

Toward a Pragmatic Understanding of the Implications of Web 2.0 for Information Architects

Amy Vickers
amy.vickers@avenuea-razorfish.com

I want to offer a new nuanced definition of Web 2.0 aimed at contextualizing its evolution during the past decade and squarely focused on its 2 biggest drivers - an ever-increasing community of Internet users and the atomization of content and functionality. Furthermore I want to separate signal from noise for user experience professionals by focusing discussion on the most critical and likely longest lasting shifts.

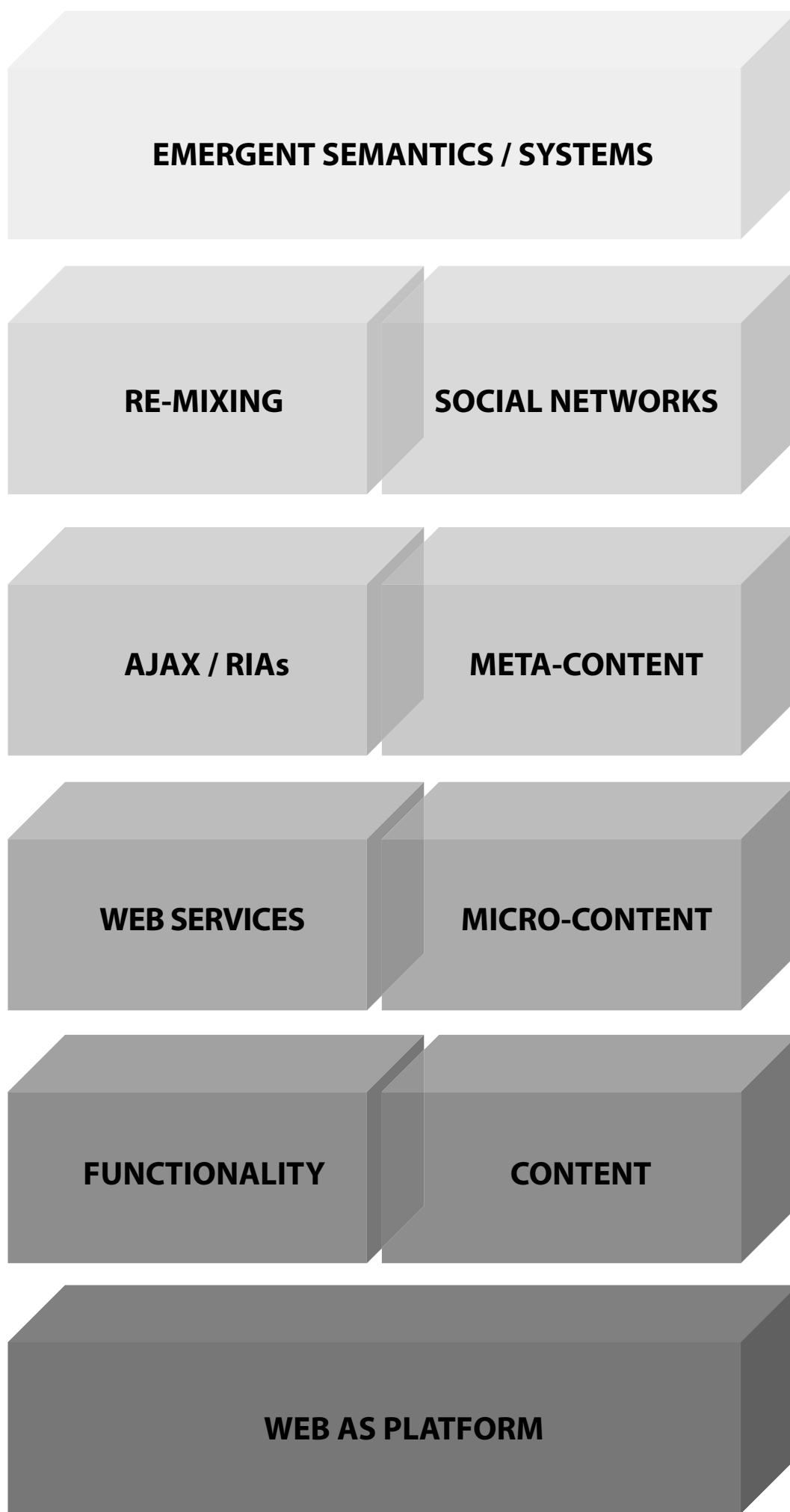
PROCLAMATIONS:

1. Web 2.0 is a continuously evolving set of user expectations and behaviors about content and interactive interfaces, enabled by radically object oriented architectures.
2. The implications of Web 2.0 for Information Architects are not new but rather shifts in focus. The most significant shifts are as follows:
 - (a) The move from 1-dimensional information layouts to multi-dimensional content clusters.
 - (b) The transition from one-dimensional task flows to multi-dimensional interaction patterns.

Abstract
Multi-Dimensional



Concrete
1-Dimensional



Definition:
+ Development of libraries of functionality
+ Development of abstract networks of meaning
+ Maturation of libraries of assets, content, data
+ Complete breakdown of business models

Implications for Information Architects:
+ User experience is business strategy
+ Greater collaboration with business units
+ Optimization for findability and comprehensibility
+ Radical quantifiability of user behavior

Definition:
+ Maturation of APIs / Plug-Ins
+ Innovation in assembling separate entities
+ Maturation of architectures of participation
+ Critical threshold of user generated content

Implications for Information Architects:
+ Emergent architectures vis-à-vis re-mixing
+ Consistency and usability of user experience
+ Integrity and quality of content
+ Greater abstraction from physical world

Definition:
+ Labeling DHTML experiments as AJAX
+ Macromedia bolsters Flash with Flex
+ Layered tagging of micro-content
+ Maturation of fragmentation

Implications for Information Architects:
+ Erosion of distinction between software and web HCI
+ Usability of interaction design and micro-tasks
+ Multi-faceted data and information architectures
+ Information architecture as business strategy

Definition:
+ Further development of XML / REST / SOAP
+ Move from web browser to other devices / UIs
+ Shift from publish to participate paradigm
+ Radical separation of information from context

Implications for Information Architects:
+ Reach behind presentation layer to structure
+ Greater personalization and customization
+ More meta-data and abstract taxonomies
+ Greater complexities for branding content

Definition:
+ Maturation of OOP on Internet
+ Development of programming frameworks
+ Development of XML and other mark-ups
+ Radical separation of structure and style

Implications for Information Architects:
+ Greater dialogue with technologists
+ Objectification / patternization of design
+ Information separated from rigid layout

Definition:
+ Shift from client-server to web-based software
+ Shift from major release to iterative releases
+ Constant user feedback and beta testing
+ Lightweight business and distribution models

Implications for Information Architects:
+ More complex interactive interfaces
+ Agile and iterative architectural development
+ More user and usage data; quantifiability