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Edited by G. Cockton, S. W. Draper and G. R. S. Weir
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People and Computers IX

Proceedings of HCI '94,
Glasgow, August 1994

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Preface: HCI'94 — You Probably Haven't Seen It All Before

This volume contains the full papers and invited papers from the 1994 conference of the British HCI Group (a specialist group of the British Computer Society). It is a partial record of a more extensive conference that includes tutorials, panels, short papers, posters and demonstrations.

Human–Computer Interaction has been consolidating over the last few years. As a result, many recent conferences have tended to be bland, without really high points or really low points. The invited papers are forward looking and avoid blandness in that way. There are, however, many forward looking full papers. Moreover, the 1994 conference will be remembered as one that moved HCI forward in some areas, rather than just documented its current state within the established areas.

Proceedings Structure

The proceedings begin with the invited papers. This apart, the usual compromises of programme structure have not been carried forward into these proceedings. The full papers in this volume have been reorganised into broad topics. As ever in HCI, these topics are not disjoint and some papers could have easily have gone in one section as another. Readers interested in specific topics are thus advised to read through the full contents to avoid missing papers that may be of interest to them.

The second group of papers covers all stages of interactive systems development (properly iterated of course) from requirements capture and specification, through to evaluation. There are also papers on specific design issues, including application areas such as computer-assisted learning.

The third group of papers is the largest, and covers design knowledge at all levels of abstraction in interactive systems, from low level presentation to high level metaphors. Novel modalities such as eye-control and sign language are covered, as are 'intelligent' features such as adaptation and agents.

The fourth group of papers focuses on modelling the elements of HCI: humans, computers and their interaction. The hope is that such models will be of direct relevance to design. The papers in this section present work at various stages of such relevance.

The fifth set of papers addresses the problem of capturing designs and related information. The growing scope of this aspect of HCI is reflected in wide range of topics covered in the five papers.

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The last set of papers address one of the more demanding areas of HCI work. Computer-Supported Co-operative Work (CSCW) has been divided from birth between technological utopianists and workplace democrats. The papers in this section largely avoid these entrenched positions, reporting either small focussed pieces of practical work in CSCW or attempts to gain a better understanding of two important issues in CSCW.

Paper Selection

As with some past BCS HCI conferences, referees from previous years' conferences were replenished with an open invitation to referee papers. Such an approach balances the usual aristocracy with consituencies who are generally denied influence, even though they constitute the bulk of the audience for the proceedings, as well as the bulk of the conference delegates. Industrial HCI practitioners, academics who are fairly new to HCI, and graduate students all have perspectives that programme chairs need to know about. This is not to deny the real expertise of our well established referees (several of whom responded to the open invitation), and their judgements were given proper weight during paper selection. However, each paper was refereed by at least one new referee, and their reactions were often very useful.

The selection process was completed in six weeks. The final selections were made by the editors of these proceedings. We would like to thank referees for their prompt and informative reports. We would also like to thank Russel Winder for his continued highly professional work on the production of these proceedings, and his measured forbearance with those of us who let him down with deadlines.

In Summary

Old HCI hands will know there can't be a summary. HCI is too diverse. Readers new to HCI should at least skim all the papers (and the keyword index) to get a feel for current topics and approaches. Old hands should do the same, because what was once up in the air may now be more down on the ground, and what is now up in the air will be a refreshing surprise. We enjoyed seeing these proceedings through from the initial submission of 73 papers. We hope that you will enjoy reading the invited and accepted papers. Lastly, we hope that those of you at the conference will have a profitable and enjoyable week in Glasgow. We want HCI'94 to be a memorable conference.

Gilbert Cockton
Stephen Draper
George Weir

Glasgow, August 1994.

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