Preface

The mind is slow to unlearn what it learnt early.
—Seneca

Since 1994, when we first began organizing web sites, we have enjoyed a rare opportunity to participate in the birth of a new discipline. In the early days, we were pioneers and evangelists, exhorting web designers to learn about library science, even as we struggled to apply traditional principles in a new medium. To improve our craft, we embraced relevant fields such as human–computer interaction, integrating user research and usability engineering into the process. And to spread the word, we spoke at conferences, wrote the *Web Architect* column, and in 1998, published the first "polar bear" book on information architecture.

In the intervening years, it's been exciting to see information architecture mature into an established profession and an international community of practice. We have all learned so much from our work and from one another. And therein lies one of our biggest challenges. As our body of knowledge grows deeper, our discipline becomes more resistant to change. Individually and collectively, we find it harder to unlearn.

And yet, unlearn we must, for technology relentlessly transforms the playing field, changing not just the answers but the questions as well. In a post-Ajaxian Web 2.0 world of wikis, folksonomies, and mashups, how do we structure for co-creation? How do we document the rich interfaces of web applications? How do we design for multiple platforms and mobile devices? What has changed, and what remains the same?

In writing the third edition, it was these questions that kept us awake at night. There are no easy answers. We have done our best to balance old and new. We have addressed emerging technologies while maintaining a focus on fundamentals. And, we have tried to emphasize goals and approaches over specific tactics or technologies. In this way, we hope to provide not only knowledge about information architecture, but a framework that will enable you to learn and unlearn over an extended period of time.