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March 30, 2003

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IA Summit 2003 Wrapup Part 1

[Previous](#) Page [1](#), [2](#)

Information Overload: A Love Story

Thom Haller

Thom Haller ushered in a first for the IA Summits. He delivered a prototype performance piece, a comedic monologue with slides and props that focused on the pressure of finding appropriate labels for oneself in a world overflowing with information and demanding standardization.



Thom set the stage by drawing on the code instilled in him by his early days as a Boy Scout. He then took us through his transformation as a gay youth and his search as a student whose opportunities followed the corridor of interstate 75 from West Virginia to places north. He reviewed the highlights of his career seeking labels for what he did and desperately trying to avoid life in a mauve cubicle.

Thom Haller.
Photo by Mike Lee.

Family photos projected on a hugescreen brought the past into a cinematic present. Throughout the performance he reenacted his torment by manhandling a Play Dough brain he molded and then sliced into warring halves. He "danced" through a sense of places using Hoola Hoops and then wore them as oversized label jewelry dominating his presence.

Thom closed by sharing his current label as an information designer, playing out that role in our nation's capital-- a place far way from I-75. We laughed, we cried, we enjoyed. An audience of about 50 people immersed themselves in the information space that Thom created. We came away caring about how labels affected one of our own, and we were reminded by his performance that Information Architecture is a compositional art with a domain much larger than the Web.

—*Brian Arbogast de Hubert-Miller*

[Previous](#) Page [1](#), [2](#) [Discuss](#)
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