
Researcher-Practitioner Interaction

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Abstract

This workshop explores whether problems exist between HCI researchers and the practitioners who are consumers of research — and, if so, will endeavor to identify the dimensions of the problems and propose possible solutions. On the one hand, the workshop aims to articulate factors that may render the research literature inaccessible or irrelevant to practitioners and to suggest potential improvements. On the other hand, the workshop also aims to learn from researchers how their research could benefit from practitioner input.

Keywords

research-practice misalignment; HCI skill set; practitioner needs

ACM Classification Keywords

H5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

General Terms

Management, Human Factors, Design

Introduction

The HCI community is by no means alone in believing that a problem exists between research and practice. Over the past 30 years, research seeking to identify the nature of such problems has been conducted in several disciplines, including marketing [7], information systems [6], medicine [4], and work and organizational psychology [1]. Some of these studies have found that

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research findings are often couched in jargon, are overly technical, and are sometimes simply irrelevant to practitioners [1]. Authors attribute the problem to “academics’ ignorance of business realities” [7], p. 5, to an apparent lack of understanding of real-world problems [6] or to the way the practitioner community tackles these [8]. Others have found that practitioners appreciate and recognize the value of theory-driven research, provided its relevance is made clear to them. In their self-defense, researchers point out that “as soon as you start doing something for the industry, it’ll become applied and it won’t have the same kind of academic value” [7], p. 6, and that applied work carries no rewards for salary and promotion.

By its very nature, HCI is an applied discipline, yet signs that the research-versus-practice gap does exist are not foreign to the HCI community. We do not know the nature, the magnitude, or the dimensions of the problem, or the extent to which it may be grounded more in faulty perception than in reality. Until these issues are better understood, there is little hope of identifying workable remedies and setting achievable goals for overcoming the problems. Consequently, this workshop will bring together researchers and practitioners in an effort to clarify the issues underlying the apparent misalignment between them.

Even if it proves difficult to align research completely with the needs of HCI practice, the fact that academic researchers are also responsible for educating future HCI specialists should not be overlooked. It is crucially important to identify the knowledge and skills that HCI graduates should possess when they enter the workforce. Studies in the information systems community have found substantial differences between

academics and practitioners in importance ratings of technology variables such as hardware, network communication software, programming language and so on [6]. As Cooke and Mings [3], p. 296, so aptly point out, “How can teachers know what they teach about usability in the classroom accurately reflects workplace practices? And how do academics know that the usability research they conduct meets practitioners’ needs?”. The degree to which the SIGCHI HCI curriculum [5] is, or should be, still informing research and education, and its continued relevance to the skills and knowledge practitioners need, will be brought into the discussion in the workshop.

Goals for the Workshop

This workshop aims to gain a better understanding of the gaps between researcher and practitioner communities. The workshop will facilitate the following:

- In-depth discussion of key issues (refer to the section on “Issues and Questions to be Addressed”)
- Sharing and documenting detailed experiences of experienced and new researchers and practitioners to fulfill the immediate need of bridging the gap between these two communities
- Generation and dissemination of lessons learned and recommended solutions to the CHI community (CHI poster, SIG session, <interactions> article, wiki, etc.)

Issues and Questions to be Addressed

- How can the usefulness of research papers be improved to suit varied audiences?
- How should research be disseminated to different audiences, including practitioners?

- What are the barriers that discourage practitioners from adopting research findings?
- How can research papers be made more accessible?
- How can collaboration between the two sub-communities be increased for future CHI conferences?
- What should students of HCI and interaction design be taught about research, to prepare them for the practitioner world?

Organizers' Backgrounds

Elizabeth Buie has 35 years of experience in information systems, focusing on HCI and user experience in web sites, web applications, desktop applications, and complex systems. This includes several years in system engineering, defining and analyzing system requirements and integrating HCI into the system life cycle. Elizabeth has master's degrees in Mathematics and in Human Development. She served on the editorial board of *<interactions>*, where she edited a practitioner column, and she currently serves on the editorial board of the UPA's online Journal of Usability Studies. Elizabeth co-chaired the CHI '95 workshop on HCI in Government Contracting, and has led efforts to promote government HCI in SIGCHI and elsewhere. She is a member of ACM, SIGCHI, UPA, and IxDA. Her web site is luminanze.com.

Susan Dray is a leader in the HCI profession, nationally and internationally. She has given over 80 talks at conferences on every continent except Antarctica, including Plenary Addresses to the International Ergonomics Association, the South African Conference on HCI, and APCHI. In addition, she has published numerous papers and book chapters. She is a

Fellow of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society. . Dr. Dray was the North American editor of *Behaviour and Information Technology* and the editor of the Business column in *<interactions>*, and currently is Director of Publications for UPA. She has a doctorate in Psychology from UCLA and is a Board Certified User Experience Professional. In 2009 Dr. Dray was named an ACM Distinguished Engineer. Her web site is dray.com.

Keith Instone is the Information architecture lead for ibm.com, in the CIO's office. For the past 10 years he has focused on applying HCI research and principles to large web sites. For the first half of his career, he was an HCI researcher, specializing in how hypertext systems were being used. Keith is active in the user experience community, including serving on the board of UXnet. His web site is instone.org.

Jhilmil Jain is a User Experience Research Lead in the Intelligent Information Management Lab at Hewlett-Packard Labs. Dr. Jain received her doctorate in Computer Science with a specialization in HCI from Auburn University; she worked on projects in multimodal interaction and semantic web modeling at HP Labs and IBM Almaden Research Center. Jhilmil has several publications and patents in information visualization, user research, multimodal interaction modeling, personal information management systems, and experimental evaluation. She has served on the program committees of conferences such as CHI, HCII, and UPA; on the editorial board of the International Journal of Handheld Computing Research; and on the review boards for books on handheld computing and social media. She currently serves as the Program Chair of the CHIMIT conference. Jhilmil is a member of

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Gitte Lindgaard is Director of the Human Oriented Technology Lab (HOTLab) and professor in the Department of Psychology, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. She holds the NSERC/Cognos Senior Industry Research Chair in User-Centred Product Design, Previously, she was Principal Scientist and Head of the Human Factors Team at Telstra Research Laboratories, Australia. She is vice-chair on the IFIP Technical Committee 13 on HCI, Fellow of the HF&ESA, deputy editor of *Interacting with Computers*, and associate editor of several international HCI journals such as the *IJHCS* and *The International Journal of Mobile HCI*. Her research interests include multimedia/multimodal and mobile technologies, aesthetics and emotion in computing, and human decision making in medicine.

Arnie Lund is Principal Director, User Experience at Microsoft, User Experience Community Lead for Microsoft IT, and occasional instructor at the University of Washington. Dr. Lund's PhD is in experimental psychology (focusing on cognition, human learning and memory) from Northwestern University. He co-chaired CHI '98 and CHI 2008. A Fellow of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society, he has served on the HFES Executive Committee, where he oversaw various US standards activities, including the first US HCI standard. Dr. Lund founded the Chicago chapter of HFES and has been active in various Society positions. He was president of the Board of Certification for Professional Ergonomists, and holds a CUXP certification. Arnie has been a researcher and research manager at companies such as Bell Labs, Ameritech, US West, Sapient, and Microsoft, as well as delivering

innovative products for the companies. Published widely, he holds 20 patents.

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