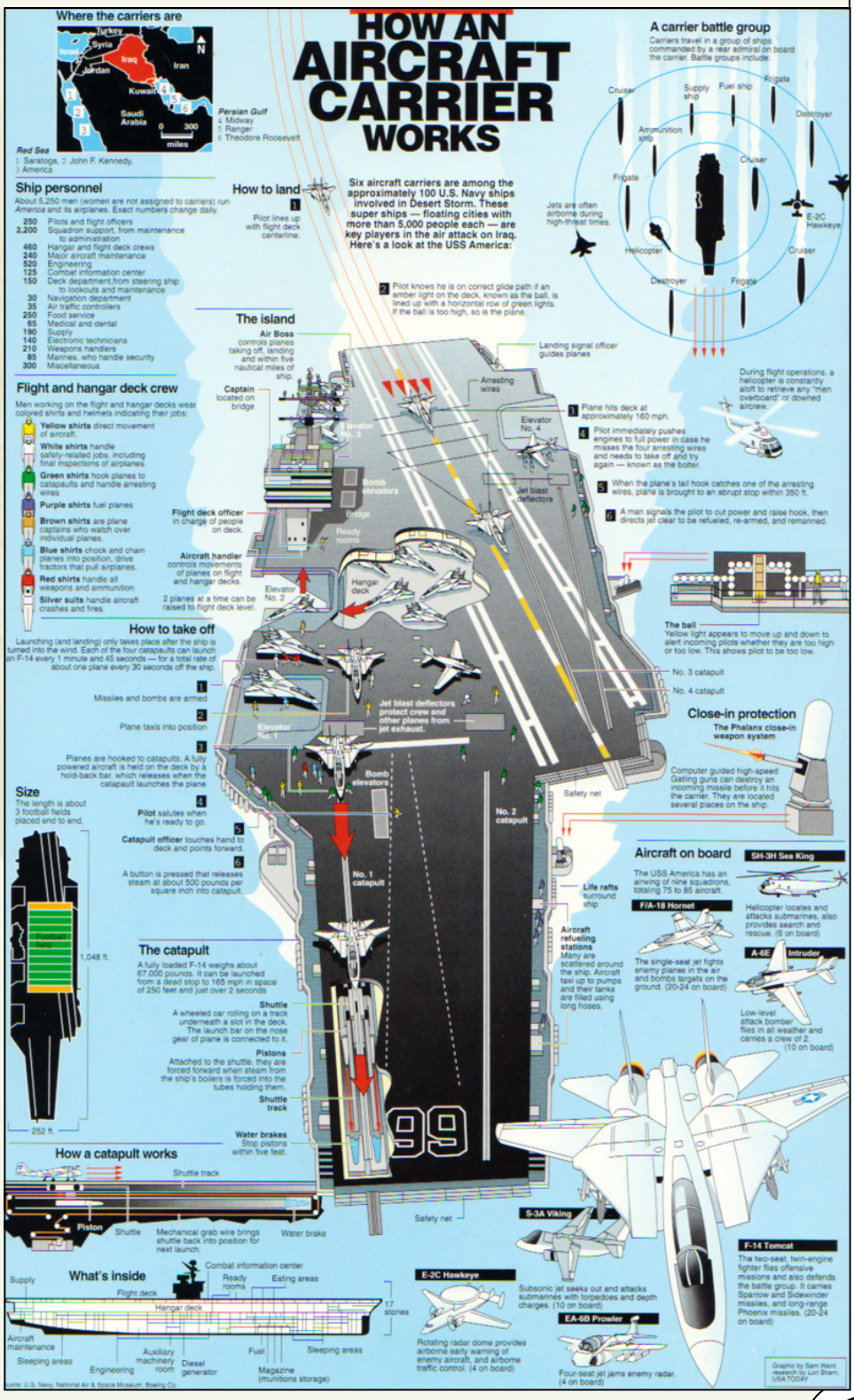
A4ria

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE

RICHARD CURTIS ON *USA TODAY*'S SPECIAL PAGE CREATION

The aircraft carrier special page has a remarkable history. Just prior to the Gulf War, we knew that the U.S. would soon deploy aircraft carriers in combat areas near Iraq. The editors wanted to show an aircraft carrier, and explain their workings. How large are they? How many people work on one? What about armaments? Food? To help us, we had a model of the USS America, a nuclear-powered carrier, along with reference materials and advice from the military. We chose a view that would have impact and still allow the inclusion of other visual aspects. As luck would have it, the day before the page was published the U.S. announced that the USS America and five other carriers would be committed to the war. This gave us an unexpected but important news peg. As always in our graphics, we maintained an order to the page: headline, "lead," a body of information—in this case lots of facts and visual details—and a closing (the plane flying off the deck). We are told that a framed copy of this page now hangs on the boardroom wall of the USS America.



DEFINITION OF THE WEEK

Information Architect

1. the individual who organizes the patterns inherent in data, making the complex clear.
2. a person who creates the structure or map of information which allows others to find their personal paths to knowledge.
3. the emerging 21st century professional occupation addressing the needs of the age focused upon clarity, human understanding and the science of the organization of information.