

Lecture Notes:

# Information Delivery Dynamics: a tale of two media

**Freda Salatino**

*“Any sufficiently developed technology is indistinguishable from magic.”*

*-Arthur C. Clarke*

## The Medium and the Message

In the late 20th century, information is delivered via either static or fluid media.

Static media include paper books/broadsheets, broadcast sound waves, and non-interactive electronic media (i.e., bank statements delivered via ATMs)

Fluid media include all interactive, or user-configurable media.

## Information Architecture

- Layout Dimensionality
- Navigation
- Image Quality
- Interactivity

## Static Media: Dimensionality

- Two-dimensional design
- Layout depends on the user's eye to find the connection between objects
- Palette only limited by the size of the page

## Static Media: Navigation

- Exclusively linear
- All connections are made for the reader by the designer/author -- even the indices are pre-fab!
- Signposts include table and figure captions, continued on/from, page headers/footers, “for further information...”

## Static Media: Image Quality

- Static media are not backlit. The images on a static page do not require any computer throughput.
- They use image color, paper color, paper texture to create effects that cannot be duplicated on a flat screen
- Stunning images stay with the reader long after the book is closed

## Static Media: Interactivity

- Static media are theatre
- Interactivity comes from the physical relationship between the reader and the book or magazine; from the act of physical navigation -- and from the physical act of sharing the material

## Fluid Media: Dimensionality

- n-dimensional design
- No design/page fidelity between any two “readers” -- some 2-dimensional design layout is possible, but this needs to be used with caution
- Layout depends on the user’s hand, to scroll up and down, and to find the connection between objects on this page and other pages

## Fluid Media: Navigation

- Navigation completely at the user's whim
- The reader has complete freedom to make their own connections between topics - up through and including connections the original authors may never have dreamed
- Signposts include appearance of links, any explanations of where users can go/where links can lead, and discernable information design

## Fluid Media: Image Quality

- Image quality on the web is largely mediated by how updated the reader's browser is, and how quickly the images download over the network
- Screen resolution can make or break the image viewing experience

## Fluid Media: Interactivity

- If static media are theatre, fluid media are flea markets -- take what you need, and leave the rest
- Interactivity comes from the user's directed perusal of the information you design, and the connections they make between your information and others' information and services

## To Sum Up

In all cases, electronic delivery changes even the nature of documentation that was originally intended for a static medium.

- PC-based electronic doc
- Web-based electronic doc
- PDF

How can knowledge engineers continue to deliver their message, while leveraging all the advantages of the new fluid media?

## Simultaneous Publication

Let's see how one group is handling this whole static vs. fluid media issue...

*<http://www.hotwired.com/webmonkey/99/07/index1a.html>*