

# Artist's statement

By Jie Geng

As the Internet is now becoming larger and more complicated, a site map is more and more important for users to avoid getting lost in the cyberspace. The good navigational site map should gracefully and interactively provide the users with the looked for detail content, while keeping them conveniently informed of where they are and provide them with an overview diagram of the information space. A site map should give a clear overall site view that would help the user to decide whether to continue going to a web site or not.

A site map can be a regional site map or a global site map, or a combination of both.

A regional site map can represent a detailed relationship between the currently viewed page and those immediately linked pages. It helps that viewer to navigate from the current page to the next page that is linked directly to the current page. The illustrated relationship is detailed but regional.

A global site map provides the overall view of the web sites that may not be directly linked. It logically links some web sites that are related in contents. It helps the users to determine whether to go into a web site or not from the high level.

A combination of the regional map and the global map will benefit the user greatly. Imagine that a global map is always linked to a regional map, no matter which page the user looks at. With this arrangement, the user can always focus on the specific page of the current web site, and knows what other related web sites are available.

My project is a Silk Road web site with a dynamic regional site map and a global site map. The regional site map is a Java applet that generates meaningful structure of the web site and visually represents it. An animated smooth movement and color change of the symbols that represent web pages are pleasing to the viewer's eyes. The user can interact with my regional site map and control and jump around my Silk Road web site. The global site map provides the overall view of other related and logically categorized Silk Road web sites authored by others in the Internet. The user can gain in-depth knowledge and understanding of Chinese history, culture, religion, custom, language etc.

# Project Description

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Ten years ago when I was an art student in the Fine Arts Academy of China, I remember that every student was required to visit and study the famous grottoes of Silk Road in Dunhuang. In this website, I try to present the legend of Silk Road to the global village. Many links to other interesting web site are also provided.

My project is a Web site with a dynamic site map to link the web sites about Silk Road. The user can interact with the site map and view the overall Silk Road web sites in order to gain understanding of Chinese history, culture, religion, custom, language etc. The user can use the visualization map to control and jump around the web sites. The viewer can tour each city - Xian, Lanzhou, Jiayuguang, Dunhuang, Urumqi, Turfan, and Kashgar on Silk Road. The viewer always knows where he/she is.

Named in the middle of the 19th century by a German geographer, Ferdinand Freiherr von Richthofen, the Silk Road - perhaps the greatest East-West trade route for cross-cultural exchange - was first traveled by General Zhang Qian in the second century BC [1].

The camels carried the silk and other merchandise in those days. This ancient trade route started in the old capital of Xian, reached the Yellow River at Lanzhou, followed along the "Gansu Corridor" and stretched along the edge of deserts and mountains. The early traders were traveling at a snail's pace over some of the most inhospitable territory on the face of the earth - searing, waterless deserts and snowbound mountain passes. This place is called Taklamakan Desert. Many people lost in the sand of the desert and died. The Taklamakan Desert, its name in the local language means "Go in, and you don't come out."

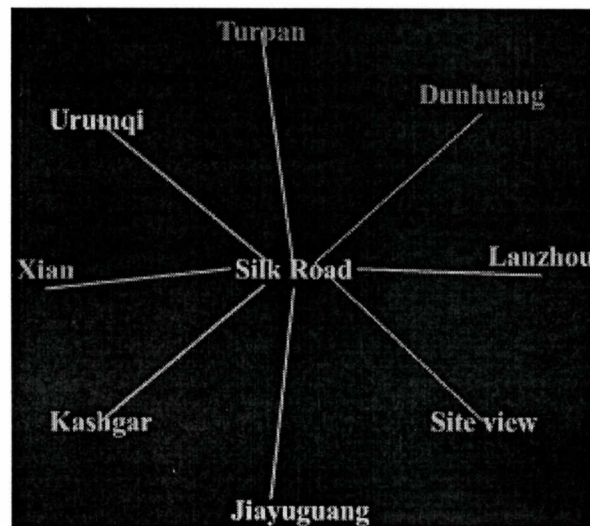
Now Silk Road is still an itinerary that attracts many people. There are many web sites on the Internet also. As we spend more and more time online, in cyberspace, it seems natural to make maps. Just as we maneuver in the real world we have several types of sensory cues to tell us where we are and where we have been.

The key issue of my project is interactive navigation in Web's information landscape. The purpose is to provide the dynamic views of information by building a complex classification system - a way to tag each page with information about its content.

Usually a site has a "site map" for navigation. I believe that the good navigation should gracefully and interactively provide the user with the looked for detailed content, while keeping him/her conveniently informed of where he/she is.

There are two maps in this web site. One is regional map which is a Java applet gives user a partial view of the site. One is the global site map which is a flash movie shows the overall view of the site.

When you get into the web page, a site map and a web page appear on two different frames of a same browser. The site map looks like a star see figure 1. A word representing a web site on the same browser is surrounded by words representing linked web sites. The surrounding words rotate around the word at the center smoothly to get the user's attention. When the user clicks on any one of the surrounding words, the clicked one will move to the center while words representing connected web sites will adjust their positions so that they are evenly surrounding the new word at the center. At the same time, the web page represented by the new word at the center is displayed at the right side frame of the same browser.



**Figure 1.** Regional Site Map

A combination of the regional map and the global map, see figure 2, will benefit the user greatly. Imagine that the global map is always linked to the center of the regional map, no matter which page is at the center of the regional map. With this arrangement, the user can always focus on the relationship of the limited pages displayed in the regional map. When he/she needs to locate the position of the current page in the bigger picture, the answer is always only one click away.



In this project, Java applet is used to build the regional site map. Flash software is used to make zoom in and zoom out global site map and rollover image buttons and descriptions. Java scripts is used to make the long picture and complex content of each city in a single page. Each city's map and the picture of the famous places are displayed. The user can click on each highlighted location to explore the place when the page rollover

### **Reference:**

[1] Judy Bonavia , *The Silk Road From Xi'an to Kashgar*, Odyssey Publications Ltd. 1999.