

A blurred image of playing cards, specifically the King of Spades and the Ace of Hearts, against a teal background. The King of Spades is on the left, and the Ace of Hearts is on the right. The text "understanding the user" is overlaid on the bottom left of the image.

understanding the user

experience

today, we're going to talk  
about pathways to content

we will be looking at  
different solutions for  
large websites

so, where  
do we  
start?



imagine your website was  
a deck of **playing cards**

how would you  
break up the site?




























more importantly..

what **pathways** would  
you provide to the content  
(the playing cards)



would you use **suites** as  
the main pathway?

			
<p><b>King</b> <b>Queen</b> <b>Jack</b> <b>10</b> <b>9</b> <b>8</b> <b>7</b> <b>6</b> <b>5</b> <b>4</b> <b>3</b> <b>2</b> <b>Ace</b></p>	<p><b>King</b> <b>Queen</b> <b>Jack</b> <b>10</b> <b>9</b> <b>8</b> <b>7</b> <b>6</b> <b>5</b> <b>4</b> <b>3</b> <b>2</b> <b>Ace</b></p>	<p><b>King</b> <b>Queen</b> <b>Jack</b> <b>10</b> <b>9</b> <b>8</b> <b>7</b> <b>6</b> <b>5</b> <b>4</b> <b>3</b> <b>2</b> <b>Ace</b></p>	<p><b>King</b> <b>Queen</b> <b>Jack</b> <b>10</b> <b>9</b> <b>8</b> <b>7</b> <b>6</b> <b>5</b> <b>4</b> <b>3</b> <b>2</b> <b>Ace</b></p>

would you use **numbers** as  
the main pathway?

K	Q	J	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	A
												
												
												
												

would you use colours as  
the main pathway?

Red		Black	
			
K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A	K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A	K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A	K Q J 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 A

or something else?

which of these options  
would be best for users?

the answer is...  
all of them!

every user comes to your  
site with a different  
mindset

let's look at how others  
have dealt with pathways

exhibition  
pathways



exhibition planners have  
been struggling with  
user pathways for  
a long time

some lessons learned

content writer:

“audiences will understand  
the paths we create”

ummm... maybe...

observation 1:

paths that are intuitive  
for one person may be  
unintuitive for others

content writer:

“audiences will go to panel  
A then B and finally C”

... maybe not...

observation 2:

given the choice, people  
will follow their own  
paths

exhibition planner:

“we’ve designed a floor  
plan

that forces users along  
a set path”

really?

## observation 3:

when there is no choices  
available, people will  
often be resentful

do these observations  
sound familiar?

so, how do you make paths  
that work for *everyone*?

who knows !

let's look at **four types** of  
pathway

silos



silos are sections of  
content

with **one entry point** -  
users cannot jump from a  
page

within one silo to a page  
within another

how would a user get from  
the 10 of hearts to  
the 10 of clubs?

			
King	King	King	King
Queen	Queen	Queen	Queen
Jack	Jack	Jack	Jack
10	10	10	10
9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2
Ace	Ace	Ace	Ace



silos can provide strong  
linear narratives but can  
also be very limiting

facets



rather than pages being  
seen as unique, they are  
seen as objects with  
a number of properties





facets provide  
multiple paths  
to a single object

for example, users  
could navigate via  
suites **or** colours

### view by suite

			
King	King	King	King
Queen	Queen	Queen	Queen
Jack	Jack	Jack	Jack
10	10	10	10
9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2
Ace	Ace	Ace	Ace

### view by colour

Red		Black	
			
K	K	K	K
Q	Q	Q	Q
J	J	J	J
10	10	10	10
9	9	9	9
8	8	8	8
7	7	7	7
6	6	6	6
5	5	5	5
4	4	4	4
3	3	3	3
2	2	2	2
A	A	A	A

tags



pathways can be determined  
by user generated tags.

this allows users to  
create  
or follow **unique paths**  
through content.

for example, a user could  
tag various cards with  
the word “beard”

every tag adds  
richness and diversity

every tag adds another  
method of **linking together**  
content

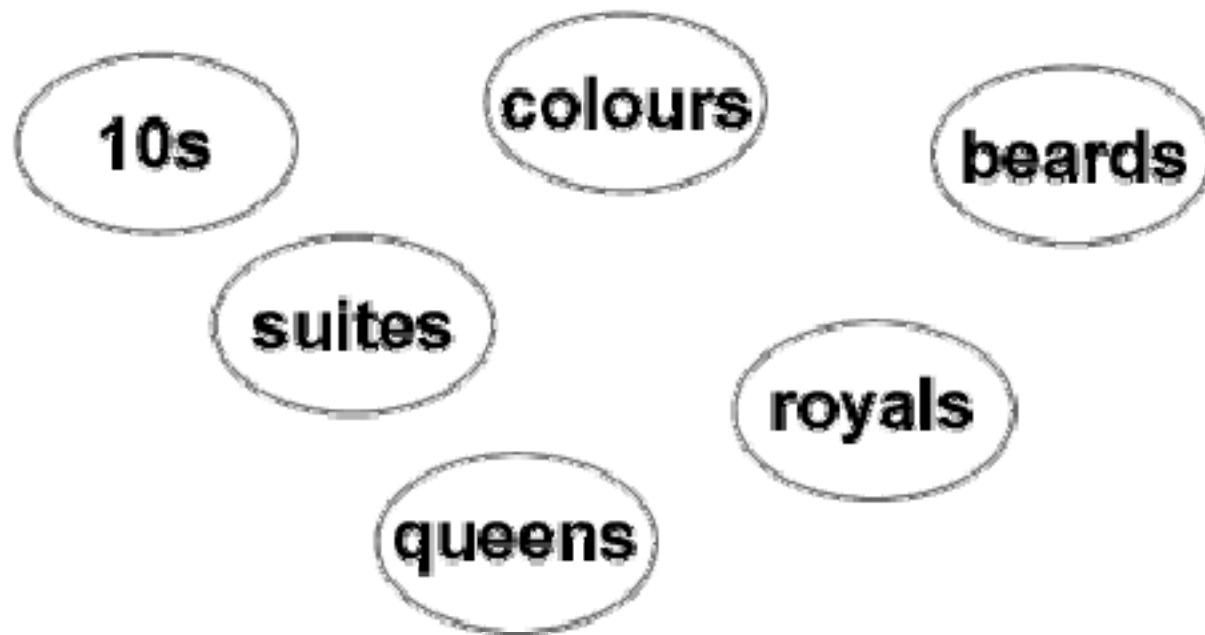
every tag is sacred

tags can't tell stories

abstract  
folders



authors can gather pages  
from anywhere in the site  
and place them “inside”  
abstract folders – based  
on  
any concept



abstract folders are like  
facets on steroids

for example, content on  
sharks could be placed  
into  
“fish” and “dangerous  
animals” folders

abstract folders are very  
**powerful** but not ideal  
for all sites

only possible with  
sophisticated content  
management systems

extending  
abstract  
folders



could you also create  
abstract folders for  
images?

movies?

audio files?

best option?



combining different  
pathway systems?

depends on the type of  
site, users, aims etc

every site is unique -  
there is no **one** answer

regardless, we should  
always be **striving** for  
better, more intuitive,  
more flexible pathways  
for our users

questions or abuse?