

## An Information Design Culture

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## Overview

What is culture?  
Types of information  
Demands of an information culture  
What do we do about it?

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## What is culture?

### What is culture?

- :: A lifestyle
- :: A way of thinking
- :: An individual in terms of a larger group

**Ethnicity?**  
**Spirituality?**  
**Geographical or Global?**

"to be cultured"  
"cheese cultures" (r/ilight).

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## What is culture?

"The totality of **socially transmitted behavior patterns**, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought".

*or*

"The **predominating attitudes and behavior** that characterize the functioning of a group or organization".

*or*

"A **high degree of taste and refinement** formed by aesthetic and intellectual training".

*(dictionary.com)*

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## What is culture?

**socially transmitted behavior patterns**  
**predominating attitudes and behavior**  
**high degree of taste and refinement**



Why is culture important?



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## What is culture?

Then what is an *information culture*?

An *information culture* demands an understanding and synthesis of information, continuously, in order to actively participate and function in society.

What kind of information?

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## Types of information

An information culture demands comprehension and synthesis of four types of information:

1. directional & instructional
2. decision making
3. implicit rules & social structure
4. emotional and social pseudo-structure

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## Types of information : Directional & Instructional

Guides the user towards a goal  
Marks progression  
Shows effects of decision making

- :: Street signs
- :: Instruction Guides
- :: Manuals
- :: Maps



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## Types of information : Decision Making

Aids in selection from a diverse set of choices  
Helps in visual and conceptual comparison

- :: Menus
- :: Purchasing of items in a store
- :: Graphs and charts



## Types of information : Implicit Rules & Social Structure

Helps in creating coherence and order in day to day life  
Aids in setting boundaries for appropriate social actions

- :: Men & Women have separate public bathrooms
- :: At a restaurant, you don't cook your own food

How do you know what these "rules" are?  
What happens when you break these rules?

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## Types of information : Emotional and Social Pseudo-structure

Helps in creating extended social hierarchy surrounding style and self-image: social class, value and society

- :: Wearing shorts and a tank top at The Mansion on Forsyth Park is not acceptable behavior
- :: Picking your nose in public is frowned upon

How do you know what these "pseudo-rules" are?  
What happens when you break these rules?

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### Demands of an Information Culture

An information culture **demands comprehension** and synthesis of four types of information:

1. directional & instructional
2. decision making
3. implicit rules & social structure
4. emotional and social pseudo-structure

**But what happens when this demand is not met?**

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### Demands of an Information Culture



What are you supposed to do with this information?  
Why is it poorly presented?

**What would be a better way of presenting this?**

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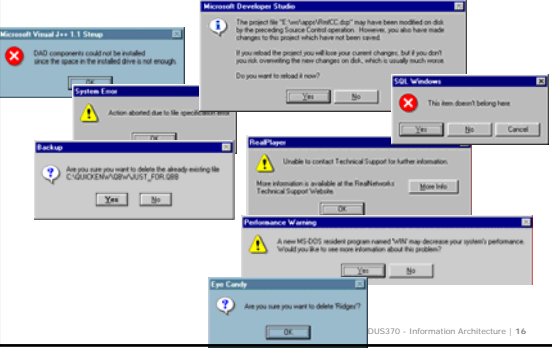
### Demands of an Information Culture



What is the user supposed to do?  
**How does something like this happen?**

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### Demands of an Information Culture



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### Demands of an Information Culture



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### Demands of an Information Culture

The examples shown are **not usability errors**. They are **information errors**.

**What are the results of the poor information design shown on the previous slides?**

We end up stuck in an information culture that demands our understanding of poor design and punishes us when we don't comprehend.

**What are the greater (think worldly) repercussions of ill information comprehension?**

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## What do we do about it?

We have three choices.

1. **Do nothing.** Accept sub-par information design; continue life as is.
2. **Change the designs.** Work within an accepted information hierarchy and become aware of the higher impact our work has.
3. **Reject poor information design.** Don't accept a world full of products that demand you compromise common sense and intelligence.

**As designers, how can you do #2 and #3?**

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## Summary

- What is culture?
- Types of information
- Demands of an information culture
- What do we do about it?

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