Reorganizing IA | Sara Smith

September 30, 2018

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Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Potential Value	Graded Value
Your description of the website's information architecture schemes and structures are thorough.	6	5.5
Your design critiques, recommendations and justifications demonstrate understanding of IA principles described in the textbook and associated reading. These principles include navigation schemes, labeling schemes, search schemes, and content structure.	6	5.5
Illustrations, screenshots and callouts are used effectively. Images serve to advance your point of view and are not gratuitous or overused.	6	6
Craft: The proposal is free of spelling and grammar errors, and makes for a professional appearance and presentation.	2	2
Total Points	**20**	**19**

***SOURCE**: Page numbers referenced in this document are cited from Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond by Louis Rosenfeld, Peter Morville and Jorge Arango (2015)*

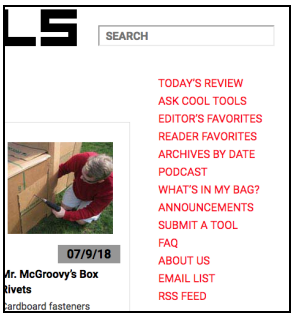
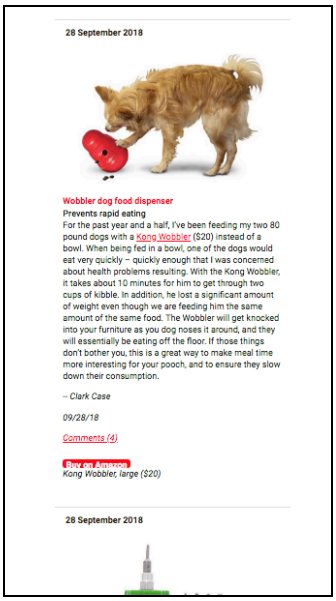
Organization Schemes of Cool Tools

According to our textbook, an **organization scheme** defines the **shared characteristics** of content items and influences the logical grouping of those items.

The site Cool Tools by Kevin Kelly contains **both exact and ambiguous organizational schemes**, such as alphabetical, chronological, task-oriented , metaphor dirven and is hybrid of schemes. In addition to this, the structure includes both top-down and bottom-up hierarchies.

> "On the Web, task-oriented organization schemes are most common in the context of websites where customer interaction takes center stage. … You will rarely find a website organized solely by task. Instead, task-oriented schemes are usually embedded within specific subsites or integrated into **hybrid task/topic systems** …" (111)

Examples of the organization schemes on the Cool Tools site are pictured below:

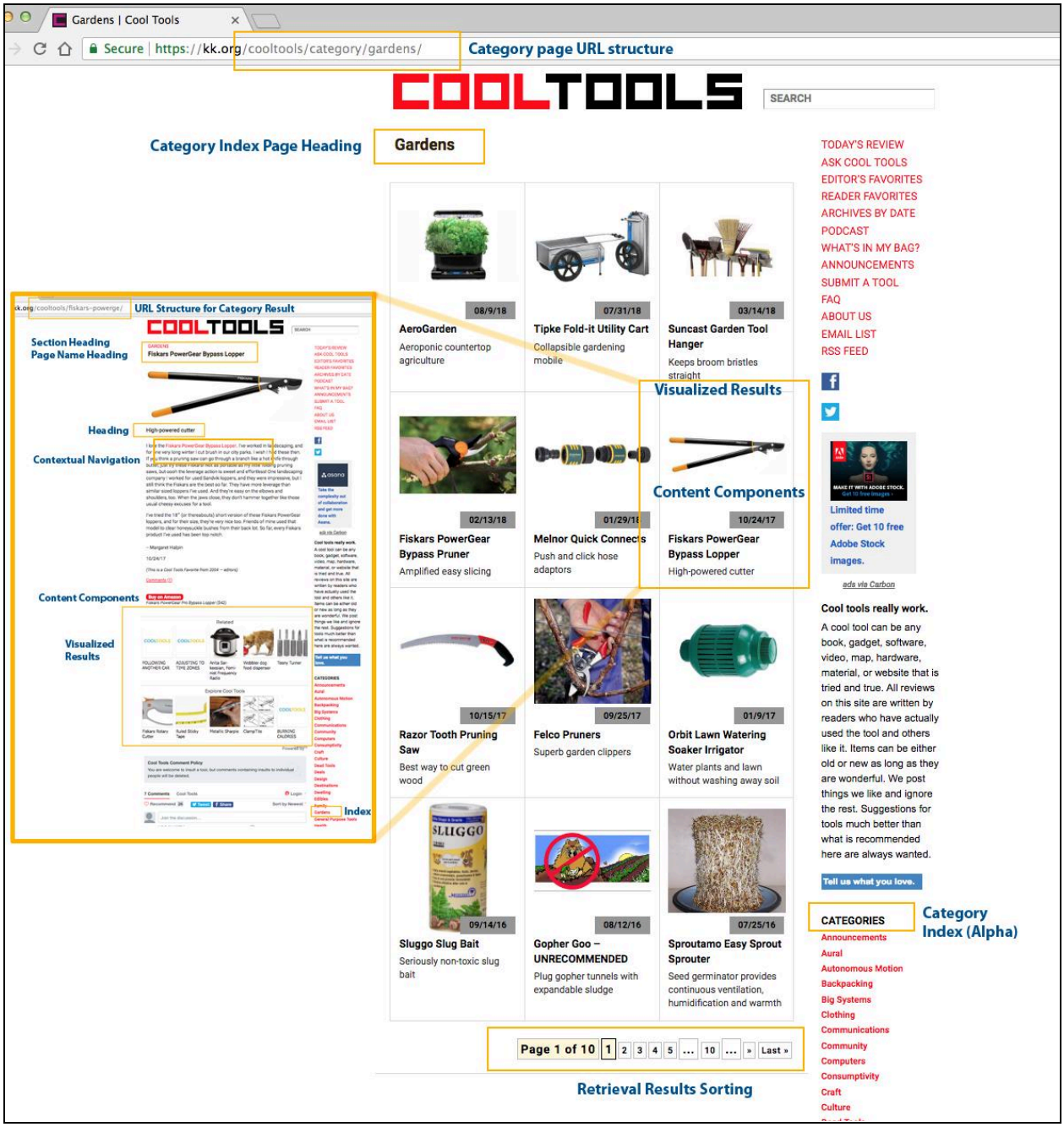
Topical/Task Oriented Navigation	Alphabetical Index	Metaphor Driven Index	Chronological Organization
			

Additional Images

Note: The following images note the information architecture elements on the Cool Tools site.

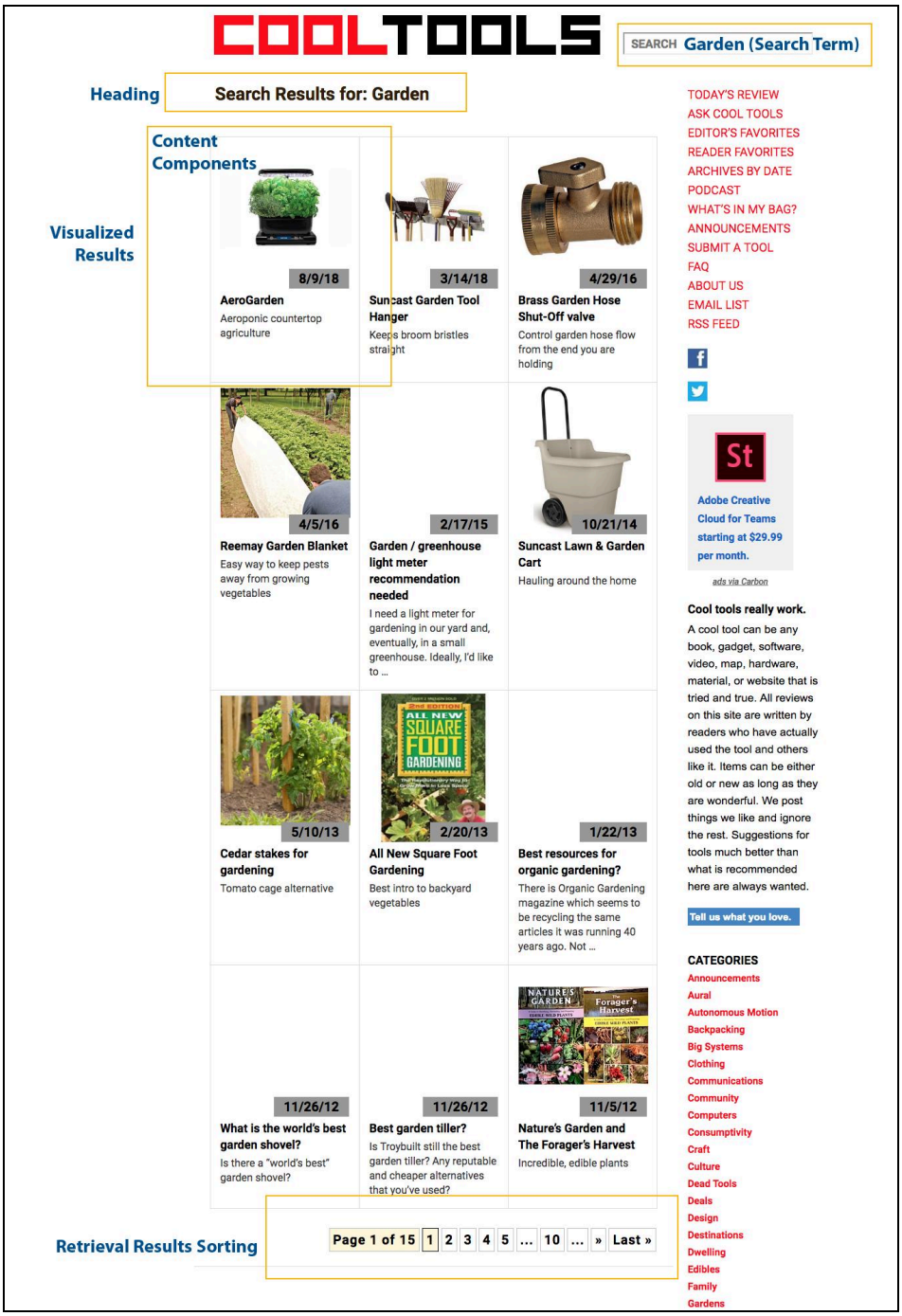
Category Index: Gardens

About this screenshot: The results for selecting the indexed term "Gardens" resulted in a page with heading displaying what the page is related to, visualized results with content components and retrieval results sorting at the bottom. Clicking on one of the results, the user is met with a detailed page relating to that item which includes: headings, contextual navigation, content components, and additional recommended visualized results, based on the item's database metadata relation to it. Note: This result varies from the result of searching the term: Gardens in the search bar.



Search Term: Gardens

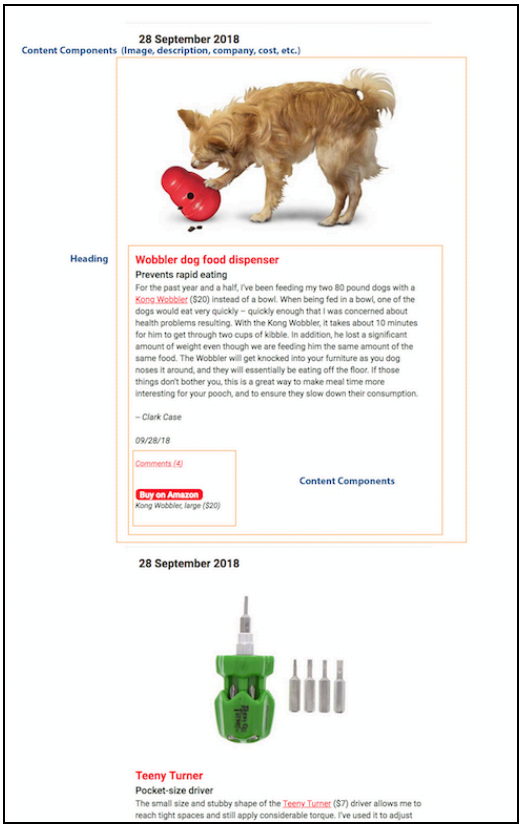
About this screenshot: The search results for search term "Garden" resulted in a page with heading displaying what the results related to, visualized results with content components and retrieval results sorting at the bottom. Note: This result varies from the result of clicking the indexed category "Garden" in the sidebar.

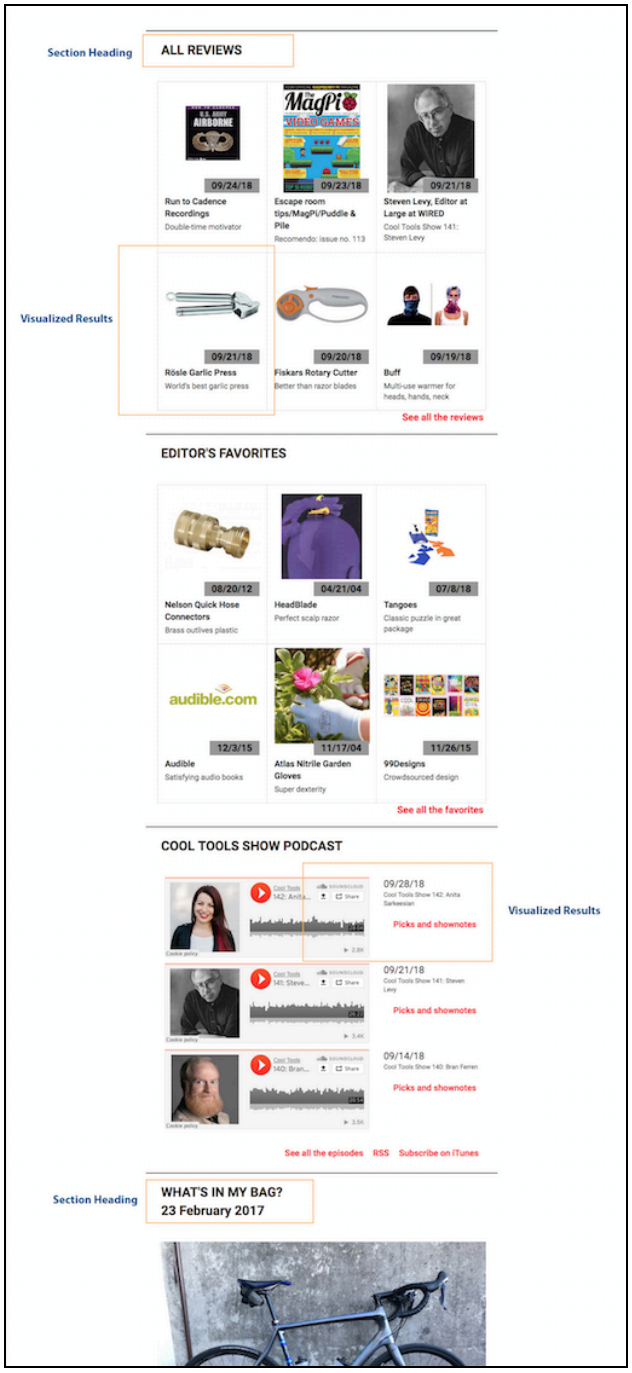


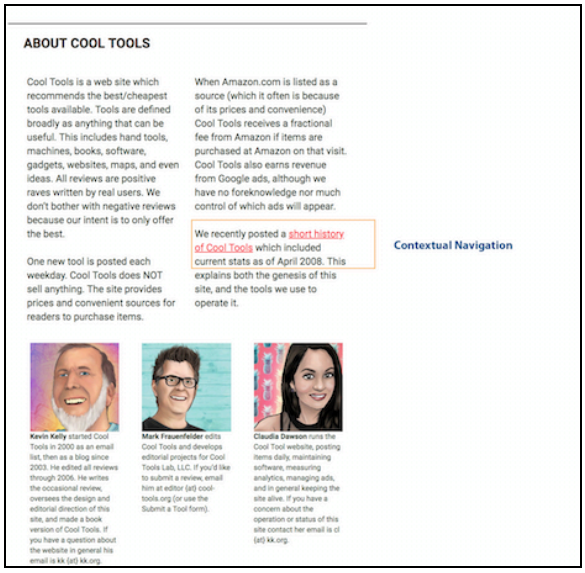
Homepage IA Element Overview

About these screenshots: The following images convey the long scroll on the homepage, that lacks anchored links. It additionally shows the different IA elements relating to the structure and current organization of the site. (Note: These images together do not represent the entire homepage.)






Section Heading
ALL REVIEWS
09/24/18
Run to Cadence Recordings
Double-time motivator
09/23/18
Escape room tips/MagPi/Puddle & Pile
Recomendo: issue no. 113
09/21/18
Steven Levy, Editor at Large at WIRED
Cool Tools Show 141: Steven Levy
Visualized Results
09/21/18
Rösle Garlic Press
World's best garlic press
09/20/18
Fiskars Rotary Cutter
Better than razor blades
09/19/18
Buff
Multi-use warmer for heads, hands, neck
See all the reviews
EDITOR'S FAVORITES
08/20/12
Nelson Quick Hose Connectors
Brass outlives plastic
04/21/04
HeadBlade
Perfect scalp razor
07/8/18
Tangoes
Classic puzzle in great package
12/3/15
Audible
Satisfying audio books
11/17/04
Atlas Nitrile Garden Gloves
Super dexterity
11/26/15
99Designs
Crowdsourced design
See all the favorites
COOL TOOLS SHOW PODCAST
09/28/18
Picks and shownotes
Visualized Results
09/21/18
Picks and shownotes
09/14/18
Picks and shownotes
See all the episodes
RSS
Subscribe on iTunes
Section Heading
WHAT'S IN MY BAG?
23 February 2017


ABOUT COOL TOOLS
Cool Tools is a web site which recommends the best/cheapest tools available. Tools are defined broadly as anything that can be useful. This includes hand tools, machines, books, software, gadgets, websites, maps, and even ideas. All reviews are positive raves written by real users. We don't bother with negative reviews because our intent is to only offer the best.
One new tool is posted each weekday. Cool Tools does NOT sell anything. The site provides prices and convenient sources for readers to purchase items.
When Amazon.com is listed as a source (which it often is because of its prices and convenience) Cool Tools receives a fractional fee from Amazon if items are purchased at Amazon on that visit. Cool Tools also earns revenue from Google ads, although we have no foreknowledge nor much control of which ads will appear.
We recently posted a short history of Cool Tools which included current stats as of April 2008. This explains both the genesis of this site, and the tools we use to operate it.
Contextual Navigation
Kevin Kelly started Cool Tools in 2000 as an email list, then as a blog since 2003. He edited all reviews through 2006. He writes the occasional review, oversees the design and editorial direction of this site, and made a book version of Cool Tools. If you have a question about the website in general his email is kk (at) kk.org.
Mark Frauenfelder edits Cool Tools and develops editorial projects for Cool Tools Lab, LLC. If you'd like to submit a review, email him at editor (at) cool-tools.org (or use the Submit a Tool form).
Claudia Dawson runs the Cool Tool website, posting items daily, maintaining software, measuring analytics, managing ads, and in general keeping the site alive. If you have a concern about the operation or status of this site contact her email is cl (at) kk.org.

Organization Structure of Cool Tools

The information architecture elements for the **Cool Tools site** can be found labeled in the images above. Below is a description of each of these key elements identified in the screenshots, and how they play a part in the organizational system built by **Cool Tools**.

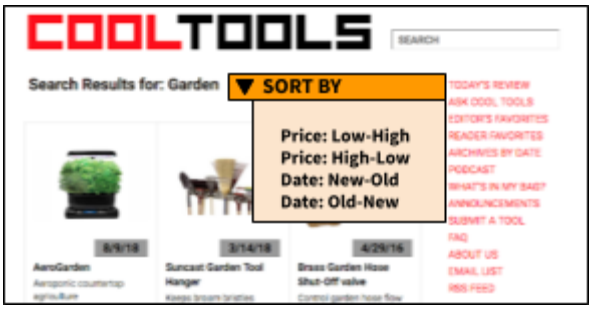
- **Navigation Schemes**
    - The **primary navigation** of Cool Tools maintains consistent on all pages in the desktop view, except the "Ask Cool Tools" page of the site - the navigation veers off the consistent path it had once been on and instead implements, what can be assumed as a "local" navigation.
    - Additionally if viewing via **mobile** the navigation is pushed to the bottom of the site.
    - The site uses primary navigation via **global navigation** and **contextual navigation** to navigate the site.
    - The site uses **secondary/supplemental navigation** in the way of **indexes** and **search**.
- **Labeling Schemes**
    - The site makes use of **contextual links**, **headings** and **index** terms.
    - The **labeling system** is consistent but the presentation at times is not easy to distinguish the hierarchy, which is part of the role of labeling.
    - The **contextual links** provide a bottom-up hierarchical navigation for the site.
    - It is not clear to the user where he or she is within the site itself.
- **Search Schemes**
    - **Search** is consistently placed on the site. However, it does not include an autosuggestion.
    - The **search retrieval results** sorting display the number of results from the database, providing a bottom-up style navigation within the content of the site.
    - There are no filters present to further define the search results.
        - "**Sorting** is especially helpful to users who are looking to make a decision or take action." "Users will generally assume that the **top few results** are the best." (240)
    - **Visualization** is present in the search results, providing the user with content components such as:
        - Representational (image)
        - Descriptive (name of item, company, and additional elements relating to the product)
- **Content Structure**
    - The current content structure of Cool Tools is similar to the display of an everyday blog.
        - However it does not contain a proper database structure to provide the user with the necessary tools to navigate the database structure of blog posts.
            - 'A collection of **data** arranged for ease and speed of search and retrieval.'" (122)"By tagging documents and other information objects with **metadata**, we enable powerful searching, browsing, filtering and dynamic linking." (124)
    - The site uses visualization to navigate content on the site.
        - "**Visualization** has proven most useful when the user must select among a result set of elements that she knows by their looks, as in the case of shopping for physical goods." (205)
    - The structure includes product names and descriptions and dates as the primary focus of displayed content in search. Additional content items are included, but further within the site.
    - The site sections off content through headings, horizontal rules and subheadings on the main page.

Re-Organizing Cool Tools

Four ways Cool Tools could improve the organization to help people make use of the information on the Cool Tools site would be as follows, in no particular order. Prioritization to be explained in next section.

Incorporate filtering and sorting into an improved database's result views.

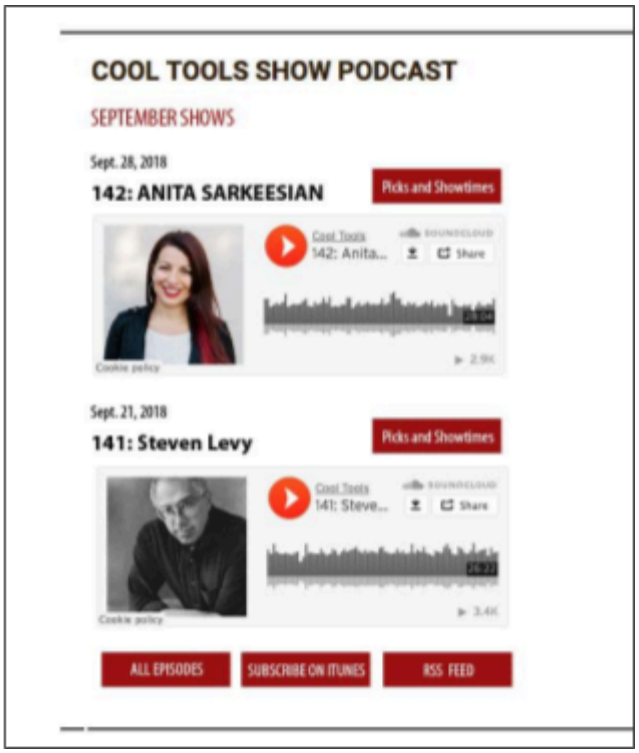
Include a filtering and sorting option for all result views on Cool Tools, such as: search results, index displays or individual pages with views.



Labeling system presentation improvement for navigation hierarchy.

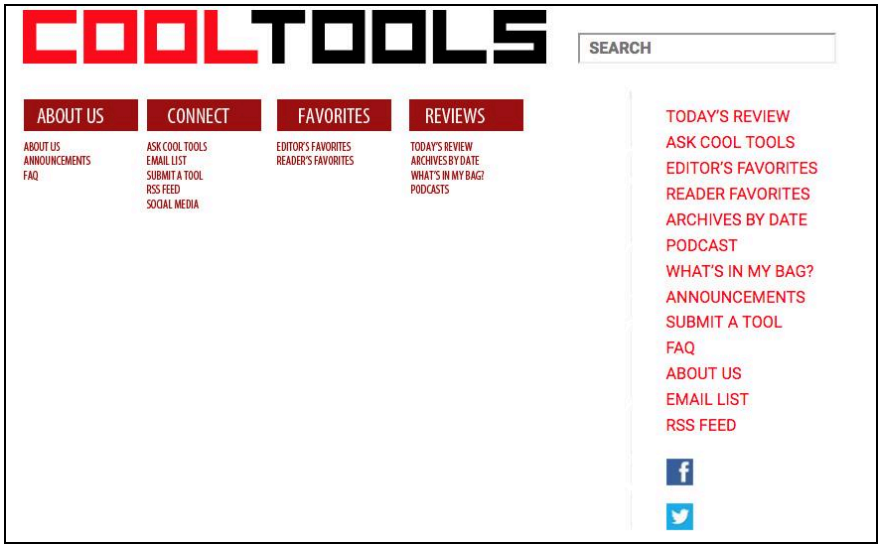
Distinguish the hierarchy of the site through the presentation of labels for digestible content.





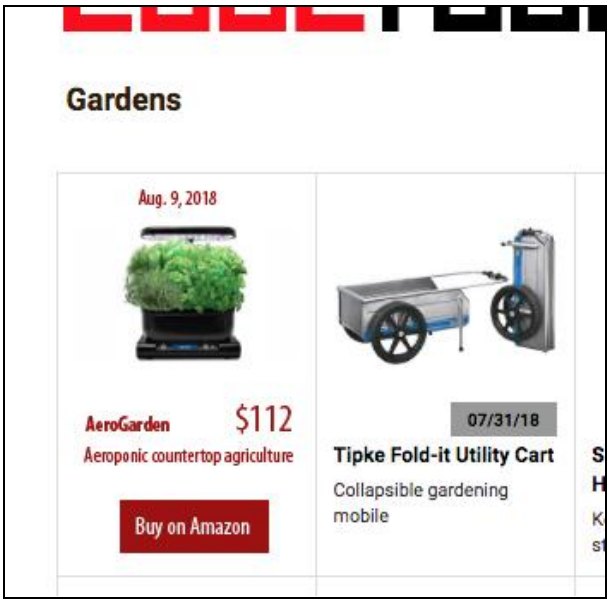
Simplified navigation system through grouping more like items.

Combine like items in the current global navigation to create a simplified navigational system that expands to local navigation based on where you are on the site. Navigation additionally would signify where you are in the site through local navigation.



Content components reorganization - geared toward the user.

The main display of content components for the cool tools on the site include: Name of product, description, date and image. The adjustment of this view to include price and vendor should be added.



SOURCE: Page numbers referenced in this document are cited from Information Architecture: For the Web and Beyond by Louis Rosenfeld, Peter Morville and Jorge Arango (2015)

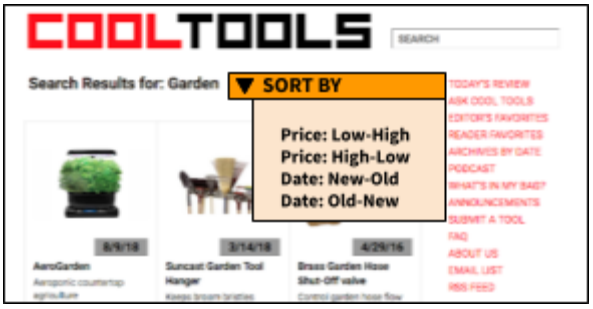
Justifications of Recommendations

Please find the following justifications to accompany the recommendations made above, which will help the site user. It appears there was a website improvement for “Cool Tools” in May of 2017, according to the site’s Announcements section. The following would build upon those improvements to better the site for all users.

PRIORITY 1

Incorporate filtering and sorting into an improved database’s result views.

Include a filtering and sorting option for all database result views on Cool Tools, such as: search results, index displays or individual pages with views.



RECOMMENDATION JUSTIFICATION

The first recommendation for improving the Cool Tools site is to incorporate filtering and sorting into an improved database. The reasoning behind this is, the main focus of the site is to showcase “Cool Tools” - in order to do so, one must be able to locate them with ease.

The current setup of the Cool Tools site simply provides the user with pages and pages of results, based on search or indexed category, and navigatable only by next page and page number options in the retrieval results sorting field.

By incorporating a filtering and/or sorting system with a database of proper metadata through tags, it will allow the user to successfully navigate through the plentiful field of results.

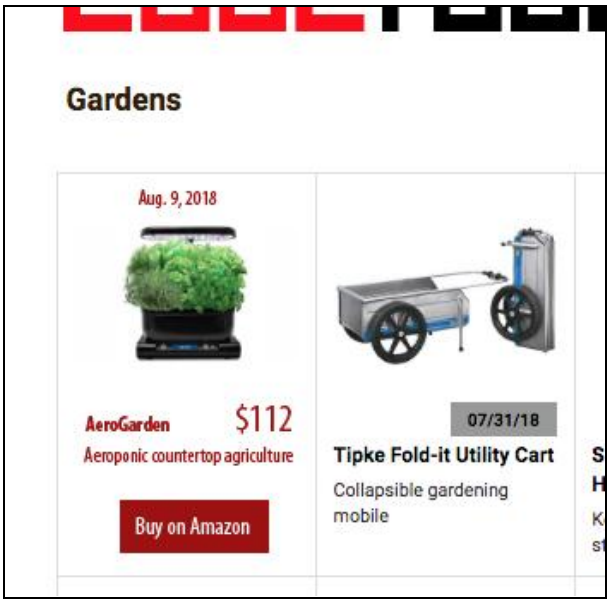
Improving the database will also allow the user to receive more accurate results. A check was done on the category index term “garden” - the word “gardens” was searched. When searched, different results appeared than those of the singular category tag: “garden.” This was an indicator that perhaps the tagging system may need to be revisited at the same time as the filtering and sorting system, to make sure the best results are available to the user.

“By tagging documents and other information objects with metadata, we enable powerful searching, browsing, filtering and dynamic linking.” (124)

PRIORITY 2

Content components reorganization - geared toward the user.

The main display of content components for the cool tools on the site include: Name of product, description, date and image. The adjustment of this view to include price and vendor should be added.



RECOMMENDATION JUSTIFICATION

The second recommendation for improving the Cool Tools site is to make sure when the proper results are displayed they are then able to be digested with ease. When displaying multiple results, it is important to showcase the proper content components, which will assist the user in distinguishing what he or she is looking at.

For instance, in the example provided above, the current site's content components do not include value-added items such as price and the option to purchase from the search. Clicking on the title allows the user to jump into the full listing of the product and learn more, which includes the price and option to purchase; however, the option is not provided for a user who can make a decision on the results screen.

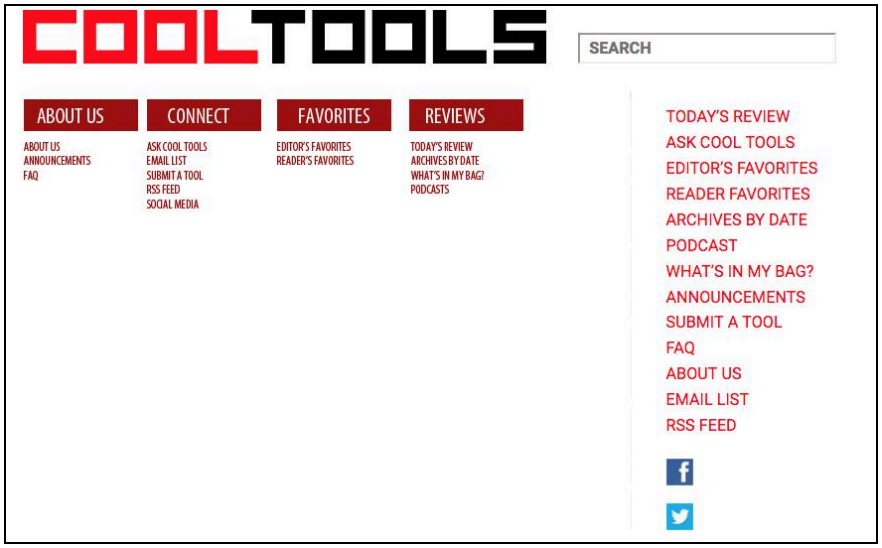
By facilitating the option to take action, while still maintaining the option to learn more, the site user can then choose which path they want to take and not be held to just one path.

"Show users who are clear on what they're looking for only representational content components … to help them quickly distinguish the results they're seeking. Users who aren't as certain of what they're looking for will benefit from descriptive content components such as summary, part of an abstract, or keywords to get a sense of what their search results are about." (234)

PRIORITY 3

Simplified navigation system through grouping more like items.

Combine like items in the current global navigation to create a simplified navigational system that expands to local navigation based on where you are on the site. Navigation additionally would signify where you are in the site through local navigation.



RECOMMENDATION JUSTIFICATION

The third recommendation for improving the Cool Tools site is to simplify the navigation system through grouping more or like items. When providing users with a lot of options, even though these options apply, plenty can be too plentiful and impede the user's navigation and delay their time on the site. As a result of the recommendation to consolidate there will be pages nested under the parent navigation, as pictured above. These will be referred to as children.

In addition to this, I am recommending that the navigation also visually signify where the user is within the site. Currently when visiting the site, you are not informed where you are on the site. This can be accomplished through breadcrumbs, in addition to showcasing the primary navigation in the header on the page the user is currently visiting, and so forth.

The navigation would be both task oriented and topical, as it is today. The proposed new navigation is in alphabetical order, however, based on user testing and analytics, this is subject to change. Additionally, it did not involve any card sorting or user feedback and could perhaps be limited further.

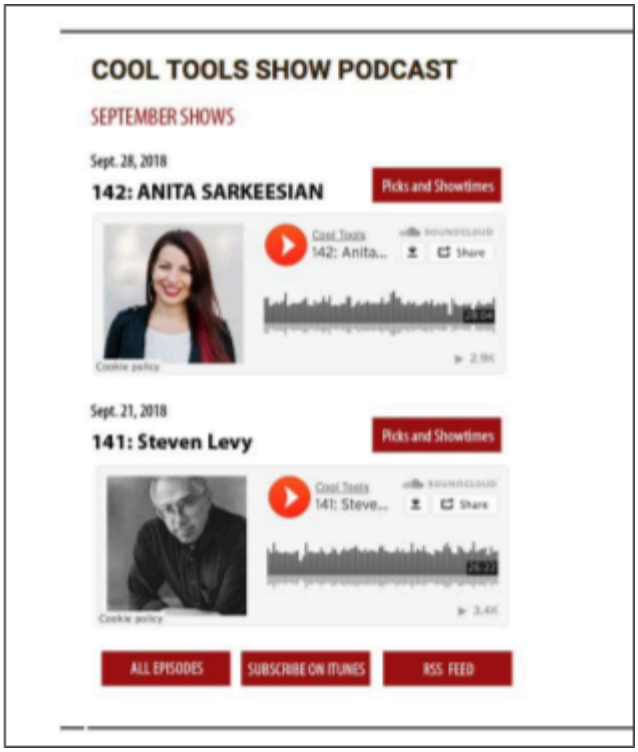
"On the Web, task-oriented organization schemes are most common in the context of websites where customer interaction takes center stage. … You will rarely find a website organized solely by task. Instead, task-oriented schemes are usually embedded within specific subsites or integrated into hybrid task/topic systems …" (111)

PRIORITY 4

Labeling system presentation improvement for navigation hierarchy.

Distinguish the hierarchy of the site through the presentation of labels for digestible content.





RECOMMENDATION JUSTIFICATION

The fourth recommendation for improving the Cool Tools site is to improve the content structure of the site through its labeling system. Once users are able to successfully navigate the site through improved navigation, they will be delving into its content. When presented with the content structure, as the one pictured above, users will need to identify the content's hierarchy through headers, clear style differentiation and effective use of whitespace.

The previous iteration conveys important information; however, there is room for improvement. The reorganization of the content creates a distinguishable structure of the content: the podcast presenter, the date and actionable items, such as the buttons. Previously, the date was more prominent than the presenter's name. By incorporating the header "September Shows" based on the date metadata, the importance of the timeframe is still present. However, now, with the reorganization of whitespace and the heightened importance of the presenter's name through its heading presentation, the user can clearly distinguish what he or she is looking at.

Therefore, when presenting the user with contextual navigation, they will be able to navigate it in a fluid manner, so that they can explore the content on their own terms.

"Contextual navigation supports associative learning. Users learn by exploring the relationships you define between items. … The actual definition of these links is often more editorial than architectural." (188)