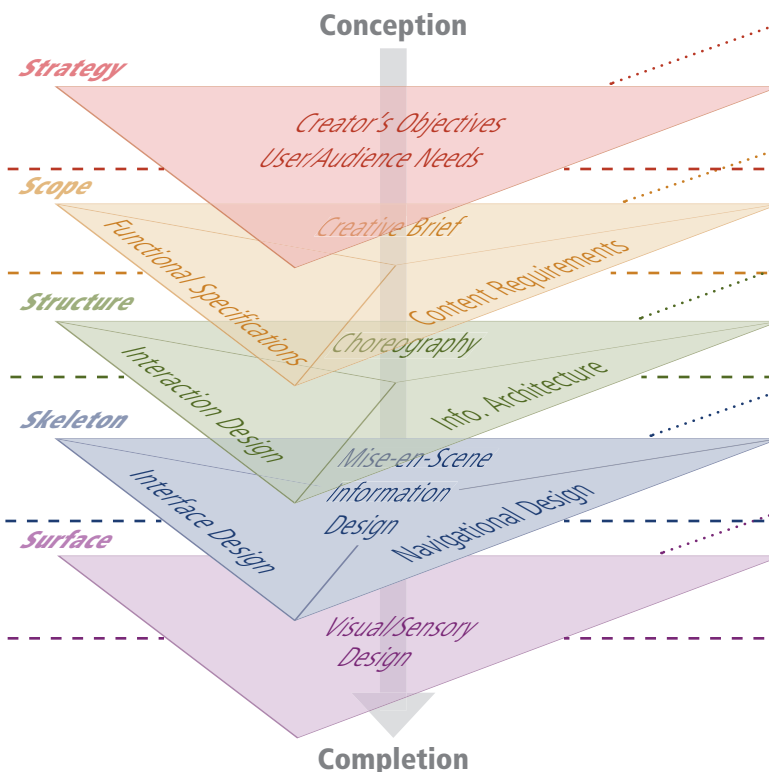
Interface Design: Traditional HCI (human-computer interface)—designing interface elements to facilitate user interaction with functionality.

Information Design: In the broad Tuftean sense, designing the presentation of information to facilitate understanding.

Visual/Sensory Design: Using the visual appearance (the "look" in "look-and-feel") of specific interface elements to aid interaction. Also the usage of audio, motion, or tactile cues and/or feedback for the same purpose.

Typified by software applications

Information-oriented

Creator's Objectives: Business, creative, or other internally-derived goals for the site, software, or product.

User/Audience Needs: Externally-derived goals for the site, software, or product; identified through user research, ethno/techno/psychographics, etc.

Content Requirements: Defining the content required to meet the user/audience needs and the creator's objectives.

Information Architecture: Arranging and structuring the content being used, to facilitate intuitive access to them.

Navigational Design: Designing interface elements to facilitate the user's movement among the content (and functionality) being used.

Information Design: In the broad Tuftean sense, designing the presentation of information to facilitate understanding.

Visual/Sensory Design: The visual treatment of text, graphical page elements and navigational components used to aid comprehension and orientation. Also, the usage and treatment of animated, audio, video, or tactile elements for these purposes.

Typified by hypertext systems

Central diagram

Conception → Completion

- **Strategy:** Creator's Objectives / User/Audience Needs
- **Scope:** Creative Brief / Functional Specifications / Content Requirements
- **Structure:** Interaction Design / Choreography / Info. Architecture
- **Skeleton:** Interface Design / Mise-en-Scene Information Design / Navigational Design
- **Surface:** Visual/Sensory Design