

## CONTEXT

Social software tools are changing how people express what they know and what is known about them. As the adoption rate of various socially networked services rises (Facebook's market penetration is currently over 80% of eligible college students) so will the call for information architecture to solve problems for the individual, rather than for the corporation or institution.

Social websites are not concerned with the least painful path from item to shopping cart, because what they are selling is connection, contact, identification, and self-expression. Different user motivations will require different architecture, one that needs to serve two primary needs:

- 1) *Generation and dissemination* – structuring information I created or know about (i.e., blog posts, flickr photo sets, del.icio.us bookmarks)
- 2) *Discovery* – structuring information I want to know about (i.e., feeds, searchrolls, tags)

Solutions originally created to manage professionally-created and maintained content may not make sense when it comes to personally created and maintained content – so we see an explosion of tagging. When it comes to avoiding information overload, structuring meaning “for me” is paramount, making that structure socially relevant is secondary. The possibilities for creating “usable exhaust” – social relevance as byproduct of individually valuable actions – present an enormous opportunity and challenge for information architecture.

