Modern content management technology

The end of information architecture?

Marc Stephenson, October 2018

About Metataxis

- Information architecture and management consultancy
- 16 years old
- Worked on 200+ client projects
- Consult and implement
- Private, public and third sector
- Worked with micro (20 staff) to large organisations (100,000 staff)
- Projects from 2 days to 2 years
- We've seen lots of content management technology, and…
- …we've done lots of information architecture

Some of our 200+ clients

*Modern content management technology is **now** so good, we don't need to bother with information architecture anymore*

What do we mean by IA?

A short Metataxis definition:

> *"The principles, processes, models and semantics involved in designing a cohesive set of information collections and their classifications and relationships, in order to support effective management, discovery and use of information."*

An even shorter Metataxis definition:

> *"A way of **organising** and **describing** your information to deliver **benefit**."*

What are these "benefits"?

1. **Increased Efficiency**
   - Finding information
   - Avoiding duplication and "reinventing the wheel"

2. **Increased Effectiveness**
   - Ensure information is complete, connected, accurate, and up to date
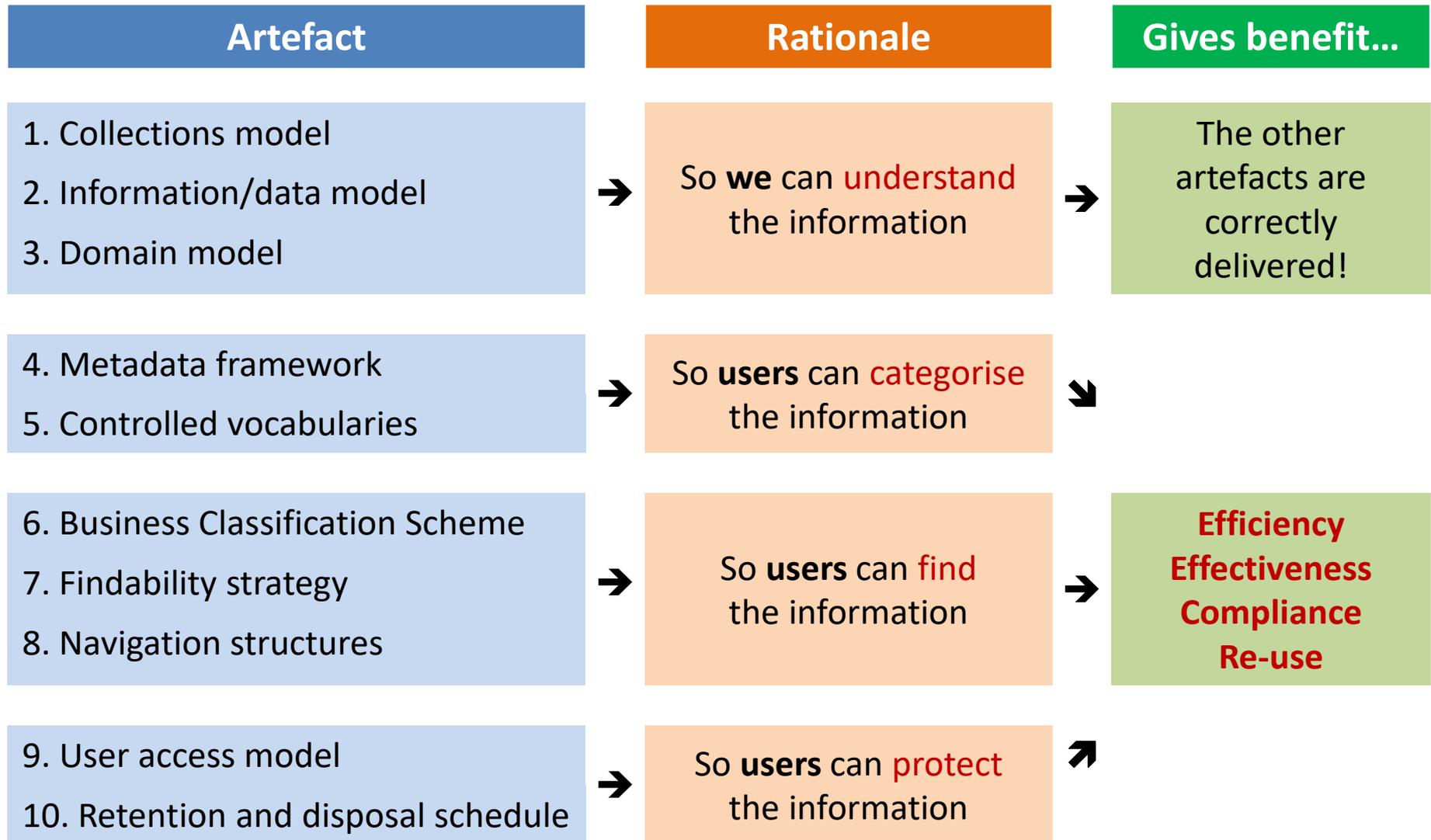
3. **Increased Compliance**
   - PECR (Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations), DPA (Data Protection Act), GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), and…
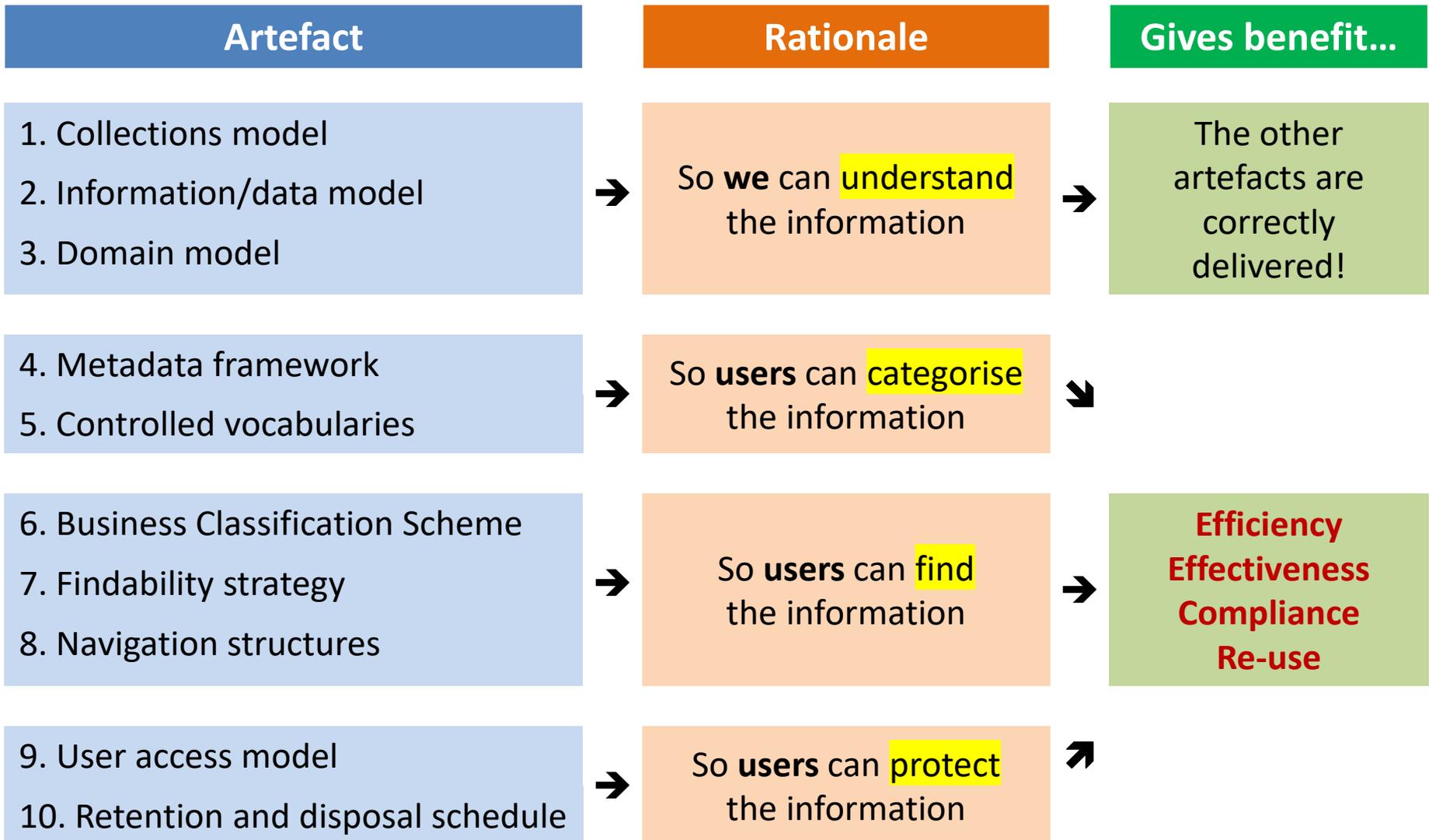
4. **Increased Re-use**
   - Synthesis of new information from old information
   - Information sharing – growing a knowledge culture

What *typically* constitutes an IA?

Artefact	Rationale	Gives benefit...
1. Collections model 2. Information/data model 3. Domain model	➜ So **we** can understand the information ➜	The other artefacts are correctly delivered!
4. Metadata framework 5. Controlled vocabularies	➜ So **users** can categorise the information ⬊	
6. Business Classification Scheme 7. Findability strategy 8. Navigation structures	➜ So **users** can find the information ➜	**Efficiency Effectiveness Compliance Re-use**
9. User access model 10. Retention and disposal schedule	➜ So **users** can protect the information ⬈	

What *typically* constitutes an IA?

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1. Collections model 2. Information/data model 3. Domain model	→ So **we** can <mark>understand</mark> the information	→ The other artefacts are correctly delivered!
4. Metadata framework 5. Controlled vocabularies	→ So **users** can <mark>categorise</mark> the information	↘
6. Business Classification Scheme 7. Findability strategy 8. Navigation structures	→ So **users** can <mark>find</mark> the information	→ **Efficiency Effectiveness Compliance Re-use**
9. User access model 10. Retention and disposal schedule	→ So **users** can <mark>protect</mark> the information	↗

But *nowadays* we don't need these…

Understand

- Just not needed anymore – *that's saved me effort and money!*
- ➔ No need for 1. Collections model, 2. Information/data model, 3. Domain model

Categorize

- AI is now *good enough* for auto-categorisation - *don't make me think!*
- ➔ No need for 4. Metadata frameworks or 5. Controlled vocabularies

Find

- Users don't care about browse, filter or navigation - *just give me search!*
- ➔ No need for 6. BCS, 7. Findability strategy, 8. Navigation structures

Protect

- AI is now *good enough* for auto-classification - *don't make me decide!*
- ➔ No need for a 9. User access model or 10. Retention and disposal schedule

And anyway...

- Modern content management tools are starting to eschew IA
  - Less emphasis on IA within tools
  - "Folksonomies are all we need – not taxonomies"
  - "I just want a Google-like interface"
  - "As long as my UI has a shiny interface, that's fine"
- There is too much content
  - It's growing all the time
  - There are too many live systems
  - There are too many (unmigrated) legacy systems
  - Storage is cheap – lets just keep everything forever
- It's too hard and expensive to create an IA
  - Cost benefit analysis is hard to define – "how do I persuade the CFO?!"
  - "My IT vendor says I can just install their system and it's all sorted"

But hold on!

*Is modern content management technology **really** now so good, we don't need to bother with information architecture anymore?*

What about…

Understand

- Understanding your organisation is important!
- Intangible, does not mean not real, or not valuable
- System commissioning/design, processes engineering, procedures, change management, culture, governance – all require understanding your information

Categorize

- AI is *sometimes* good enough for auto-categorisation – needs pre-built vocabularies
- Even when it is, AI needs to be designed, steered, managed, corrected…

Find

- *Some* users don't care about browse, filter or navigation
- Search is only half the solution (despite decades of brainwashing)
- Search needs a metadata framework

Protect

- AI is *sometimes* good enough for auto-classification – needs training
- Users should take responsibility for their information - it's their job!

In reality...

- AI is improving – IA needs to embrace this
- IA is becoming more focussed as technology improves
- IA is becoming more systematized – less legwork, more thinking and designing
- And the information world continues to change…
  - IA for voice interfaces?
  - IA for virtual and augmented reality?
  - IA for wearable devices?
  - IA for IoT?
  - IA for Blockchain?
  - And all the many other "latest" things to follow…

*Is modern content management technology **now** so good, we don't need to bother with information architecture anymore?*

Not quite yet...

Questions?

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