

# Interfaces

No. 53 Winter 2002

British  
**HCI**  
Group  
[www.bcs-hci.org.uk](http://www.bcs-hci.org.uk)



**How can you have a clean desk policy when you keep racking up the awards?!**



*Penny Noy spots the latest in visualization*  
*Andy Smith detects undeveloped desktops*  
*Elaine Campbell's training adventures*  
*Laura Cowen's first time*  
*Janet Read at IWIDC2002*  
*Anne Smith's PhD*  
*Sarah Kettley at ISWC2002*  
*Knees-up in South London leaves little standing*  
*Cassandra on XP and dogs*  
*...and a bumper bunch of book reviews*



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## View from the Chair The Last HCI Winter's Tale

HCI folk have long hoped for more than walk-on parts, so why are we still mostly in the wings waiting for our ‘the users are suffering’ line only to quickly exit left alone? At least in the Winter's Tale someone gets to exit with a bear!

My simple (and thus obviously suspect) answer is that HCI people overall haven't really had to fight to *succeed*. There are indeed tales of woe of (not) getting HCI onto the curriculum, into software development and onto research agendas. In most real fights, HCI loses. However, HCI has many wins, which is what lies behind my simple answer. HCI has fought and lost, but has also won having never fought. When adding HCI to curricula, government R&D programmes, development projects, others fought and won. HCI folk got invited to the victory celebrations, only to disabuse the hope, optimism and naivety of their sponsors in a torrent of jargon, *well actuallys* and *it dependeses*.

Maybe I've been lucky. I became a PhD student in a MMI unit (remember MMI!) that had already been set up by someone who brought the money with him. I became a researcher in the Scottish HCI Centre, which was funded by the Alvey programme, and next a research associate at Glasgow University, working on an industrially funded project that simply had to have HCI (which the non-HCI project director and sponsor knew). I then became an HCI lecturer, filling a post created by senior academics who saw the need for HCI in the computing curriculum. Since then I have worked in universities and industry where the door has been wedged open for HCI. In September next year I'll have spent 20 years in HCI and I've never once felt myself on my back foot (as they say in cricket). So why does the HCI community as a whole constantly feel under siege?

My belief is that HCI has had it too easy. With all those suffering users out there, cash simply had to be made for academics, consultants, awareness projects (remember *Usability Now!*) and research programmes. The problems were undeniable and therefore solutions had to be paid for. With commercial usability so poor, finding and fixing usability problems was hardly a challenge. As with a white PhD botanist in a developing country, we took credit for ‘discovering’ what the natives were already well aware of. Users find usability problems on a daily basis, so we should have no problem finding them. We didn't. We could walk into project after project, spot an imminent usability disaster and exit left as hero(in)es – hardly any more of a challenge than the Desert Storm ‘turkey shoot’ during the Iraqi retreat.

If anyone can find usability problems, then we don't need usability experts. The Winter of our Discontent will only thaw into an HCI spring when we can convince systems' commissioners that HCI is actually very hard. I know this. You know this. I'm not sure if they do. It all looks too easy (and at one level, of course, it is).

This is the point at which *we* need to start fighting for HCI, not as a reaction to terrible usability problems, but as a proactive way of avoiding them. Not out of pity for suffering users, but out of pride in our ability to design really useful software. It's a fight we need to fight on our own behalf, and to win on our own behalf. We need to stop seesawing between fighting then losing and hiding then winning.

With BHCIG's navel-gazing restructuring complete and a near doubling of active volunteers (but keep on coming, we need more!), we need to turn our attention to refining and delivering the message that HCI is no job for amateurs. We need to educate systems' commissioners to tell the difference between a swimming HCI expert and a drowning HCI amateur. Too often, they can both appear to flail their usability problem reports in the same way ('Those poor suffering users, delete this software now!').

BHCIG has a number of initiatives planned or in place that are part of the jigsaw here. Our Communications Group (Chair, Tom McEwan) has been charged with awareness raising. Our Education and Practice Group (Janet Finlay) has been charged with defining competences for HCI that are reflected in educational curricula, professional accreditation and codes of practice. Our Events group (Chris Roast) has been charged with creating the venues where we can get together and move issues forward. If you've got ideas on how to let them listen to the true HCI message, then do get in touch. If you have time, access to funds, or both, then you're especially welcome!

**Gilbert Cockton**

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## Editorial

With this issue, the various subgroups are starting to report their progress. You'll also notice that the back cover has a new format – reflecting the upsurge in committee volunteers and the multiple roles that several people play.

One role remains empty and that is the authoring of this column (and the miscellaneous responsibilities that go with it). Regular readers will know we have a strong and enthusiastic cohort of contributing editors and frequent contributors, and since Fiona Dix's professional skills take care of all of the time-consuming aspects of production, the job could be done by a (more) organised person in a day or so a month. Email me if you would like the challenge – the transition can be as immediate or phased as you wish.

All of the above are equal winners of the British Computer Society's Specialist Group Publication Award that we received recently (for the second year in a row). It's been a good few weeks for awards – Napier's work with Dig Ltd won a TCS Award (the first such accolade for technology transfer of UCD? Regardless, HCI researchers looking to transfer their ideas to industry will find TCS an effective funding mechanism). Awards from outside HCI are doubly welcome – they show that we can be perceived to have relevance in the 'real world'.

This issue has a wide variety of topics, and I'm especially enthusiastic to have new and returning contributors jostling alongside our regulars, as well as a strong international flavour. HCI2002 is still fresh in our minds, yet some of the distracting tensions at the time have long since dissipated, leaving the memorable – and a sense of hope that we are making real headway – with government, with industry and with the public sector. But as Gilbert counsels, we should be wary of soft targets. Anyone can point out flaws, it takes persuasiveness to pre-empt them. As any good manager says 'don't bring me problems, bring me solutions!'

So here's to HCI2003: Designing for Society, in Bath in September, when we can hopefully measure the effectiveness of our impact, rather than argue about how to achieve it. The call for papers is enclosed with this issue (or available at [www.hci2003.org](http://www.hci2003.org)). You have an extra few days this year to complete your writing – but the deadline, for full papers, is but a few short weeks away.

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### NEXT ISSUE

*Interfaces* welcomes submissions on any HCI-related topic, including articles, opinion pieces, book reviews and conference reports. The next deadline is **15 January**, but don't wait till then – we look forward to hearing from you.

**To receive your own copy** of *Interfaces*, join the British HCI Group by filling in the form on page 27 and sending it to the address given.

with thanks to commissioning editors:

Book Reviews: Xristine Faulkner, [Xristine@sbu.ac.uk](mailto:Xristine@sbu.ac.uk)  
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Deadline for issue 54 is **15 January 2003**. Deadline for issue 55 is **15 April 2003**. Electronic versions are preferred: RTF, plain text or MS Word, via electronic mail or FTP (mail [fiona@hiraeth.com](mailto:fiona@hiraeth.com) for FTP address) or on Mac, PC disks; but copy will be accepted on paper or fax.

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# Usability collaboration with India goes Europe wide

Andy Smith

Last year, in *Interfaces*, I wrote about the launch of the Indo British Software Usability Partnership [1]. Since then I have been working with the Computer Society of India (CSI) with the aim of fostering HCI in India, both within academia and professional practice.

In November 2001, Jon Rimmer (Sussex University) and I led a session on HCI at the CSI's annual conference. Earlier this year a funding bid to the European Commission's Asia IT&C Programme was submitted and has now been accepted. The newly formed 'Indo European Systems Usability Partnership' (IESUP) started formally on 21st October 2002. It is a two-year project that aims to support links between usability and HCI folk throughout Europe and their counterparts in India. I will talk more about the project later, but will start with a bit of background on my perception of the role of HCI in India.



## HCI in India

In May 1998, the Prime Minister of India formed a National Taskforce on Information Technology and Software Development in order to formulate a long-term national IT policy. The main objective was to help India emerge as an 'IT software superpower'.

It may be on the way – as the Indian IT industry has grown from US\$1.73 billion in 1994–95 to US\$13.5 billion in 2001–02, the latter representing 2.87 per cent of GDP. On the other hand, the penetration of IT within the whole Indian society is still very low. Access to good quality running water is more important than access to the latest PC for people living in many remote Indian villages.

Anyway, according to NASSCOM (National Association of Software and Services Companies), the employer body for IT in India, a key strength of the Indian IT industry is a 'focus on a high value, software off-shoring model' [2]. Certainly the composition of the IT market in India over the 1994–2002 period demonstrates a high software export orientation.

However, according to NASSCOM the strength of this off-shoring model is balanced by key weaknesses within the Indian IT industry. One of these is the fact that India has a low presence in the global packaged software market. I don't think that India will be able to claim genuine IT superpower status without developments in this area, and usability has a key role here. High levels of usability are critical to the quality of software products in a global market. Jakob Nielsen picked up these ideas in his recent Alertbox [3] and calculated (exaggerating somewhat, I feel) that India will need to train 400,000 usability professionals in the next six years.

NASSCOM also identify a lack of localisation of software associated with inadequate growth in the domestic market. Of course the effective localisation of software systems requires an understanding of real user needs. It is related to the HCI topic of cross-cultural usability, in which there is some current research and development activity in India.

A brief anecdote may be worth reporting here. On a previous visit to Bangalore (the 'Silicon Valley' of India), I met two people at a reception after a seminar in which I had talked a bit about culture and HCI. One of these was an IT professional who claimed that all of what I was saying didn't matter – to roughly quote 'if you can use Microsoft products in the UK, why can't we in India'. Another was an academic from a University in Delhi who seemed to see my point – 'what is the use of a desk top metaphor to people in remote Indian villages who have hardly seen a real office desktop, let alone a PC?'. It was an interesting discussion.



In fact, the effective use of IT in India is seen by national and state governments to be key in delivering education and other services to remote communities across the country. Some readers may have seen on Channel 4 News recently

an item reporting on the success of 'hole in the wall' computers located in village communities.

So IESUP is not just about making the Indian IT industry develop better, and sell more, IT products, it's also about how usability can help in supporting the development of local communities

through effective IT. Basically it's also about enabling those involved in HCI and usability and HCI in Europe and India to work closer together.

## IESUP

Overall the aim is to support the integration of HCI and usability into both Indian IT education programmes, and software development projects, mirroring that which occurs in Europe and the USA. By doing so India will be supported in further integration into the global information society and will be better able to contribute to the development of the new generation of interactive artefacts, from commercial software systems to novel and ubiquitous interactive devices.

The EU contribution to IESUP is 200,000 euros and this level of funding will enable IESUP to develop active and sustainable links. Activities will include seminars/workshops in India, visits from India to Europe, together with virtual communities and other methods of larger scale communication. By facilitating discussions and debate in India and elsewhere, and establishing networks between groups of individuals in focused aspects of usability, IESUP will seek to:

- Promote the inclusion of systems usability and human-computer interaction within university degree courses in Computing and IT;
- Support the Indian IT industry in being better able to address usability within the software market;
- Develop an enhanced understanding of the methods for software localisation in the Indian context;
- Foster greater awareness of the role of interaction design in the development of the next generation of online systems and interactive devices.







The project is being formally managed by the University of Luton but the main partners are the British HCI Group, CSI, the University of Limerick, Ireland, and the University of Uppsala, Sweden.

## What will actually happen?

Firstly, it is proposed to arrange a series of seminar and research workshop tours in India over the next two years. The focus for the tours will be on the four key themes of the project:

- *HCI in the University Curriculum*, providing a platform for university academics in Europe and India to share issues regarding the place of HCI/usability/interaction design within the university curriculum.
- *User Centred Design*, aiming to share issues regarding the role of user usability/UCD in commercial practice, particularly within the design of e-commerce systems.
- *Interaction Design*, addressing issues wider than 'traditional usability' – seeing interaction design as an emerging and important force in the 'ubiquitous computing' arena.
- *Culture and HCI*, debating the role that cultural differences have in systems usability and ways in which effective

## International Workshop on Interaction Design and Children – 2002

**Panos Markopoulos, Tilde Bekker, Janet Read**

In his keynote address to HCI2002, Andrew Monk enticed the audience with visions of disabled people scooting around on red sporty bikes and elderly people sleeping on smart beds, portraying a view of HCI that went beyond the workplace: supporting leisure, daily life, and addressing diverse user groups.

In line with this growing trend, just a week before the HCI conference, a workshop was held in the quiet, industrial city of Eindhoven in the Netherlands that focused on Interaction Design and Children. This event was organised by M. Bekker, P. Markopoulos and M. Kersten-Tsikalkina of the Eindhoven University of Technology. The organisers planned modestly for 30–40 attendants but were very encouraged when eventually registrations had to be closed at 92 people because of the limited capacity of the rooms that had been reserved.

The workshop opened with a keynote by Alison Druin, from The University of Maryland. Her 'onion' model of the different roles children can play in the design of technology became a reference point for many of the presentations that followed. These included papers by aspiring industrial designers, educational experts and researchers in user (child) centred design. On the second day, the other keynote speaker, Justine Cassell from MIT Media Laboratory, discussed story-listening systems that support children in the development of their active language skills.

A large number of submissions were received and the successful papers were presented in a single-track conference format. Different approaches for involving children in design were illustrated and there was debate about their relative advantages and disadvantages. A range of technologies were

localisation of systems (specifically in the Indian context) can be achieved.

## How do I get involved?

The project will fully fund travel and accommodation costs for those who take part in the seminar tours – but it will not be able to pay such participants directly for their time, or refund any costs incurred by employers.

So, if you have something to contribute, have some free (in both senses of the word) time and would like to get involved please contact me in the first instance via:  
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## References

1. Smith, A. (2001), Indo British Software Usability Partnership, *Interfaces*, 47, pp 10–11.
2. [www.nasscom.org](http://www.nasscom.org)
3. Nielsen, J. (2002). 'Offshore usability', Alertbox, September 2002, [www.useit.com/alertbox/20020916.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/20020916.html)

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presented, including PC based systems, mobile applications, augmented rooms and interactive mats. Uses of technology for education, play, communication and therapy were all discussed.

The workshop was informative, challenging and fun to attend. Video recordings of children seemed to make for excellent and entertaining presentations, though sometimes distracting to the audience, like the usability test participant who banged his head on the table instead of testing the system! On the second day of the workshop 30 of the delegates enjoyed a participatory design session with a busload of local children. This event was organised by M. Evers and Daniel Litz, from Human Shareware. Poster sessions were held during coffee breaks and a local hotel was the venue for the excellent workshop dinner. The workshop proceedings have been published by Shaker Publisher ([www.shaker.nl](http://www.shaker.nl)), and a selection of papers is planned for a special issue of *Interacting With Computers*.

Over the two days, several themes seemed to recur. Are children so different from adults as participants in the design session? Should usability be what we design for? How can technology make a valuable contribution to children's lives? As the event drew to a close there was a feeling of an emerging community and a synergy being created. Many participants were talking already of the need for a conference series.

The Child Computer Interaction group of the University of Central Lancashire, in Preston, England, will host IDC2003 between the 1st and 3rd July 2003. This conference will build on the work begun in Eindhoven and will provide a forum for debate on the emerging issues from IDC2002 together with academic papers from an international audience.

For further information about IDC2003 visit the Conference website at [www.uclan.ac.uk/computing/staff/read/Publish/IDC2003.html](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/computing/staff/read/Publish/IDC2003.html) or email [SJMacFarlane@uclan.ac.uk](mailto:SJMacFarlane@uclan.ac.uk).

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# New Journal for Information Visualization

Penny Noy

On the launch of the new journal, *Information Visualization*, an interview with editor-in-chief: Chaomei Chen of Drexel University, USA. (First published in the newsletter of the Information Visualization Society, Issue No 2, Summer 2002, reproduced with permission.)

The first issue of the new journal, *Information Visualization*, is available free on-line at <http://www.palgrave-journals.com/ivs/>, click on *table of contents* and then *current issue*.

Dedicated to establishing a generic research agenda, providing an interdisciplinary platform and the close connection of theory and practice, this publication is much needed to provide a focus for the field. The editor-in-chief, Chaomei Chen, talks to Penny Noy about the launch and his vision for the journal and the field in general.

It was with quite some degree of interest that I greeted the news last year that a new journal, dedicated to information visualization, was to be launched.

A few months ago, as a member of the Information Visualization Society committee, I was privileged to read a sample copy of the journal and was pleased to see the range of associate editors that have been brought together to work in this single publication.

I resolved to interview the individual responsible for co-ordinating the achievement of the launching of the new journal and ask him something about the whys and wherefores of bringing this project to fruition and about the journal's aims and scope. I also wanted to ask him some more general questions about the field.

*First let me congratulate you on the achievement of the launch of the journal. Why do you think such a journal has not existed before?*

This is a new field. It is not uncommon to hear some fields have their first journal 20 years after their identity was established. As mentioned in my editorial, books mushroomed since 1999, which is a clear sign of a maturing field. (note: see figure 1, reproduced from the editorial of the first journal issue.)

*What was the motivation of the journal?*

The motivation is to have an interdisciplinary journal and pull together works related to information visualization from otherwise isolated disciplines.

*Looking at the list of 27 editors and members of the editorial board, I am impressed by the range of participation that you have achieved. Can you tell me something about the process of getting these people together?*

After I wrote my first book, I had a pretty good idea where to find the key players in the field and I wanted to establish the strongest possible editorial board for the journal. All editorial members are dedicated researchers from a diverse range of areas and even disciplines. People have been extremely supportive, especially Ben Shneiderman, Bob Spence, Colin Ware, Peter Edes, and many well-known infovis people.

*Can you give us some idea of the different areas that might be considered the different 'threads' of information visualization?*

The fundamental challenge in information visualization is to

establish the connection between the form and the meaning. Theories, methodologies, and applications are among the major avenues that could lead us to new insights and better understanding of why some connections work well, how one can generalize what we know, and what new questions we should ask. Information visualization will inevitably change the way we think and do things. Works contributing to any of these aspects of information visualization and related issues are likely to have a significant impact on the field as a whole.

*Specifically, what about work in the psychology of perception and cognition? I recently attended an inaugural lecture given by a professor in Cognitive Psychology. There were some results presented concerning the phenomenon known as 'pop-out' that were immediately useful to my work. The professor was interested to hear about the new journal, but maybe this is a one-way exchange, we want to use the results of their work, but what can they use from us? What is your view?*

Information visualization is interdisciplinary in nature. Psychologists should be able to learn from computer scientists as much as computer scientists can learn from psychologists. A majority of information visualization focuses on representing phenomena that used to be 'invisible' to us at a considerably more complex level than before.

On the one hand, designers borrow and adapt guidelines and theories from established disciplines such as psychology. On the other hand, information visualization tremendously expands our horizon. The semantics of many visual-spatial designs has yet to be tested empirically, let alone supported by theories readily accessible to all participating parties. Addressing these issues from interdisciplinary perspectives will certainly remain to be a fruitful source of inspiration and stimulation.

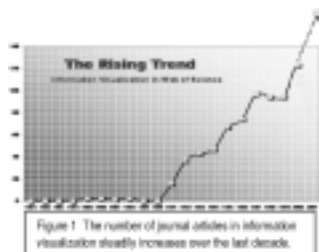
*Information visualization deals with (amongst other things) new forms in 3D, sonification and multimedia in general. Online publishing gives the possibility of using new formats, but there are considerable practical difficulties and the durability (the 'archivability') of such forms must be examined. Will there be any scope in the new journal to have, for instance, a 3D scatterplot or virtual world that you can explore – instead of the screenshot that*

*would appear in the printed version?*

The journal offers a special section in its online arena to accommodate materials that supplement published articles. For example, authors can provide three-dimensional, interactive prototypes as well as video clips and data sets.

*This is a related question. The British Library in the UK stocks all publications in the English language. Art galleries and museums contain examples of artefacts for students and all interested people to view. Between them these, and other, authorities record and preserve the history of our achievements. Now that we are creating visualization artefacts in software, perhaps we need a repository for posterity, as well as the contemporary student, to capture the achievements and development in this area. What do you think?*

There are many wonderful websites and course materials in this area. The purpose of our online supplementary section is to



provide additional materials to bring out the full flavour of those articles in the journal. In the long run if there is a need for an online museum of information visualization classics, then it is only natural to expand the coverage of the journal's website. In the immediate future, we will devote our effort so as to establish the journal as a high-quality forum for researchers and practitioners in information visualization.

*What do you consider to be the particular problems faced by information visualization? Difficulties, weaknesses?*

Although things are changing rapidly over the last few years, information visualization is still more of an art than science. The journal is soliciting a series of visionary articles from leading scientists in the field for the first volume to address the direction of information visualization, the key questions the community as a whole should tackle, and the promising routes that one should pursue. Taxonomies, toolkits, testing kits, benchmark data sets, integration protocols, standardized software components, and standardized experimental designs are among the things we urgently need to build the critical mass.

*A quick question for myself, and fellow students of information visualization. Prior to the launch of Information Visualization, I could not find which journal or journals were best for visualization papers. Can you advise me? I find most of my references in conference proceedings.*

The new journal aims to provide an archival forum for such needs. Prior to this journal, information visualization articles appear across a wide range of places. There are journals that publish information visualization articles, but they tend to orient to restricted audiences in terms of their disciplinary background and profession. We hope the new journal will become a useful and long-lasting melting pot.

*What is your vision for the journal?*

My editorial is mainly about the vision of having a cross-disciplinary collaboration so as to enrich and vitalize the profound interest in information visualization even further.

*What is your vision for the field?*

Pictures and stories are perfect companions for each other. Each star constellation in the sky has a story. The Pioneer spacecraft carries a plate in which a story of mankind is compacted in a picture. I have special interests in using information visualization as a story-telling vehicle to unfold a discovery story, a detective story, or a historical story. I envisage there will be a growing interest in the relationship between stories and visualizations. I have provided a detailed account of this topic in my new book *Mapping Scientific Frontiers: The Quest for Knowledge Visualization* to be published by Springer next month. There is nothing really static in the physical world, nor in the intellectual world. Information visualization must capture the movement of underlying phenomena and tell us a visually, as well as meaningfully, compelling story.

#### About the author

Penny Noy is a PhD candidate at City University, London, UK. Her company sponsor is BTECH's Future Technologies Group. She is working on a new concept – *Signature Exploration* – for assisting comprehension of complex data visualizations and is a committee member of the Information Visualization Society ([www.ivsociety.org](http://www.ivsociety.org)).

#### About Chaomei Chen

Chaomei Chen is the Editor-in-Chief of *Information Visualization*, published quarterly by Palgrave Macmillan. He is well known in the information visualization field for his work in visualizing semantic spaces and author co-citation networks and the use of pathfinder network scaling. He is the author of *Information Visualisation and Virtual Environments* (Chen, 1999).

This year sees him publish two new books: *Mapping Scientific Frontiers: The Quest for Knowledge Visualization* (Chen, 2002) and *Visualizing the Semantic Web* (Geroimenko and Chen, Eds., 2002). Based for some years at Brunel University, UK, he has recently moved to Drexel University, USA. He can be reached at [chaomei.chen@cis.drexel.edu](mailto:chaomei.chen@cis.drexel.edu).

His homepage: <http://www.pages.drexel.edu/~cc345/>

## A date for your diaries

### The 6th HCI Educators Workshop: Effective Teaching and Training in HCI will be coming to Edinburgh next year

*Where?*

Napier University (Merchiston Campus)

*When?*

Monday March 31st to Tuesday 1st April

*What?*

The A B C (Appropriateness, Benefits and Costs) of D-E-F- (Distributed-, Electronic- and Face-to-Face-) Learning

This conference will build on previous conferences, most recently at Portsmouth and Heriot-Watt, and related events, such as the workshop at HCI2002. The conference will provide us with an opportunity to explore and discuss

- what we teach and why;
- how we teach it and why; and
- how can we best apply what we teach to how we teach.

This will be in the context of changing times in higher and further education (larger classes, less contact time, and increased workloads) and a diversifying domain (from usability engineering through to interaction design, interacting with computers and interacting through computers, from work-based applications to home and leisure-based applications).

Are we making most effective use of new learning technologies to help us meet these challenges? Should we be doing more to share resources to help us meet these challenges?

The conference will be a mixture of papers, posters, panels, and demonstrations with interaction through questions and comments, with time set aside for dialogue in small groups and as a whole group.

There will be time to relax – a full and varied social programme is planned for the Monday evening.

Further details will be available soon through the usual channels but in the meantime please feel free to contact us at [s.cairncross@napier.ac.uk](mailto:s.cairncross@napier.ac.uk) if you have any queries, questions or suggestions.

We look forward to welcoming you to Edinburgh in the spring.

Sandra Cairncross and Alison Varey  
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Conference co-chairs

[www.hcie2003.org](http://www.hcie2003.org)



# Training

Elaine Campbell

When I was approached to write a column, on the implementation of usability and HCI as part of learning strategies, I have to admit that I struggled on which area to select and discuss. Then it struck me that I should practise what I preach! I should consider and apply some of the same rules and strategy that I employ at client sites.

One of the key pre-implementation rules is the assessment of user motivation and engagement – I realise that I have probably lost some of the visual learners by now due to the text-based nature of this column, but there are strategies which can override most users' learning style or reluctance to engage. Early in my training career, i.e. post engineering, my trainer suggested that when the class started to look as if they were disengaging then you should drop a completely unrelated word into the sentence – he suggested that the word 'sex' is probably the most powerful one to use. The 'sex' word works incredibly well with male software engineers and also I'm guessing for you folks that were skimming this article and came across the word sex – so is everyone engaged now?

Considering this strategy brought to mind an article I read a while back. The article was written by a web developer who, when he left college, went to work for a company developing adult entertainment sites. After a few years developing for this organisation, he decided to move on but quickly discovered that he was unable to obtain work elsewhere, due to the content of the sites he had been developing rather than his technical ability. His argument was that web design strategies and technology are the same irrespective of the site content. I, on the other hand, am not so convinced and would like you to consider the following diverse examples.

If we look at the unemployed developer's argument then I think we can agree that the technology and software development tools are the same irrespective of the content. It makes very little difference whether a website is written in PHP or JSP (except from a performance perspective, but we can come back to that at a later date) or simply in HTML.

What does require consideration and planning is the design strategy and the navigational access to that content, i.e. the application of standard HCI and usability design rules and best practice in the context of the target user base. A large part of website (and particularly e-learning) usability is based on access to information on a just-in-time basis for the user. Therefore implementation needs to be carefully planned with user motivation; user learning style; user relevance; user personality; user priorities all determined and managed before implementation takes place. There is a fine balance that needs to be struck between usability and the user context, which organisations need to ensure is met ahead of time.

If we return to the unemployed developer's case, I think that it is safe to say that the users who visit adult entertainment sites are very highly motivated in their quest for knowledge. In many cases these sites' content design and navigation may not necessarily have met all (or any of) the usability criteria; however, we can assume that in many cases

the user's motivation may have overridden the bad navigational and content design.

The opposite can also be true in that excellent design cannot necessarily overcome lack of user motivation. A large blue chip organisation recently introduced a new quality methodology and, due to geographical constraints, decided to implement an e-learning approach. However, they did not communicate the business reasons and the user context clearly, and mandated that training should be undertaken within one week. This strategy resulted in one nominated engineer (yes, it had to be engineering!) going through the web-based package and noting all the answers and timings – by day 2 of the release a 'cheat-sheet' was circulated to all engineers along with how long each section would take to complete. Here lies the beauty of the windowing environment, ensuring that multi-tasking is possible. This allowed all the other engineers to undertake the training as a 'click exercise' rather than them having to engage. Good HCI and usability design in this case just made clicking easier, there was simply no user engagement.

These experiences (though extreme) indicate that when working within a web-based or e-learning project then the balance between user motivation and good program design must be examined in parallel and not in isolation. Then during implementation there are three golden rules, which should always be applied:

- 1 The implementation must be seen as a change management process; i.e. pilot groups are identified, regular meetings are held and the correct change environment is created from the outset.
- 2 Staff and management support and engagement have been solicited and agreed from the beginning and feedback is acted upon.
- 3 That the implementation is a sustainable solution for the organisation and not simply 'e-learning fever'.

**Elaine Campbell**  
*Upstart Training*

## INTERACT 2003

Ninth IFIP TC13 International Conference on  
Human-Computer Interaction

Zurich, Switzerland, September 1-5, 2003

### Submission Deadlines

January 26, 2003: Papers, Tutorials, and Doctoral Consortium.

February 23, 2003: Panels, System Demonstrations, Interactive Experience, Workshops, Future Developments in HCI, HCI Societies Worldwide, Organizational Overviews.

April 27, 2003: Interactive Posters, Short Papers, Special Interest Groups, Student Posters, Video Papers

July 30, 2003: Student Volunteers, Scholarships.

more information from

<http://www.interact2003.org>



# British HCI Group Executive Committee Reports

## Interacting with IwC

Elsevier Science BV, publishers of *Interacting with Computers*, the interdisciplinary journal of HCI, were pleased to announce that they had (as had become a tradition at the HCI Group's conferences), contributed a prize for the best short paper. The winners ('The Idea-Collector: a device for creative face-to-face meetings', by Van Turnhout et al) received a copy of Martin Helander's heavyweight tome, *The Handbook of HCI*, presented by Helen Sharp, Short Papers chair.

*Interacting with Computers* is now into the 'Psychology Subject Collection' of Science Direct. That means that psychology libraries will now be able to get an electronic subscription to *Interacting with Computers* for a very low price, if they have already subscribed to a number of psychology journals. In other words: a larger readership for the journal, and more exposure!

### Listen up, pop-pickers!

*Interacting with Computers* Top 25 of most downloaded articles April–August 2002. Grundy and Hosking slots into the top spot, leaving a 'frustrated' Ros Picard and pals. But is that Gilbert blowing his horn as he seconds that emotion? Tune in next issue to find out whether a late surge in scenarios will tell a different tale next time around...

- 1 John Grundy and John Hosking. Developing adaptable user interfaces for component-based systems. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (3) (2002), pp. 175–194
- 2 J. Klein, Y. Moon and R.W. Picard. This computer responds to user frustration: Theory, design, and results. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (2) (2002), pp. 119–140
- 3 Jocelyn Scheirer, Raul Fernandez, Jonathan Klein and Rosalind W. Picard. Frustrating the user on purpose: a step toward building an affective computer. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (2) (2002), pp. 93–118
- 4 Rosalind W. Picard and Jonathan Klein. Computers that recognise and respond to user emotion: theoretical and practical implications. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (2) (2002), pp. 141–169
- 5 Gilbert Cockton. From doing to being: bringing emotion into interaction. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (2) (2002), pp. 89–92
- 6 N. Tractinsky, A.S. Katz and D. Ikar. What is beautiful is usable. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (2) (2000), pp. 127–145
- 7 Jaspreet S. Ahuja and Jane Webster. Perceived disorientation: an examination of a new measure to assess web design effectiveness. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (1) (2001), pp. 15–29
- 8 Paul Beynon-Davies. Human error and information systems failure: the case of the London ambulance service computer-aided despatch system project. *Interacting with Computers* 11 (6) (1999), pp. 699–720
- 9 P. Reed et al. User interface guidelines and standards: progress, issues, and prospects. *Interacting with Computers* 12 (2) (1999), pp. 119–142
- 10 A. Light and I. Wakeman. Beyond the interface: users' perceptions of interaction and audience on websites. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (3) (2001), pp. 325–351
- 11 Bruce Thomas and Jim Warren. Guest Editors' Introduction. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (3) (2002), pp. 173–174
- 12 P. van Schaik and J. Ling. The effects of frame layout and differential background contrast on visual search performance in Web pages. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (5) (2001), pp. 513–525
- 13 James R. Warren, Heath K. Frankel and Joseph T. Noone. Supporting special-purpose health care models via adaptive interfaces to the web. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (3) (2002), pp. 251–267
- 14 Sid Davis and Susan Wiedenbeck. The mediating effects of intrinsic motivation, ease of use and usefulness perceptions on performance in first-time and subsequent computer users. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (5) (2001), pp. 549–580
- 15 S. Morris, I. Neilson, C. Charlton and J. Little. Interactivity and collaboration on the WWW: is the 'WWW shell' sufficient? *Interacting with Computers* 13 (6) (2001), pp. 717–730
- 16 S. Henninger. A methodology and tools for applying context-specific usability guidelines to interface design. *Interacting with Computers* 12 (3) (2000), pp. 225–243
- 17 David Benyon and Catriona Macaulay. Scenarios and the HCI-SE design problem. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (4) (2002), pp. 397–405
- 18 P. Bourges-Waldegg and S.A.R. Scrivener. Applying and testing an approach to design for culturally diverse user groups. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (2) (2000), pp. 111–126
- 19 D.W. Bustard, Z. He and F.G. Wilkie. Linking soft systems and use-case modelling through scenarios. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (1) (2000), pp. 97–110
- 20 Oronzo Parlangeli, Enrica Marchigiani and Sebastiano Bagnara. Multimedia systems in distance education: effects of usability on learning. *Interacting with Computers* 12 (1) (1999), pp. 37–49
- 21 J.T. Mayes and C.J. Fowler. Learning technology and usability: a framework for understanding courseware. *Interacting with Computers* 11 (5) (1999), pp. 485–497
- 22 S. Bxdker. Scenarios in user-centred design. *Interacting with Computers* 13 (1) (2000), pp. 61–75
- 23 Dan Diaper. Scenarios and task analysis. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (4) (2002), pp. 379–395
- 24 R.G. O'Hagan, A. Zelinsky and S. Rougeaux. Visual gesture interfaces for virtual environments. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (3) (2002), pp. 231–250
- 25 C.J. Scogings and C.H.E. Phillips. Linking tasks, dialogue and GUI design: a method involving UML and Lean Cuisine+. *Interacting with Computers* 14 (1) (2001), pp. 69–86



## Upcoming issues

Regular papers in 14/5 and continuation of the debate between Dan Diaper and Jack Carroll on Scenarios vs. Task Analysis. Look forward in future issues for a continuation of the discussion from Alistair Sutcliffe and others.  
Vol 14/6 is first part of a Special Issue edited by Kostas Stathis from City University on Intelligence and Interaction in Community-Based Systems and the third paper in a musical trilogy by Paul Vickers and Jim Alty

### IwC, Volume 14/5

**Andrew Sears & Renee Arora** (USA). Data entry for mobile devices: an empirical comparison of novice performance with Jot and Graffiti

**Paul Vickers & James Alty** (UK). Using music to communicate computing information

**Paul Vickers & James Alty** (UK). Musical program auralisation: a structured approach to motif design

**J. Shawn Farris, Keith S. Jones & Peter D. Elgin** (USA). Users' schemata of hypermedia: what is so "spatial" about a website?

**Olle Bälter** (Sweden). A longitudinal study of attitude changes in a medical service organisation after an email introduction

**R. López-Cózar, A. De la Torre, J.C. Segura, A.J. Rubio and V. Sánchez** (Spain). Testing dialogue systems by means of automatic generation of conversations

**Geoff Elliot, Eleri Jones & Phillip Barker** (UK). A grounded theory approach to modelling learnability of hypermedia authoring tools

**Morten Hertzum, Hans H.K. Andersen, Verner Andersen & Camilla B. Hansen** (Denmark). Trust in information sources: seeking information from people, documents, and virtual agents

**David R. Danielson** (USA). Web navigation and the behavioural effects of constantly visible site maps

#### Commentary papers

**John M. Carroll** (USA). Making use is more than a matter of task analysis

**Dan Diaper** (UK). Task scenarios and thought

**Dianne Murray**

General Editor, *Interacting with Computers*

<http://www.elsevier.nl/locate/intcom>

### IwC, Volume 14/6

#### Regular papers

**Paul Vickers** (UK). When bugs sing

**Andy Smith & Lynne Dunckley** (UK). Prototype evaluation and redesign: structuring the design space through contextual techniques

#### Special issue

**Kostas Stathis**, City University, UK. Guest editor: Special Issue on Intelligence and Interaction in Community-Based Systems (Part 1).

**Beeson I.** Exquisite variety: computer as mirror to community

**Stathis K.** Living memory: agent-based information management for connected local communities

**Agostini A.** Design and deployment of community systems: reflections on the Campiello experience

**Sumi Y.** Conference assistant system for supporting knowledge sharing in academic communities

**Kamei K.** Effectiveness of spatial representation in the formation of network communities: experimental study on Community Organizer

**Paliouras G.** Discovering user communities on the Internet using unsupervised machine learning techniques

## Subgroup reports

Contact information of members of BHCIG subgroups is listed on the back cover of *Interfaces*.

### Events Group

#### Operations

The events group is concerned with ensuring that the B-HCI-G supports a range of events benefiting HCI practitioners, educators and researchers.

The annual HCI conference is Europe's premier annual event, providing a key focal point for a good proportion of the membership. Following highly positive feedback from the continental excursion of the conference in 2001, we are looking towards other collaborations as part of future European events.

The group is also focusing its attention upon developing a calendar of day meetings for specialist areas of particular interest. More generally, the events group aims to develop strong cooperative links with the many activities and events that are relevant to HCI research and practice.

Finally, the events group is not limiting itself to 'traditional' models; it is keen to explore and develop alternative activities that stimulate and support its members.

Current group activities include:

- (i) developing resources for event planning,

- (ii) developing a more coherent view of event attendance and profile, and
- (iii) developing the group's core strategy document.

An initial meeting of the group is planned in the near future.

#### Why is there never an event on <my favourite topic>?

The group is keen to hear of any ideas for events that members have in mind, and to support them in developing successful events.

#### What events work for you?

Any feedback about events and activities you've attended is valuable as input to helping the events group ensure stimulating and valued experiences for the community. The events group members have considerable experience; however, we currently have no practitioner representatives. Any practitioners keen to provide input into events and planning to suit practitioner needs, please do get in touch.

**Chris Roast**

[c.r.roast@shu.ac.uk](mailto:c.r.roast@shu.ac.uk)

### Education and Practice Group (was Competences)

#### Operations

The group has agreed an initial set of operations/activities indicated below.

Some of these are established, others are new (or new perspectives).

Involvement in and responsibility for these operations are still under discussion. Some likely volunteers are noted but not all are decided.

- 1 Developing a strategy/mission statement for the group: who we are, what we do, what we want to achieve. This should include consideration of the relationship between education and practice and between HCI and usability. (Volunteers: J Finlay with all)
- 2 Establishing and developing liaisons with other groups, to include: other HCI related organisations (e.g. SIGCHI, UPA), relevant professional societies (e.g. BCS, BPS, etc.), and both local and international organisations. (Volunteers: C Campbell, J Earthy, B McManus)



- 3 Developing educational publicity: what the BHCI group does, what usability/HCI is. (Volunteers: A Light, S Cummaford)
- 4 Focused outreach to industry, FE, HE, including ways of encouraging student members at all levels (Volunteers: A Light, S Cummaford, B McManus)
- 5 Collating and promoting HCI resources (e.g. Usability Net, hci-fun). What can we provide and for whom? For example, educational resources, registers (e.g. practitioner register). (Volunteers: D Clarke, J Rosbottom)
- 6 Running specific and regular events, e.g. HCI Education workshop, master classes. (Volunteers: J Rosbottom?)
- 7 Developing professional development, both through our own schemes (perhaps linked to the conference and other events) and links into other schemes (e.g. ISM). (Volunteers: J Earchy)
- 8 Accreditation and certification: what, when and how. (Volunteer: J Earchy, C Jarrett)
- 9 Curriculum development: reviewing and revising the curriculum recommendations. (Volunteers: B McManus, H Sharp + practitioners)

We have set up a JISC mailing list to support the group and plan to have a full group meeting in the near future to finalise sub-groups. It is likely that at that meeting some of these operations will be merged.

**Janet Finlay**  
J.Finlay@lmu.ac.uk

## Communications Group

### Operations

The Communications Group were due to meet in London on 6th Dec, for the first time en masse. Most of the group's work is currently handled well enough through email and online contact, but with several

new recruits it is important to introduce people. Thereafter, face-to-face meetings will be most likely timed to coincide with the annual conference and other such events, with the operational teams meeting in virtual space.

With *Interfaces* and *UsabilityNews*, the group has two well-defined and successful operations, both of which have a perennial need for contributors, and also for a number of support roles to the respective editors. Since both compete with professional publications, they need to employ professional services where appropriate, and to find long term funding solutions to pay for these services.

With the existing JISCmail services – within the group and its committees and external (bcs-hci mailing list and the conference mailing lists) – the group manages the flow of information around the organisation and to relevant external subscribers. We are always looking to develop new ideas and mechanisms, and support William Hudson's successful UCD List initiative (<http://lists.syntagm.co.uk/archives/ucd.html>) and plan to collaborate with him in future on next generation discussion spaces.

Retiring webmaster Eamonn O'Neill has recently completed an overhaul of the BHCI's own website, reflecting our current *de facto* corporate style. Before we move on to the next stage of site re-design to meet existing and emerging accessibility needs, as well as the communications needs identified by the other subgroups, we are considering the British HCI Group's own 'branding'.

Marketing and branding are areas that are popularly trivialised, yet there's no denying the power of effective branding, though this can only take place after considerable navel-gazing. What exactly are the objectives of the British HCI Group? We also operate here in a context – particularly that of the BCS's recent rebranding

exercise, and the BCS Connect initiative which promises much support for the activities of affiliated groups such as our own. This is a particularly difficult knot to unravel, and we will need to retain professional services to assist us (and find the resources to pay for them!).

**Tom McEwan**  
T.McEwan@napier.ac.uk

## HCI 2003 Designing for Society

17th Annual Human-Computer  
Interaction Conference

University of Bath  
Bath, England  
8-12 September 2003

[www.hci2003.org](http://www.hci2003.org)

Submission deadline for full papers  
and tutorials: **7 February 2003**

All other submissions: 9 May 2003

*Call for Papers enclosed with this  
issue*

### People and Computers XVI – Memorable yet Invisible • Proceedings of HCI 2002

Kristine Faulkner, South Bank University • Janet Finlay, Leeds Metropolitan University  
Françoise Détienne, INRIA, The French National Institute for Research in Computer Science & Control

This volume contains the full papers presented at HCI 2002, the 16th annual conference of the British HCI Group.

The idea of making systems memorable is one of the ways in which they can be made easier to operate but in making systems memorable it is easy to make them obtrusive. The conference aims to look at the questions of memorability and invisibility. Can systems be both memorable and invisible? Or are memorable systems far from invisible? Is an invisible and memorable system possible? And if so, what might it consist of? Do systems become memorable and invisible with familiarity even if they are initially quite difficult to use?

The papers presented in this volume cover all the main areas of HCI research, but also focus on the theme of designing systems that are memorable, yet invisible, including:

- Interactive system design
- Interaction tools and techniques
- Users with special needs
- Virtual reality and multimedia
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# Conference Report

## International Symposium of Wearable Computers 2002 (7–10 October 2002)

**Sarah Kettley**

Held in Seattle on the campus of the University of Washington, the event attracted approximately 230 delegates from academic research and the R&D departments of commercially interested parties from around the world. The symposium benefited from the corporate support of Microvision, Intel Research, IBM and HP Invent, and was sponsored by the IEEE Computer Society, and its site can be found at <http://iswc.tinmith.net/>.

One of the instigators of the annual conference, Prof. Thad Starner, has said that he will be pleased when it no longer has the weight of numbers needed to allow it to continue, as this will reflect an effective assimilation of wearable technology into mainstream computer use, but until then, the conference continues to be based as much around the exhibition and discussion of novel gadgets as around the presentation of academic work.

Commercial vendors exhibited throughout the conference and an informal gadget show is held at the end of the event in the lecture hall, allowing dissemination of hardware as well as service and software ideas. The fashion show, the first time it has been held, was also a highlight, and was produced by Komposite ([www.komposite.com](http://www.komposite.com)) using professional models and a multimedia presentation. This was open to the general public as well as delegates, and as such was very well attended.

The use of the fashion show, however, as a medium for the dissemination of wearable computing research is questionable – at the moment wearable computing still does not have a lot in common with fashion, and until it does, this style of presentation runs the risk of being a pastiche. However, one of the most interesting things to come from the conference was the evidence of both the need for, and the acceptance of, an aesthetic approach to wearable design in the future.

Aaron Tovey's paper introduced the idea of the 'social weight' of wearables, defining this as the 'drag on social interaction' caused by use of any device in public, and attempted to describe metrics for its analysis. Tom Martin's excellent keynote speech compared the development of the wearable paradigm with that of the wristwatch, which went through interesting form and interaction factor changes, as well as affecting the social meaning of time, before settling into the generic form that we are used to today. He pointed out the process of simplification that the watch interface has gone through as users have become accustomed to the representation of data – that is, in contrast to the intricate displays of the eighteenth century, we now often wear watches with no numbers on the face.

Papers were presented as part of one of various sessions: Applications, Clothing, Hardware, Location, Context, Theory and Video. The main centres and researchers in the field were all represented, and there is more work being done in the UK than might have been expected. Lancaster, Birmingham and Bristol Universities have active wearable groups. Abertay University in Dundee is looking at patterns of social activity using wearables, and Glasgow and the Royal College of Art in London are involved in the Equator project also examining social activity.

The conference also benefited from the use of the HIT lab – Human Interface Technology – at Washington University, and, indeed, this faculty building was used to present demonstrations. Mark Billingham, General Chair, completed his PhD here, and his wonderful MagicBook was also on display as part of this session. Further work is being done at Washington on group work mediated by shared surfaces, as well as projects in healthcare, using Phantom force feedback to assist in the training of surgeons or in the field of the psychology of pain, and the possibilities of lessening patient suffering through the use of Virtual Reality to relieve severe burn pain ([www.vrpain.com](http://www.vrpain.com)).

Of the posters presented, Richard de Vaul's work at MIT appeared to offer the biggest step forward for the wearable paradigm, through compelling statistics supporting his development of an interface which places negligible cognitive load on its user. Although at an early stage, this research could find application in situations where users are otherwise fully attendant on another task – wearable computing, as a paradigm, works only if it is not the main cognitive focus – such as driving or operating machinery, not to mention the scope for military application. The test subjects were given information hidden by visual noise, i.e. words on a screen could not be read, but were nevertheless assimilated by the subjects and used in further tasks.

There was a constant presence in the form of Infineon, a Munich-based commercial developer of worn digital products; at the moment, of a clothing based MP3 player. Although this is not ground-breaking work, in that other companies have produced short runs of MP3 jackets (Levi's, WRONZ), Infineon are actively pursuing a business plan to market this as an everyday wearable item. Using students studying fashion in Munich, they have a truly clothing-based concept and were always available for press at the conference, showing their two prototypes in the form of a rain jacket and a jogging body warmer. Both were highly wearable, and along with Lucy Dunne's SmartJacket, were the hits of the fashion show presentation (<http://www.infineon.com>).

In conclusion, then, the field of wearable computing continues to be widely interdisciplinary, with many concerns such as power source, physical weight and size, social factors and technical display considerations, but the years of work done in proving concepts and technologies is now maturing enough for the original researchers to be aware of a need for the development of aesthetically pleasing, as well as physically comfortable, form factors for these devices in order to make them desirable in the eyes of an everyday market.

**Sarah Kettley**  
PhD student at Napier University



## HCI2002 Reports

Here we have a number of pieces, some serious, some flippant, from what proved to be an exhausting but enjoyable conference, which successfully brought the professional usability community together with the theoretic HCI community, only to find that we were all the same people and we knew a lot of each other already.

### Purple Press Lowlights

Four issues of the Purple Press appeared, and back issues are available from the editor. As ever it mixed silliness with pointlessness, while at the same time subconsciously (or was that unconsciously) touching on the background issues.

### A butterfly farts in South America and the n falls off Fintan's T-shirt...

Wendy's opening keynote was memorable and very visible: she heroically glued herself to the spot metaphorically and actually to allow the technology to work effectively. She provided a thought provoking and oftentimes humorous opening keynote with just the right mixture of speculation and report back, all delivered in a delicious American accent and with charm and aplomb.

However, technology did the invisible bit for her, punctuating her speech by replacing her slide with a glorious mauve square to match the apparently new toilets in the abbey conference centre. Halfway through Wendy realised that what she saw wasn't what the audience saw at which point one ungallant and very precise individual gave her exact timings for timeout. I've got him down for the next Nobel Prize for observation of minutiae and for owning such an accurate stopwatch. (I bet he has a Swiss army knife).

But Wendy was not fazed and continued to charm and endear as well as thought provoke. It was an apt and delightful start to what looks like being an unstuffy and informal conference.

One of the SVs told me that he'd been told by the chair that they weren't to be host to Mr. F\*\*\* Up but I note with amusement that Mr. F has invited himself any way. But my guess is that Memorable yet Invisible will also be unflappable and these guys are too generous and good-natured to make a fuss if someone muscles their way in unannounced and uninvited.

**Cassandra Hall**

### Les Hatton

Les Hatton's talk on the Thursday morning made me realise that science fiction stories have failed to take the realities of the trends in user interfaces into consideration.

Hence this updated account of a space fight:

"Hello, I'm Xyla, on the run from the bad guys – it's not important why. What is important is that they're catching up. That looks like a good asteroid over there to dodge behind.

"Hmmm! How do I do that? Oh, yes, simply press Main Mode 5 times, hold down Set, Course, and Change together, then turn the joystick through 180°. Oh, and I mustn't forget the foot pedals...oops, too late – missed it.

"Well it doesn't really matter. In order to fire, the bad guys have to press Mode 6 times, Fire Mode twice, move the Xyzzp lever to position M and ... oops looks like someone pressed Mode too many times and engaged Auto-Destruct. Amateurs – don't they even read the manual?!?!?"

"Bye Bye!"

**Joy Goodman**

### Swami Sally

Picture Tuesday's Doctoral Consortium, about 3pm – it's been a long day, lots of fruitful discussion, but its getting late – and all the participants are dying for a shot of coffee.



All that is except our karmic chair, Sally "Swami" Fincher. After refusing to let anyone leave the room, and insisting to be referred to as "arhata" (perfected soul), she led the assembled caffeine-starved ranks through a surprise yoga session: "a series of

dynamic postures and internal dances, to strengthen our nervous systems and refine our process of inner perception".



**Yogin**

### The Apeman Cameth

Delegates with a rock and roll bent may have recognised London, SE1 as Kinks country.

Who was that delegate in the arms of latter-day "Lola" in a local hostelry on the last night? She looked like a woman and talked like a man (*more Bahktin utterances? Ed*).

Our esteemed chair could be heard humming "So tired, tired of waiting, tired of waiting for you" on Tuesday as he scoured the horizon in vain for a student rep with a phono lead. And the eminence gris playing solitaire (billiards?) on his PDA in the front row of the theatre had to be a dedicated follower of fashion. Oh yes he is.

The conference may have been rich with our Scottish Brethren but David Watts, so cool and fancy free, would not be seen dead at an HCI conference. So come Friday, after we'd partied "All day and all of the night", I suggest lazing on a sunny afternoon in the beer garden around the corner before a bracing autumnal (almanac) trip on the Thames to a Waterloo sunset. Paradise!

**Kinky**



The 'memorable systems' full paper session at HCI 2002 (Wednesday 3rd September, 4.00–5.30pm) certainly lived up to its name. First we had Mary Czerwinski describing eloquently her work at Microsoft Research on supporting recovery of context by computer users, when interrupted or forced to suspend a task and switch to another.

Suspensions, resumptions and interleavings are the common experience of just about everyone now. The aim of the exploratory experiments described here was to find out what users think is important in the context, to help them in returning later without loss of flow. The key finding was that up to 50% of what was significant was stuff that no computer system, monitoring the user's behaviour, could ever hope to guess at. So it will always be necessary to rely, at least to some extent, on the user's initiative to decide what features of the context to 'bank', and when to bank it.

The parallels between IBM in the eighties and Microsoft in the noughties get closer all the time. Jack Carroll and his colleagues at IBM Yorktown Heights did wonderful, groundbreaking work in the eighties which benefited a whole generation of interface designers and HCI researchers, but hardly any of it ever percolated into IBM's own systems and products. It's true that, in Microsoft's case, a lot more of the front-line research they sponsor does make it into their tools and products, but somehow it gets diluted, perhaps by the marketing people, so that it never quite lives up to the high promise engendered by the quality of the research. Maybe that doesn't matter, because at least at the level of the kind of long-term investigation of user behaviour and the characteristics of memory, which Mary was talking about here, the results are freely published in the literature for all to benefit from.

The middle layer of this memorable three-decker sandwich was Saul Greenberg from Calgary talking about 'How people recognise previously seen web pages from titles, URLs and thumbnails'. This reported on a solid, extensive user study, using a fully enhanced browser (not a prototype), of how well users were able to recognise previously visited pages or sites from thumbnails of various sizes. The results suggest that users can identify Web sites by small thumbnails (96 x 96 pixels or less) – what they recognise seems to be the colour patterns and overall 'look' of the site. However, for recognising a specific page, being able to read some of the page's text is important.

Recognition rates were also tested with both truncated titles (several different truncation algorithms were investigated), and with the URL on its own. Recognition rates were found to be comparable to those with thumbnails in each of these cases, but a higher percentage of both titles and URLs were rated as being poor or very poor representations of the page. This looks like another of those cases where the subjective preferences of users are not necessarily reflected in better performance in experimental tests – but since the preferred system is not significantly worse, there is a good case for giving users what they like, or at least a combination of what they like and what is good for them.

The climax of the afternoon, if that's the right word, was Harold Thimbleby's presentation, ostensibly about how 'proper design', based on 'well-known systems engineering

practices' can make life easier for the user by hiding the underlying complexity of the application domain. Who could disagree – but the devil is in the detail. Unfortunately neither the talk nor the written paper dealt in any depth with how in practice this approach might have led to a better design of the particular ticket vending machine, a critique of which makes up the bulk of the paper.

Maybe this was behind the comment by one of the referees that the paper would not have passed muster if submitted as an MSc dissertation – or maybe the remark was intended as positive feedback, for after all, there are different criteria for an HCI conference paper and a master's dissertation.

How did we know about this referee's remark? Because Harold chose to spend a fair part of his talk dissecting the feedback he and his co-authors had received from the (anonymous) reviewers. While this made for an electric atmosphere in the courtroom, the wisdom of such a breach of protocol has to be doubted.

Of course it's depressing that such a widely used and important kiosk system as the target ticket vending machine has such a poor interface, causing avoidable delay and frustration to thousands of passengers every day, and of course we should be both angry (about the complex and far-reaching causes behind its being foisted on the innocent public), and ashamed (that we have so failed to make an impact on public perception of what is possible and what is acceptable, that there has been little more than a murmur of protest from the long-suffering public). And by all means try the meticulously constructed simulation at [www.uelic.uel.ac.uk/projects/tvm](http://www.uelic.uel.ac.uk/projects/tvm) (only don't use Internet Explorer, as it apparently doesn't accept some of the standard JavaScript which the simulation uses) – and experience the horror for yourself, if you don't live within spitting distance of the real thing.

But rather than be submerged by doom and gloom, let's use this as a spur to redouble our efforts to get the message across to our clients, colleagues, students, the government, and anyone who will listen, that the mission of our discipline is to bring light where there was darkness, simplicity where there was complexity, and enjoyment where there was stress and uncertainty.

There was certainly no lack of evidence elsewhere in the conference that we are making small but significant steps in this direction, in spite of the many 'hall of shame' candidates which we can all easily find around us. It's all too easy to turn curmudgeonly with advancing age – but it's one of the few temptations that really does need to be resisted.

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## My First Conference Paper

Laura Cowen

HCI 2002 was memorable for me partly because it was the first conference I had attended and partly because it published my first academic paper. Having never attended an academic conference before, it was all a bit mysterious to me what happens at one and what the people whose work is published in the proceedings actually do prior to and at the conference itself. So, for anyone thinking of submitting to a conference for the first time, I thought I'd share my findings with you...

### *January 2002*

Having graduated from Lancaster University with a Masters in HCI in September 2001, I spent three months job-hunting and contemplating writing up my thesis research project to submit for publication. I actually started writing in January when I returned to Milton Keynes to work for Enterprise IDU, the company where I had done the experimental work for my research project.

My thesis supervisor at Lancaster University, Linden Ball, had seen the call for papers for HCI 2002 and suggested that we write up my research project for submission to the conference. As the paper had a much lower word limit than my original thesis, I had to throw out much of the detail, particularly in the introduction. Once I had drafted the first half of the paper, I sent it to Linden, along with the original thesis, and he wrote up the results and conclusions. I anonymised the paper (for review purposes) and proof-read it several times. Then, with about 24 hours to spare before the deadline (and a job interview), I dared myself to click the 'Send' button and hand it over to the reviewers.

### *March 2002*

Over the next couple of months I spent some time convincing myself that there was no chance they would accept it then I wouldn't be too disappointed when they didn't. So when Xristine Faulkner emailed at the end of March to say that they had accepted our paper I was pretty chuffed to say the least.

### *April 2002*

About a week later we got to see what the reviewers had actually said about our paper. The four first-stage reviewers had to rate the paper (and give comments) on things like its suitability for the conference, its originality, the quality of writing, and so on. It was quite amazing how so few people could vary so much in opinion. One person thought our paper was the bee's knees while another was really very critical.

There were a couple of valid points they made about the statistics and the references. The funniest comments were regarding the anonymisation of the paper. One particular reviewer thought that the paper wasn't suitably anonymous, based on the fact that we had referenced four papers by Goldberg and Kotval (whose work my research project was based on). The reviewer thought that we were Goldberg and Kotval and complained that we hadn't concealed it very well!

After the four first-stage reviewers had had their say, a second-stage reviewer reviewed all their comments and decided to accept the paper.

### *May & June 2002*

Having got rid of the paper back in January and then heard the good news that it was accepted, I was brought back down to earth again with the news that I had to make a number of alterations to the paper. Fortunately Linden agreed to fix the statistical issues (amid Mac crashes and crises) and I did the rest.

Throughout May & June the paper was batted back and forth between me and the publishers. Meanwhile I was also moving house and starting my new job at IBM Hursley, near Winchester (which caused a whole lot of puzzling about how to denote my affiliations on the paper without taking up the entire first page).

### *August 2002*

Having had a break from the whole thing for a few weeks, come the end of August I had to start preparing a presentation for the conference itself. Unfortunately, by now I'd forgotten a lot of the finer points of the paper, which made it difficult to sound knowledgeable about the work. By the end of August, though, I'd produced a set of slides (and spent some time sitting in the living room presenting them to the fire-place...).

### *September 2002*

Conference week began, for me, at the Novotel in Southampton where I had to attend my graduate induction week for IBM. Two days of presentations, team games and origami (don't ask) left me no time to practise my presentation but no time to get nervous about it either. On the Tuesday evening I finally got away, re-packed my bags and set off for the conference.

Our paper was timetabled for first thing Friday morning, so that gave me a couple of days to watch other people's presentations and get a feel for how it was done – and find out whether there were likely to be any really nasty questions. On the whole I felt that if everyone else could do it, then so could I.

Brief moments of panic occurred when the presentation files stored on my website wouldn't download and the CD-ROM drive on the laptop didn't work (fortunately the wonderful Simon could solve all technical problems!), and also when I was privy to a conversation between two more seasoned conference presenters regarding difficult post-presentation questions. I recovered enough, though, to enjoy the conference and the trip to Shakespeare's Globe the night before my paper presentation.

### *Friday 6th September*

#### *5.45am*

I wake up (just in case my alarm set for 7am doesn't go off).

#### *6.15am*

Still awake having checked only twice to make sure my alarm is still set correctly. Must get back to sleep as not had much sleep over the past few days.

#### *6.45am*

Still awake but feeling rather sleepy now. Not sure I should risk it though: what if I had accidentally un-set my alarm when I checked it last?



7.00am

Time to get up. Hopefully the shower will wash away the sleepy, sickly feeling in my stomach.

7.45am

Breakfast is a non-starter. Smuggle out two pastries in napkins for munching en-route to South Bank University.

8.15am

Set off on my 45 minute trek from Pimlico (where I'm staying) across the river to the Elephant & Castle. Manage to consume a pastry on the way. Will have the other after I've presented.

9.00am

Arrive at the conference venue as planned. Somewhat relieved as I haven't managed to arrive this early on the previous two days. Check again that my slides are on the laptop and working. Not so nervous any more so I sit and chat with the other presenters in my session.

9.15am

Linden and Alan Dix (former Masters tutor) arrive for moral support then the rest of the audience start to trickle in. Despite being out the night before, rather a lot of people seem to have made it in on time.

9.55am

All done! It actually worked out a lot SHORTER than when I practised it. Had quite a few questions but no nasty ones. People just seemed interested and wanted to know more about what we'd found, which was nice. :-)

So there you go... my experience of submitting and presenting my first conference paper. Hopefully, it will have given anyone interested in doing the same an insight into the whole process. The main thing is that it's not that mysterious or scary after all. And it is nice to see my name in print.

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## Report on HCI2002 Workshop 6

**Alistair Kilgour**

### Stairway to heaven?

Workshops were an innovation at this year's HCI 2002, and overall they seem to have been a great success – workshop 6 on "Design and evaluation of HCI educational resources" certainly was. [You may protest, dear reader, that there were workshops last year, and also in 1999, which is true, but these were not 'standard' UK HCI conferences. I believe this year really is the first time we have had a workshop track at a stand-alone British HCI Group conference.]

Although the participants all felt we had reached nirvana, when we got there it turned out to be quite different from what at least some of us had envisaged beforehand. And there was also a faint hint of déjà vu.

The range and quality of the position papers were excellent. The spark that set light to the idea of an education workshop for HCI2002 had been a remark by Jo Hyde at the end of the Portsmouth workshop, to the effect that as educators we don't spend enough (or any) time consulting our users (the learners) when designing our courses – that we don't, in fact, practise what we preach in the way of user centred design, at least so far as design of our educational resources is concerned. (This point was elaborated by Jo in her position paper for the workshop, which also raised wider issues about the place of HCI in the computer science curriculum.)

Following on from that, we felt there was a need for more rigorous evaluation methods, which ideally should be able to provide more solid evidence than just our own intuitions, or the enthusiastic response of the students (gratifying though that may be), to back up claims of improved quality and efficiency.

### It's all in the mind

Of the seven position papers, only two directly touched on evaluation. One of these, from Jan Swanson and Patrik Holt at Heriot-Watt University, concerned a metric (mind maps) which could provide a key assessment tool for the measurement of the learning achieved through learning support material, whether accessed in distance learning mode, or as

part of an on-campus taught course. It was acknowledged in discussion that the very process of constructing a mind map is itself a learning experience, so that the measuring tool, as is so often the case, may affect the quantity being measured. In addition to its potential for assessing the learning gains, mind maps also offer the possibility, through cluster analysis in a cohort of learners, of diagnosing strengths and weaknesses in knowledge acquisition and understanding, allowing educators to adapt content delivery and course management to address any areas of difficulty uncovered.

### Chewin' the cud

The other evaluation-related position paper, by Terry Mayes of Glasgow Caledonian University, reported the results of a large-scale evaluation of the learning benefits of exposure to what Terry calls 'tertiary courseware'; that is, records of previous learning encounters, such as question and answer sessions, and in particular 'task directed discussions' (based on the games used to elicit dialogues in foreign language teaching). In this evaluation it was found that the learners who made most use of the tertiary courseware showed the highest short-term learning gains. There was also evidence that these learners made significant gains in confidence as to how to frame questions, how to engage effectively in dialogue, and how to apply the specialised terms and vocabulary appropriate to the domain.

In effect, the tertiary courseware helped learners, in a very tangible way, to become successful and fully participating members of the learning community. These results represent one of the rare examples of solid evidence that access to an innovative learning resource really can bring tangible and quantifiable learning benefits. In the earlier part of his position paper Terry also argued that the conventional measures of usability applied to teaching or learning support systems are often unimportant or even irrelevant, because real learning does not take place at the interface, but through activities and tasks which encourage the learner to apply, structure and relate new knowledge to existing mental structures. Indeed, it could be argued, and has been



demonstrated experimentally, that, at least in a problem-solving context, making a system too easy to use (for example by providing direct manipulation in place of a command language interface), can actually inhibit learning rather than improve it – perhaps because it reduces the need to think deeply and carefully about the problem. This theme came to the surface several times throughout the workshop, but no clear conclusion was reached, beyond a general feeling that much more research was needed to tease out the contexts and environments in which particular types of interaction are particularly supportive of learning, or tend to inhibit it.

## Sharing recipes

Participative design is another of the techniques taught in HCI courses which we felt was seldom applied by teachers or tutors in the design of educational resources. An honourable exception to this was described in the position paper from Peggy Gregory, Stuart MacFarlane and Janet Read at the University of Central Lancashire. They reported some success in the thorough-going application of participative design in an educational setting (a school), albeit not to teach HCI.

In their paper they discuss the spectrum in the degree of learner participation from ‘informant design’, where most or all of the input comes from the instructor, to ‘facilitated design’, where learners contribute substantially in initiating ideas and realising designs. This paper also touched on a different kind of participation, where previous learners participate in the design of resources to be used by subsequent learners – an idea which linked nicely with Terry Mayes’s work on vicarious learning through tertiary courseware. The paper also described an experiment, where learners were allowed to choose what areas of the course to concentrate on, thus encouraging them to identify areas where they had most difficulty. They were then asked to design teaching material (web pages) to explain key concepts to other learners, and to illustrate the solution of a selected set of problems. This was an example of ‘learning by teaching’ which others agreed might be the most effective learning activity of all.

## Finding a better diet

We were very pleased to have the participation in the workshop of Colin Calder from Aberdeen’s learning technology unit. Colin is an expert designer of educational resources for a wide range of disciplines and domains.

In his position paper he made the important point that maybe the most important contribution from the advent and wide adoption of learning technology has been the incentive it gives lecturers to enquire and reflect about their teaching methods and learning outcomes. As Colin put it, ‘the journey may be more important than the destination’.

The paper also reminded us that novel approaches to teaching and learning usually evolve from existing methods and practice, rather than springing spontaneously from detached reflection. We often get our best ideas while in the throes of delivering, as well as when reflecting afterwards about what did and did not work.

Colin’s paper included the intriguing comment that, ‘Evaluation methodologies are the key to developing new interfaces and new pedagogical approaches’. Unfortunately we did not get the chance to follow this up in subsequent discussions – it would have been intriguing to hear about cases where this had actually happened. It’s certainly how we

think the world ought to be, but examples from HCI course design appear quite scarce.

## Smooth solution

Another position paper, from Ian Benest of York University, dealt with a specific aspect of learning technology, the production and delivery of multimedia presentations for use in a conventional lecture context, and the encapsulation of presentation and lecture for subsequent on-line access. Ian has pioneered the development of tools for the smooth production of presentations which incorporate graphics, animation, video and audio, with a spoken narrative which can be synchronised with any of the other elements.

The complete record of a lecture, including the spoken narrative and multimedia elements, can be captured and made available for subsequent on-line use. Ease of use has been a primary goal in the design of the tool, as has the adoption of open non-proprietary file and data standards and formats. Ian reported promising results from initial attempts at automatic analysis of presentations and lectures for the quality and difficulty of the content, offering the enticing prospect of automated heuristic evaluation of this type of learning resource, allowing educators the opportunity to adapt and improve their material before it is exposed to learners.

## Packed lunches

In their position paper Sandra Cairncross and Tom McEwan from Napier explored further the ideas of user-centred design, and the extent to which these methods are applied in practice in the design of HCI and multimedia learning resources. They remarked that our injunction to students, as from parents to children from time immemorial, is too often ‘Do as we say and not as we do!’

Sandra and Tom have played a central part in developing ‘teaching packs’ to cope with the growing demand for high quality HCI teaching across the computing curriculum at Napier, and in particular in partner colleges in other parts of the world. This is an intermediate strategy between standard on-campus teaching by research-focused subject specialists, and ‘distance learning’ in the sense provided for example by the Open University. It might be described as ‘human-mediated distance learning’, in that the transmission of the material to the students, and the organisation and supervision of practical work, is mediated by a lecturer or tutor at the learners’ place of study – though the local lecturers will not necessarily themselves be subject experts, at least at the start.

A highly user-centred approach was taken to teaching pack development, the users here including both the staff who would use the teaching packs as the basis of their teaching, and the learners who would follow the course.

However, other issues need to be taken into account in the development and maintenance of such teaching packs (a process which has strong parallels to standard software development processes). In particular personalisation is of great importance – this is the means by which the local teacher is able to supply relevant context and adapt the material to the local learning situation. This in effect represents the final stage of the user-centred design process, applied at or just before ‘execution’ time.



## Mix it all together...

These many-faceted inputs were thrown into the pot and mixed thoroughly by the workshop participants. Some disappeared without trace, some bubbled to the surface, and others pleasingly bonded into polypeptide chains which we were able to extract and hang out to dry on a friendly local PowerBook, under the expert control of Jo Hyde. These included reusability, a recurrent and indeed perennial theme of education workshops. We know the duplication and re-invention of the wheel that goes on all over the country is wasteful and unnecessary. Maybe at last the mood has changed enough that we really will see a way forward to effective sharing and reuse of resources.

Making the lecturer's life easier was a substrand, though we would perhaps prefer to relabel this as 'quality improvement' or at least 'concentrating on what best supports the learners'. The problem though, which takes us back to where we started, is that we don't really know what best supports learners, and even if we did, the answer would surely be context-dependent. (There's surely an echo here of Wendy MacKay's idea of 'co-adaptive' design, which may well have as much resonance in the design of educational resources as in software development.)

## ...and what have you got?

The workshop did not really get to grips with the thorny question of how quality could be measured, at least in relation to the effectiveness of the learning experience provided. We did agree though that the core of what we are trying to convey is a skill – inspired and informed by knowledge and some theory of course – and a process. The skill develops from practice in following the process, and in this way the learner develops a growing understanding of how the background knowledge and theory can inform and influence the design choices made.

Several of the workshop participants had been involved in the MANTCHI project, where small units of practical work (dubbed 'atoms') were defined by participating lecturers, used by students both in the lecturer's own and in other participating institutions, the solutions assessed by the original supplier, the appraisals fed back to the students for further comment and discussion, and then the whole collection packaged up as a piece of tertiary courseware (called a 'trail'), for subsequent reuse later.

This project represents one of the few recorded examples of collaborative design and delivery of HCI teaching and learning resources. Julian Newman at Glasgow Caledonian University has obtained funding for further work on the security and access aspects of the MANTCHI model, but plans to provide a complete environment (or 'chamber', to follow the particle physics metaphor) for the management, maintenance, and trading of atoms and trails, have not yet come to fruition. In any case, perhaps the granularity of the model is still too coarse. An atom is intended to represent about one week's work for a student group for whom HCI is about 25% of their full-time load. Maybe we need something much smaller (electrons or even mesons – fifteen-minute or even five-minute snippets of work) as the basic unit of learning currency exchange.

## Cleaning up afterwards

A strong suggestion from Steve Draper was that exchanging experience may be just as important as sharing resources – that it would be valuable for all of us to record at the end of a course our reflections on what worked, what didn't work, what was well received and what wasn't.

Of course such 'teaching reports' will be subjective and context-dependent (unless we have the luxury of participation in a funded evaluation project), but may nevertheless be of great value to others in designing and planning their own courses for delivery in a different context. This input and the discussion that followed led us to the main tangible resolution at the end of the workshop – that we should establish, with the help of LTSN-ICS (who acceded enthusiastically to our request for support), a web-based repository for contributed resources of all kinds, together with a mailing list for discussion, draft contributions, and collaborative resource development.

The elephant was a prominent symbol informing all the deliberations of the conference, and some may irreverently wonder if our workshop had some of the characteristics of the fabled pachyderm which laboured mightily and brought forth a gnat. But I don't believe so. Though resolutions to share resources and experience have emerged before, I believe that through our work on 3rd September, building on the highly successful Portsmouth HCI educators' workshop in March, a sufficient head of steam has been created to ensure success this time. Crucially we have the support of both the HCI Group's newly-established Education and Practice strategy group (chaired by Janet Finlay), and of the LTSN-ICS centre in Belfast. The new web site and mail list has now been set up – see the panel below.

Meanwhile if you would like to find out more, or be added to the mailing list, please contact John Rosbottom, [john.rosbottom@port.ac.uk](mailto:john.rosbottom@port.ac.uk) in the first instance.

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LTSN have now established a new JISCmail list (<http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/LTSN-ICS-HCI.html>) to which all attendees were added, with Steve Draper acting as the interim list owner/moderator.

The website is in draft form at <http://www.ics.ltsn.ac.uk/resources/hci/> Please have a look and let Aine know your thoughts on structure and current content. What other resources do we need to add? How can we encourage participation from a wider HCI audience?

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# "All knowledge, the totality of all questions and answers, is contained in the dog."

Cassandra Hall

I'm not normally duplicitous – with a name like mine there's no need; no one believes me anyway. But I am well aware that MS continue to sponsor British HCI conferences and are very generous. And although I may think that anyone who runs a marathon for a laugh and talks about beer is a bit of a bore, I didn't want the Culwin circus to have any bad mouthing because of anything I said. Especially after such enthusiastic and generous hospitality. (Is that guy for real?)

So I've put off reviewing XP till now. And in any case, I've only just got my latest machine complete with XP as a birthday present. This is my first serious attempt to use it, though I had Jean Michel Jarre playing on Media Player within half an hour of its arrival. I know what's important. The machine is a good platform, Pentium 4, plenty of space, fast and with a 19-inch monitor because I like games. I'm not saying it's powerful but when I switch it on, the lights dim over the green and leafy village I live in and the house warms up in an instant.

When I started up XP, the colours hurt my eyes. It was like being back at primary school and at first my attempts to write learned stodge have felt rather silly. It didn't feel serious. OK it felt fun and don't get me wrong, I have nothing against fun. If someone as respectable as Andrew Monk starts saying fun is serious and at British HCI's showpiece as well, then who am I to throw custard tarts at it? But there's fun and fun. And I like my fun to complement what I do and somehow it's very difficult for me to be erudite – ok pompous – when surrounded by what feels like something a five year old should be using. Windows had gone from something vaguely studious to being covered by what looks like those sticky shapes children play with; you know the sort that kids make terrible pictures with, that you see stuck on colleagues' pin-boards. They seem to go with harassed looks and crumpled, uncoordinated clothes and depress me. I digress. However, it is easily reconfigured and I sobered mine to reflect the serious nature I wish I could adopt. (I have to say here that I'm using Windows XP Home Edition and it could be that the Office Edition is a model of sobriety.)

There are still some very counter-intuitive ways in which it operates. Copying puzzled me for a bit as it still seems to act in ways I can't predict. I found navigating in the directories difficult with XP which is a cross between a browser and the old Windows interface. It's as if MS were scared to throw away the water wings when it came to it. But it meant I kept closing windows thinking I had another one behind only to discover I'd closed the whole lot down. Luckily, the machine is fast or it'd have been out of the window in the first ten minutes. My parents never even contemplated naming me Patience. The menu buttons at the bottom of the interface shift about a lot and have so far resisted my attempts to nail 'em down. They make me feel seasick.

But there's stuff I love. The recycle bin now occupies the bottom right hand corner like my old waste bin did on the Mac (98 kept returning it to the top left whenever it got cross with me) and I feel at home again. There's a new calm about

XP that, for all the hype, I didn't expect and certainly doesn't come over in any of the demonstrations I'd seen prior to purchase. I was expecting something loud and American and I've got something that is actually quiet and kind and soothing. I agree, it's not what you expect from something called XP. It's difficult to take anything serious that begins with an X for God sake. But that aside, it's as if MS have at last had a real go at giving people what they need. And although I feel there are things that will still leave the poor sausages scratching their heads, I liked the way in which I had a feeling that I was being considered for once and I was once again reminded of Ken Dye – that guy's keynote at Lille still gets to me. I can't help wondering if what he said does actually reflect some sympathy for users tucked away at MS.

The desktop is now described as having 'appearance and themes' which I liked. The top level is uncluttered in a way that '98 never managed to be. XP has a tidier and actually more authoritarian mind for all its pretence at offering freedom and in that it reflects good teaching and good parenting. Give guidelines and the illusion of freedom which is what the Mac did if any of you remember the famous airline joke comparison between the then current operating systems. And XP certainly fits in better with how I think about things though that might be that my first love was the Mac and I've never really got over the divorce. During set up, and whilst messing around for my first hour or so, I played Jarre's *Hong Kong* (and, yes, this is relevant). I couldn't help feeling that Jarre captured the excitement and professionalism I felt with the new system, warts and all. All it's lacking is that mouth-watering French accent and the brown eyes...

What do I miss about Windows '98? Not much at all; though my initial software purchase gave me problems, that's not XP's fault. MS Works is fine for home users but not a power user like me. Every time I open it, a fit of sneering passes over me. You try to switch off contempt when you're faced with tasks consisting of 'lawn and garden worksheets', 'grocery lists', 'caregiver instructions'. Sorry, no can do. And embarrassingly I missed the dog I had for helper on Word; the snuffling noises, the doggy enthusiasm. I never minded when it was useless because I realise from watching friends with their dogs that dogs aren't meant to help. They're designed to get in the way, waste time and be totally pointless along with their desperately-trying-to-fill-a-yawning-gap-in-my-life owners.

My students and I did some work on the MS avatars and we found that the dog – Power Pup – was the least disliked; the Paperclip was the most disliked. MS have very wisely adopted a pooch as the default avatar for XP though it isn't like Power Pup AND disconcertingly licks the screen and scratches. (I absent-mindedly wiped the licked spot and started worrying about fleas. My best friend, who does own a dog, says she wants to pat the thing when it wags its tail. Clever bit of work that MS!) But in fact, my hunting hound appeared for a bit and has now run off somewhere showing only too well why I'll never own a dog even if I didn't mind dog hairs on my designer clothes or wasn't firmly of the belief that *plus je vois les chiens, plus j'admire les hommes*, to





misquote Madame Roland. I just hope it has an ID disc on it. Actually, given the nature of this new OS it's probably in the XP stray dog pound.

Luckily, Office 2000 comes complete with dog which also scratches (the guy that designed it presumably designed the XP one and needs to be told about flea powder). And although it's quieter, it has already caused a great deal of amusement in a respectable fun way. My best friend reliably tells me that the puzzled nuzzling and whimpering the dog does at the screen when I repeat an idiotic command is just what real dogs do when they need to attract your attention. I believe her. The screen dog is effective in getting my attention that way, though I must admit I tormented it a bit at first just to see what it did. But this is what I mean by serious fun. Given XP's desire to report everything, I'm probably going to end up banned from keeping an XP dog.

Will XP catch on? I don't know. MS can make it catch on of course; they have ways and means to offer free upgrade to non-XP users. But whether people will shift to it willingly with or without the bribes, I don't know. My machine was bought from Dell and arrived ready to roll but with the bizarre coloured interface I've described already (the guy who does the set up needs to come to some of my classes) and my first few minutes were very uncomfortable. I felt the kind of despair you feel when a lover moves into your house and puts things in places you used to put other things in.

I really wanted to wipe the machine and reinstall Windows '98 not because I liked it but because at least I'd grown accustomed to its foibles. But, having resigned myself to the fact I invited XP here and it's now done the equivalent to moving in its socks and pants, I guess I'm not that upset I made the first move. Am I bowled over? No. I'm bowled over by the machine but not the operating system. Give me anything fast and powerful and I go weak at the knees. But I feel that XP isn't going away without first making the point that computers are no longer designed solely for work places – an idea that Andrew so passionately and fluently supported at the conference. And MS's attempts to bring fun to the desk top may not be entirely to my taste but I recognise that they fit into what the larger market may well need.

I also have to say I'm more impressed than I ever felt with Windows whatever number they stuck on it and including Windows NT which I respect if rather grudgingly. XP is stable. I haven't crashed it once. When programs have failed the task manager kicks in and restores order. OK anyone unused to computers will wonder what the gobbledegook is but I've learned to be grateful for small mercies. And hey, I know, operating systems are meant to be stable but this is planet Earth.

One amusing and rather touching aspect of XP is its desire to communicate. There are things it couldn't do because I didn't install the modem connection until a few days later (the birthday present assumed an ISDN connection here which I don't have) and it sounded almost wistful each time it registered its failure to do things for me. I had a real sense of a personality behind the operating system for the first time since I gave up using the Mac. XP wants to help. It is sociable and desperate to communicate. It reflects a society reaching out vast distances electronically. It yearns to network. It had all the melancholy of a lonely child, forced to stare through the window at children kicking a ball about in the street and longing to join them. But when I installed the modem connection, then it sang.

By the way, Media Player is fun. You can play about with downloaded skins to your heart's content which should please Noam Tractinsky and Tali Lavie if they're still into that, though the play list got me very puzzled at first. And Jean Michel Jarre? Well, he can move his socks in any time he likes just as long as he brings all the musicians and the sound system with him. But, sorry Jean Michel, I get to play with the synth!

Postscript – And no, this isn't a furore, I'm just hurt. It was unfair of Fintan Culwin (even in jest) to suggest, during the closing session, that I'd release a reviewer's comments without permission. For the record, I don't forward e-mail without permission either. And don't you do that either, gentle reader. That way lies deceit and the abyss. But my grandmother used to say: "Väck inte den björn som sover". Don't wake the sleeping bear. Let sleeping dogs lie, is the English equivalent. I despise dishonesty even in dogs. Once again, let me say publicly that Professor Fingerborg's review was released by him. It's not my fault the guy proves my theories of stupidity and arrogance as easily as falling off a log. Or should that be dog? Or planet Zog?

And yes I did enjoy 2002. The three keynotes were the best I've been subjected to for an age. Wendy was a delight and Les will be invited to the Invisible University at the next opportunity – all that niceness, intelligence and modesty bundled together with musical talent. God was in a good mood when he made that. Andrew's last night at the proms finish was a treat, stirring stuff served up with dignity and charm. I could have hugged the committee for that alone.

Thanks 2002... Memorable indeed. Invisible? You must be joking. You were about as invisible as, as, as, ... an elephant.

Planet Zog to Prof Potty: Come in please. Your humanising chip is showing alarming degradation. People are suspicious. Time to beam up.

*Cassandra Hall*

## The Invisible University My PhD An Interface that Effectively Relieves User Frustration?

**Anne Smith**



I recently attended the 6th Human-Centred Technology Workshop held by the University of Sussex, Brighton, 26th – 27th September 2002. The British Computer Society's specialist Human Computer Interaction Group (BHCIG) sponsored the workshop, and delegates were given the chance to write a piece about 'My PhD'. I have therefore seized this opportunity for promoting my research area to a wider audience.

As the title above states, my research is about reducing user frustration at the interface, once detected. This research fits into the area known as Affective Computing, which looks at how to give computers the necessary abilities to detect and respond to a user's emotional state. The area Affective Computing is a relatively new and emerging area and has been mentioned as a good area to be in. Others are naturally intrigued and curious when you mention the very idea of giving computers these kinds of abilities.





My first year of research is just completed and I am in the process of carrying out my first pilot experiment, which incorporates a text-based agent, which uses empathy, sympathy and active listening skills when interacting with the user in order to help reduce user frustration. This experiment is based upon similar research, which has been carried out before by Jonathan T. Klein at the MIT Media Lab in Massachusetts. I'd like to thank Jonathan, as his thesis 'Computer Response to User Frustration' inspired my own research.

During the workshop mentioned above, one of the talks was entitled 'The process of doing a PhD' which was given by invited speaker Professor Eileen Scanlon, Institute of Educational Technology, Open University. I would like to expand on this as to what carrying out My PhD means to me.

The process of carrying out a PhD so far has been interesting, exciting and new, full of the unexpected and unknown, but also of great expectation. As many readers will know, the PhD builds strong character, patience and understanding, increased abilities in presentation skills, writing skills and interacting with others, the ability to use one's own initiative ... the list goes on.

What waits around the corner when the PhD is completed is hard to imagine. Only by turning the dream into reality will I reveal the true outcome of completing My PhD, although I am sure the expectations of me then will be all the greater!

**Anne Smith**

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## Book reviews

*Mechanizing Proof: Computing, Risk, and Trust*  
Donald MacKenzie  
The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts 2001  
ISBN 0-262-13393-8

So, I hear you cry, you think that I, a time-poor, yet cash-poor, HCI practitioner would benefit from reading a thick book on mathematical proof and program verification? Well prove it!

Donald MacKenzie, a professor of sociology at Edinburgh, and long-standing critic of technology and its (mis)uses, declares a temporary personal armistice in the science wars and gives us a superb history and review of issues that should be read by all technologists who are at risk of letting their self-critical judgement lapse and allowing their hubris to exceed their ability.

MacKenzie's opening chapters are valuable history lessons, each addressing a single theme. MacKenzie recalls software bugs where lives were at risk. In the case of the infamous 1960 moonrise bug the entire planet was mere minutes away from nuclear annihilation as US intercontinental ballistic missile tracking software mistook the moon rising over the horizon as a Soviet first strike. He also surveys attempts within artificial intelligence to build automated theorem provers and logical reasoning engines and revisits the famous controversies in AI, among them the claimed limits to knowledge that can be captured by logic and logical proof alone.

MacKenzie's survey of some of the most famous and controversial proofs in mathematics, including Fermat's last theorem, the sphere packing problem and the four-colour theorem for map colouring, is particularly interesting for revealing what a polite and even-tempered world HCI is compared with that inhabited by professional mathematicians. The last survey MacKenzie gives is of program verification and methods used to construct correctness proofs of software. MacKenzie shows remarkable scholarship in these chapters, and his explanatory gifts are such that the reader does not even have to follow the physicist and mathematician Roger Penrose's policy of skipping the equations in supposedly popular science books. Despite the topics addressed by the book, it is entirely free of mathematics, but the reader is still left feeling that they

understand the reasons and reasoning underlying many powerful ideas, without being patronized.

These opening history chapters also sketch MacKenzie's thesis and highlight where the book is valuable to HCI, where the concerns of others impact on HCI, and where HCI should be concerned with the impact of others. It has been said, for example, that computer security will be the next killer app for HCI, the interplay of technology design and human psychology is obvious and it may prove to be a field in which we can live up to the goals set out in Chris Johnson's devastating critique of HCI in his introduction to the INTERACT99 proceedings. Johnson stressed that we should provide methods and ideas that lead system development, not trail behind systems that have either failed or succeeded, both often without our participation. MacKenzie shows the perils that await those who would enter the murky world of security. Despite formal methods being adopted to verify designs of secure systems, with substantial financial backing from government agencies, MacKenzie reveals a world of inter-agency squabbling and concealing information. He describes research tools being abandoned as their academic creators' values, of openness and trust, collide with assumptions that even proof-checkers are plagued by Wittgenstein's demon (in the form of a spy or other evil-doer) that adds and removes symbols from a deductive sequence. And he describes security standards being devised or watered down to match what is possible, rather than what might actually be secure – if only this term could even be defined in a meaningful way.

*Mechanizing Proof* is valuable, too, in reminding us of Harold Thimbleby's HCI89 paper that argued that we cannot deal with many issues until the matter of bugs as usability failings has been addressed more seriously. A debate about the usability or otherwise of tabbed dialogues is moot when the user is confronted by an unresponsive blue screen. MacKenzie gives a valuable history of the efforts computer scientists have undertaken to prove the correctness of their programs. Bugs, though, are our poor. They always seem to be with us and they are an embarrassment to our society. Formal proof, however, has not seemed to be the way forward. Confusion reigns as most of us wonder why software is so bad while pioneers in program verification



wonder why software is not worse, despite the formalists' offers of help largely being ignored.

MacKenzie is a sociologist and analyst of science as the product of a social process. If he adopts the extreme post-modernist view, that regards science as just another story that humankind tells itself, these views are not apparent in his writing. The gulf between what scientists aim for and how they work in practice, that MacKenzie describes, offers a manifesto for how we might choose to rethink how we do HCI and how we develop software, so that we might find a way through the confusion detailed in the opening chapters.

HCI, it has often been claimed, is subject to a theory gap; we have no principles or theories of design, psychology or interaction sufficient to alone produce usable systems. Yet for a discipline that has yet to see an Isaac Newton, we seem to be heading quickly down the road towards what Marvin Minsky termed physics envy: researchers working on small, narrowly focused topics with little understanding of, or communication with, researchers in different areas.

MacKenzie argues that proof, risk and trust in computing must be determined by means other than deductions made by a mathematically literate elite that can only be understood by other members of the elite. Trust comes about by proof of argument within a community, an idea that MacKenzie makes throughout, forcefully supported by his studies of computing history.

The four-colour theorem (which states that a map of adjacent countries, where a pair of countries that share a border may not be inked in the same colour, can be completely inked using only four colours) was proved with the aid of a computer that checked many thousand possible cases that the problem could be summarized to. Yet mathematicians see its proof as suspect and doubtful, even though all of the checking code was published along with all of the cases in a mammoth 400-page paper.

Andrew Wiles' proof of Fermat's last theorem, by contrast, is rightly hailed as a fine achievement, but, as described by MacKenzie, the refereeing process for its publication leaves one aghast. Its proof was worked through between Wiles and the referees in almost a co-habiting, mentoring, process, rather than through an anonymous critique. Reviewers had to be coaxed through the proof through dialogue and debate.

That the Earth survived the moonrise bug was through argument overturning trust in the system that would have led to apocalypse. Controllers were able to argue that if an attack had been launched, then where were the tracking data they would expect to see? And why would the Soviet Union start a war while Krushchev was at that moment in New York?

Trust in software, MacKenzie argues, must also come about through its publication and through its developers proving its reliability through debate and dialogue other than just by giving a formal proof alone. If we are to trust our technology, we must prove through rigorous argument of which formal proof must be a small part, not the whole. This, MacKenzie argues, requires a new culture of software development; the gap between those that understand the limitations of the machines and those that do not (be they management or users) must be narrowed. We should open up processes and product to honest scrutiny and we should have to make our case. This poses inevitable risks. In needing to ship product, we let marketing make unsustainable claims that reduce the user's trust, but how many passengers would fly if they knew the processes and standards (unnervingly

described by MacKenzie) by which airplane software is designed, built and tested? Given, though, the stark figures in the final chapter that of the 1100 deaths it is possible to directly link to computer software, 90% are due to the user interface, we have a lot of ground to make up if the HCI community is to be trusted.

MacKenzie has written a valuable, highly readable, text on how we might understand our trade and how we might begin to earn that trust while knowing our limitations.

Mark Treglown lectures in software engineering and ethical issues in I.T. at the School of Computer Science and I.T. at the University of Nottingham. His research interests include metaphor and interactive system design, and the application of formal methods to usability.

**Mark Treglown**  
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*The Usability Business: Making the Web Work*  
Edited by Joanna Bawa, Pat Dorazio and Lesley Trenner  
Springer 2001  
ISBN: 1-85233-484-3  
pp 161, price unknown (Amazon price £29.50)

This book provides a great number of reports from the 'coal face'. There are numerous accounts of the difficulties encountered when dealing with organizational politics, adapting usability skills to work with new applications and to work within various development methodologies.

The book emphasizes the need for usability to be 'sold' to businesses by clearly identifying the business benefits of integrating usability into the product development cycle. Even those businesses that see the importance of usability need to be able to measure its effectiveness to justify the expenditure. For those nascent usability experts just emerging from academia, this is a very important lesson to absorb in order to ease smoothly into a fruitful professional career.

Interestingly as the hype and novelty wears off the Internet the issue arises of integrating a business's web offerings more closely with the other communication channels maintained by the business. This shows a more mature vision of the Internet as only one of a number of channels through which customers can experience a business/brand and that each channel should complement each other rather than each trying to be standalone. The customer experience is coloured by each of these communication channels and when managed well can enhance the overall brand reputation.

Time and again the importance of clarifying the scope of the usability expert(s) involvement is mentioned. It is a well-acknowledged problem within the profession that the usability professional's role can overlap with other team members. Without a formal discussion of the role of each team member it is very easy to 'stand on the toes' of other team members, which inevitably leads to tension within projects. This lack of clarity about what usability professionals can provide can also lead to clients asking for work that is outside the remit of usability professionals. In this instance the advice of the book, which I agree with completely, is to defer to other professionals for those sections, such as brand experts, web designers, etc. I would sound a note of caution, however, to ensure the balance of power is tightly retained with the company originally contracted to do the work or there will be a dilution of control.



The political quagmire develops throughout the book, rearing its ugly head in case study after case study. Political 'buy-in' seems to be a key element in getting a project underway to provide the necessary clout. For me the most memorable phrase in the book is:

'Responsibility without power is an unenviable position in which to find oneself in any organization'.

Effective and efficient communication with the other members of the development team is also key to highlight the benefits of having usability in the development cycle. What really comes across from this book is how tough it can be as a usability professional: constantly having to prove your contribution is valuable; having to do battle with often hostile team mates who do not understand your presence on the project and having to twist yourself around various existing development methodologies to ensure at least a measure of usability gets included in the project.

I have to say that I was quite worn down by the time I had read this entire book. Although there are only 161 pages, each one seems to recount details of tough projects, disappointing outcomes, compromise and political wrangling. Having been in the usability business for many years I have experienced my share of hurdles, but I have also managed some very fruitful projects and retained some extremely happy clients. So, on the whole though the book is very revealing it would have been nice to see the case studies balanced with some more positive ones.

**Arlene Kline** Usability Specialist  
The Usability Company  
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**Wireless World**

Edited by Barry Brown, Nicola Green and Richard Harper  
Springer 2002  
ISBN 1-85233-477-0  
pp 229, £ 35.00

I made the mistake of looking like I had nothing to do, now that HCI 2002 is over, and Springer have kindly leapt into the breach by sending a whole batch of books from their CSCW series edited by Diaper and Sanger. This one grabbed me first because it's mobiles again, just when I said there isn't much on them in English. The things people will do to prove me wrong.

This is yet another nice collection with info tech people chipping in but also some sociologists and a geographer. The book is divided into four parts. After an introduction comes a section on locating technology (which turns out to be about the use of mobile technology and the new boundaries it has made). Part 3 is a series of sociological studies and part 4 looks at use and design.

I've particularly enjoyed Gant and Kiesler on the blurring of distinctions between work and personal life. It was nice for me to realise that I'm not the only person to have mixed both up so completely that my life resembles an Irish stew. But Geoff Cooper on social theory and the mobile world needs to be read as well. It's good. Knowing some Heidegger will help but I have a book to suggest on that too, so you have no excuse.

I also liked Ged Murtagh for having a go at explaining ethnomethodology and mobile phone design and there are other articles about the mobile office and the problems of

mobile technology. It really is a delightful confection of slants on the mobile technology that should keep those of us fascinated by it, fascinated just a bit longer. It's broader than the Katz and Arkus collection so if mobile technologies is your thing then you should get this rather than Katz and vice versa. To be honest, I think you need both just for the sheer joy of the quality of the contents.

By the way, those of you who judge books by their covers and chose your life partners for their looks will be put off this series. The covers I've seen are dull and the colours are ghastly. I was really surprised to find such lively and readable text inside what looked like a very stuffy cover designed to appeal to the sort of academics I avoid. So if you recommend them to project students or MSc students (particularly BIT ones) then warn them not to be put off by the tough exterior – the inside is soft and chewy, totally delicious and moreish. I suggest putting copies in the library and buying one for yourself.

This is the first in the series I've read but I have others and will get to them eventually, flicking through pages has left me impressed. There's one thing though and I expect I'm being childish; Diaper and Sanger say nothing about their part in what looks to be an excellent series. So can someone tell me what their roles as editors are? Are they going around press-ganging people into writing for it or what? Come on Dan, tell me. I'm intrigued. A few brief words as series editors would have been nice.

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**The Essential Guide to User Interface Design**

Wilbert O Galitz  
Wiley 2002  
ISBN 0-471-08464-6-90000  
pp 760, £40.95

I've been asked if I read the books I review all the way through and the answer is, not this one. At 760 pages it makes *War and Peace* look short and it was too heavy for me to read on the train. It's a big book and most of it is taken up with words (which isn't me trying to sound like Hamlet but to point out that white space and pictures aren't making up the bulk of this tome).

Galitz says that the book's aim is to 'present the important practical guidelines for good interface and screen design...' and 'provide materials that... will allow our users to become more productive.' And I believe him. This is everything you need to know about HCI and a bit more besides. This is not a book for the faint hearted or people who can't be bothered to have things explained to them. Bill Galitz subscribes to the idea that if you have a design rule then you need to understand why you are applying it and he is meticulous in his explanations.

I was a bit puzzled by structure. Call me pedantic but I couldn't understand why in Part 1 – The User Interface – we have two chapters and then Part 2 – The User Interface Design Process – is all steps. I grow old, as Prufrock said, but I'd rather have chapters all the way through. I know the design process is procedural, up to a point, but I was just confused and disgruntled by the terminology. By the way, I think the argument about whether we do usability testing or usability evaluation may have been won by the testers. If this





book catches on like I think it should then they've definitely won.

Part 1, as I've explained, is an introduction to the interface. There's a nice potted history and an examination of the two types of interface in use today – graphical and web based. This is very much a computer interface book, not a book about interfaces per se.

Part 2 goes through the processes of designing interfaces and bothers to look at what the client's aims in business might actually be. It's interesting to see things like training and documentation discussed here, rather than at the end, because, of course, business will be bothered about how much time they'll need to set aside for training people to use the system that you are busily concentrating on designing for them. This is nicely done. Our priorities as HCI experts aren't the same as our clients and we need to recognise that. There's psychological stuff about users (the author is a graduate in psychology) and enough about screen design to keep everyone happy.

If anyone is not sure what to get students to buy for HCI courses now that Dix et al are a little elderly (or at least their book is) and Preece et al have done something a bit different and have scared some of you, then the answer is probably this book. It's a good read, well structured, interesting and friendly but it's also very well referenced and Bill Galitz has done his homework. His explanations are full and direct and will save students hunting about for explanations they are missing. There are numerous examples, summaries of findings and plenty there to give them ideas. It's ideal; if a little heavy to carry about. At £40 odd it might sound a lot to them but they won't need to buy anything else and they can shave pounds off that by buying through online outlets.

But am I impressed? Yes, I am. It's a funny title for such a large book but ignoring that this could be the answer to the age-old question of 'what book shall we give the students'. They won't need a library with this one and it is readable and dipable into if there's such a word. (If not then I've just invented it). In any case, I've just proved you can dip into it and come out refreshed. Whatever you decide, get a copy for your own shelves but make sure they're reinforced first. As I say, it's nicely researched and carefully referenced. It'll save you hours.

Timely. Practical. Reliable. Indeed, Wilbert Galitz. All those and more. And if you can find it in your heart to go over to 'usability evaluation' not 'testing' in the third edition then you can count me as number 1 fan.

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**EuroHaptics 2003**  
The 3rd European Conference on Haptics  
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#### *Perpetual Contact*

Edited by James E Katz and Mark Aakhus  
Cambridge University Press 2002  
ISBN 9 780521 002660  
pp 391, £17.95

This isn't your average HCI book but I read this and Myerson's book over the summer so for those of you who are into mobile technology here it is. The rest of you can turn the page quickly. The number of books on mobile phones and particularly text messaging, which is what I was interested in, are very few (unless you can read Finnish) so this book was a treat for me.

Katz and Aakhus have done their work as editors well and have assembled a nice collection from a variety of contributors from all over the world and from different academic departments, mobile phone companies and all sorts. It is a truly remarkable collection. What is even nicer about it is that it's clear that at least some of the contributors have read the contributions of others so reading the collection is rather like being at a party where everyone else knows each other and are anxious to make you feel at home. I particularly enjoyed the work by the Finns perhaps because I have already come across so much work by them already but there are other excellent contributions. This collection is from a variety of contributors so don't expect the usual IT speak; you're more likely to trip over sociological terms.

The book is in three parts. The first takes a nationalistic view of eight countries and the impact the mobile phone has had on them. The second looks at the effect the mobile phone has had on interpersonal relationships and intimacy. The third section looks at the effect of mobiles on social groups and their structures examining the overall effect on culture and society. I was fascinated to realise the words used to describe mobiles in the various languages can tell you a lot about how the mobile is viewed and even used. What came over from reading this collection was the fact that mobiles are far from being neutral technologies and have affected cultures in quite different ways although a lot of similarities exist. The closest I can think of is how the fridge is used in America as a notice board and it doesn't get used like that here.

I must admit I enjoyed the sociological studies which came very close to how our research at SBU has panned out so this was a very interesting and entertaining book for me. I warn in advance that some of the contributions might seem too personal for some tastes. Even I baulked at one. But this is an excellent and timely collection put together by sympathetic editors who want the contributors to take the glory so have provided excellent ground preparing introductions to the collection.

Incidentally, there are nice potted biographies of each contributor. I always like those. CUP didn't send me this book so having paid for it I can say that at £17.95 it's a bargain even if as I suspect it will have a limited but very useful lifespan. But Katz and Aakhus have done a nice job and gave me an entertaining read over the summer. So thank you for that.

*Xristine Faulkner*  
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**April 5-10, 2003**  
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Today's computers are portable, held in the hand or carried in a pocket, worn as part of clothing and embedded in offices, homes and automobiles. As a result, Human-Computer Interaction as a field is increasingly concerned with a growing community of people more diverse in their background, skills and training than were yesterday's typical users.

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## Profile Catriona Campbell



Catriona began working in HCI when she worked at BP Scotland in 1989; then, at the age of 26, she became the first ever Global Head of E-Communications for Barclays. She now runs The Usability Company, one of the UK's leading usability agencies.

This year Catriona was voted one of the five most influential women in the UK Internet Industry, by *Internet Magazine*.

She was a founding board member of the Usability Professionals Association in the UK, and represents the U.K. on a worldwide working group to accredit usability professionals around the world.

She is a member of the British Computer Society HCI Executive Committee and is one of the two usability experts assisting the E-Envoy's office to produce the new UK Government Web Standards for usability and accessibility.

She is a member of HCPIG (Human Centred Process Improvement Group), which is publicising *ISO 18529 International Standard for Human Centred Design* for the UK Government.

She was also recently invited to become a member of the Editorial Board of *Interacting With Computers*.

*What is your idea of happiness?*

Being around people who understand what I do for a living

*What is your greatest fear?*

That UK organisations will continue to waste money developing digital interfaces without User-Centred-Design

*With which historical figure do you most identify?*

Doug Engelbart, the inventor of the Mouse, and a fan of HCI

*Which living person do you most admire?*

My mother, a serial entrepreneur who has achieved what she set out to do and more

*What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?*

My gullibility

*What is the trait you most deplore in others?*

Bad manners. Not saying please and thankyou.

*What vehicles do you own?*

Jaguar

*What is your greatest extravagance?*

Dinner and drinks at expensive restaurants

*What makes you feel most depressed?*

House work

*What objects do you always carry with you?*

My Nokia 9210

*What do you most dislike about your appearance?*

The early signs of ageing

*What is your most unappealing habit?*

Working late

*What is your favourite smell?*

Fresh tarmac

*What is your favourite word?*

Serendipity

*What is your favourite building?*

Glasgow Art Gallery

*What is your favourite journey?*

Eurostar to Paris

*What or who is the greatest love of your life?*

My husband Sion

*Which living person do you most despise?*

You know who you are!

*On what occasions do you lie?*

When I assure my friends and family that I am not working too hard

*Which words or phrases do you over-use?*

"sure" "no problem" "right away"

*What is your greatest regret?*

That The Usability Company wasn't around during the dot com boom to insist on usable web sites!

*When and where were you happiest?*

Here and now

*How do you relax?*

Meeting friends and family, watching films and reading

*What single thing would improve the quality of your life?*

An eight day week

*Which talent would you most like to have?*

A good song voice

*What would your motto be?*

Work hard, play hard

*What keeps you awake at night?*

Work thoughts

*How would you like to die?*

As a great grandmother surrounded by family

*How would you like to be remembered?*

As a lady who was adamant organisations should listen to their users

*Please print or type*

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