Information Architecture – the next Challenge for Architectural Design

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Information is increasingly developing into a raw material for the emerging Information Society. As the special qualities and properties of information offer new possibilities for design, it becomes necessary to conduct academic research into scientific and design issues of information. In the era of industrialization and mechanization, technical universities such as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) provided leadership through their research and education programs in engineering and design. The ETH is now developing an analogue strategy to provide leadership in information science and information engineering. Information Science can be grouped into three main areas: Information Technology, Information Space, and Information Content.

**Information Technology** is an area of most rapid development in industry and academia. The field has reached high commercial maturity and is a necessary base for research into information space and information content. To provide a technical base for the emerging information space, the ETH Zurich has implemented a complete wireless LAN for several thousand members of the ETH community.

**Information Space** is the necessary framework for the meaningful and sustainable organization of the exponentially growing amounts of information. Its planning has analogies to the planning of physical space. In this field, architectural design could make the most significant contributions. Other necessary foundations are databases, data mining and data warehousing, multimedia, and virtual reality. The result could be Information Architecture.

**Information Content** describes the substance of the information supplied and delivered through Information Technology in Information Space. Even more than it is the case for physical materials, the content of information as a material has a direct impact on the appearance, meaning, and impact of the resulting information structures, such as Information Architecture.

The integration and combination of the emerging areas of Information Technology, Information Space, and Information Content into a new scientific discipline of Information Science by building on the strengths of the existing disciplines is the key for the development of Information Architecture. As a preparation, the ETH Zurich has taken the necessary steps towards building an information infrastructure named infostructure, to provide an open, yet structured research, teaching, learning and service environment. The infostructure implementation started in 2000 under the name of ETH World with an international master plan competition. By now, the two campuses of ETH Zurich begin to form a single information space, in which

Information Architecture structures start to emerge. The construction site can be visited under http://www.ethworld.ch.