

EDITORIAL

This special issue of AJIS features a selection of the papers from the OZCHI2004 conference, which was held at the University of Wollongong between 21st and 24th of November, 2004. OZCHI is an annual conference held by Computer Human Interaction Special Interest Group (CHISIG) and is the premier Australian conference on Human Computer Interaction. OZCHI2004 attracted academics and practitioners from around the world, with delegates from Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Japan, Korea, Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, and the USA, among others.

The conference consisted of a series of papers, posters and panels on the theme of: “Supporting Community Interaction: Possibilities and Challenges” and other more general areas of interest to the HCI community.

The papers selected for this special issue give a real sense of the breadth of research carried out in the HCI community. The papers explore different technologies, address different human issues, and use different theoretical and research approaches to do so.

The papers describe novel uses of technology, such as the interactive library floor, intended to promote interaction between library users and to foster a sense of community (Krogh et al). Another paper questions the effectiveness of the current “Desktop metaphor” and proposes a number of ways in which our computing space might be better organised (Nielsen and Bodker). In an attempt to provide systems for the domestic environment, Kjeldskov et al. present the design of a Memorabilia Manager or a Family Digital Assistant, while Gronbaek and Petersen address similar domestic issues in their design of a MediaWall for use in domestic environments Bennett and Stevens explain the use of Projection Augmented Models, physical models onto which graphical textures, colours and other effects can be projected. So the papers introduce us to a variety of exciting new technological developments.

The papers also address a wide range of “human issues” – problems that arise because of the human dimension, rather than from the technology. The paper by Weakley and Edmonds looks at the needs of distributed groups of creative workers, specifically designers. Kjeldskov et al. address the emotional aspects of HCI, particularly the need to represent intimacy in a family setting, rather than in the business or organisational settings that have dominated much of HCI research. Hertzmun et al. explore the question of security and e-banking from a user’s point of view rather than from the technical aspects of encryption or user identification.

Other papers deal with the problems of HCI designers themselves and the need for special design tools or approaches. Subramanian and Champoux explain that the design of tangible interfaces i.e. interfaces which we touch, are significantly different to other design tasks and they propose some design tools and approaches for this special class of interface.

Not surprisingly, the variety of technologies and human issues covered in these papers requires a similarly broad set of research methods including case studies (Nielsen and Bodker), the use of cultural probes to explore meaning in human interaction (Kjeldskov et al), qualitative empirical studies (Gronbaek and Petersen) and prototyping (Krogh et al).

Whatever your background, there will be something new and exciting in these selected papers

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