

HCI, the Web and the Older Population

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ABSTRACT

This workshop on HCI and the older population will provide a forum for the presentation of current work and a platform for discussing key challenges in this area. It aims to build up and support the research community in this area, encouraging communication with older people and addressing key issues together. HCI issues for older people are extremely important in light of the rapidly ageing population in developed countries and the potential offered by computerised technology, a potential that can only be fulfilled if the technology can be used effectively by its target user group. The workshop continues a successful series held at HCI in recent years and this year focuses on the creation and use of websites, a particularly important and timely topic as the use of the internet becomes increasingly integrated with daily life.

1. TOPIC

The population of the developed world is rapidly ageing [3], with implications for many areas of policy and practice, including that of the design of computing and interactive systems. Such systems are becoming more and more a part of daily life and present valuable opportunities for supporting people with age-related impairments. However, older and disabled people often find them unsuitable or difficult to use, due to differences in experience, abilities and situations. The resultant HCI challenges have yet to be comprehensively addressed.

This workshop aims to build up and support the community in the area of HCI for older people, providing a forum for the discussion of important issues, promoting discussion of this topic on a wider level and drawing together an often scattered research community. It builds on previous popular workshops held at HCI in 2002, 2004 and 2005 (e.g., [1]).

1.1 The Internet

In particular, the workshop will focus on how older people create and use websites. Websites are changing from primarily information resources to tools of daily living, and it is therefore increasingly important to consider older people in their design and use. Existing research on the use of the internet by older people has focused on the practical issues of access and usability (e.g., [5]). Beyond these issues, however, is the essential question of why real older people use the internet. Many are now using it for practical purposes and fun by socialising with others and creating personal websites, taking advantage of the opportunities to find others who share their experiences and interests (see, for example, [3,4]).

The afternoon part of the workshop will therefore use the experience of older silver surfers to enable designers and ICT professionals to understand and fulfil the desires of older people for enjoyable web experiences.

1.2. Discussion Topics

The workshop will explore some of the benefits and problems that older people experience when they interact with the web, and will use this as a springboard for the discussion of topics that are relevant not just to web design but also to the whole topic of HCI and the older population. We aim to address questions such as:

- What problems do older people typically have in interacting with technology? How can we help to overcome these?
- What do older people want from technology? Why should they use applications such as the internet?
- What requirements gathering, design and evaluation methods are suitable for use with older people and how can they be used most profitably?
- What can researchers working in widely different application areas, such as web design and Smart homes, learn from each other? What kind of collaboration is possible and useful?
- How can we ensure that our research results have a real impact on the commercial world and on users' daily lives?

2. WORKSHOP PROCEDURE

2.1 Advance Participation

We will ask those interested in attending the workshop to submit short papers (2 pages) on their work so that these can be circulated in advance of the meeting and published as a set of proceedings. This will enable attendees to gain a picture of each other's interests before the meeting and will also provide a record of the workshop for other interested parties. Interested participants who have not submitted a position paper may be considered in special instances but not in the general case.

2.2 Programme

The programme for the day is likely to follow the following format:

Ice-breaker: We will start with an ice-breaker event to encourage the group to mix and get to know each other on an informal basis.

Keynote 1: A short keynote talk will introduce the topic of HCI and the Older Population, describing key issues in HCI and the Older Population and stimulating discussion. This will be given by Roger Coleman, Professor of Inclusive Design at the Royal College of Art and Co-director of the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre, which focuses on the design implications of social change, particularly ageing.

Poster and demo session: A poster and demonstration session will allow participants an opportunity to present and discuss their work and to hear about other research in the area. All participants who have submitted a paper will be invited to display a poster and we are keen for those who have developed products and prototypes to show them to the group. The session may start with a brief introduction in which poster presenters point out their posters and introduce themselves. Members of the older population will be on hand to provide feedback if requested. Posters will also be displayed throughout the day to allow plenty of time for participants to examine them.

Discussion Groups 1: Small groups will then be formed to discuss some of the topics mentioned above. To facilitate this discussion, each group may be given specific questions or tasks to look at. After a time of discussion, the groups will report back to the workshop as a whole, summarising their key points and conclusions.

Keynote 2: The afternoon session will be opened by a short keynote address from a member of the older population from Hackney Age Concern Silver Surfers, introducing the Silver Surfers group and creating personal websites.

Design Workshop: We will then break into smaller groups, each of which will be asked to review or design a game that will entertain an older person and support intergenerational play. Invited older participants from Hackney Age Concern Silver Surfers will be available to contribute to the design process. The groups will share their resultant designs and lessons learned from their older participants. This session will last for about 2 hours altogether.

Discussion Groups 2: Following on from the design workshop, the groups will discuss how we can encourage researchers and designers to respond to the real desires and pleasures of older people.

Wrap-up: As a group as a whole, we will look back on the workshop and try to extract key points from the discussions, focusing on what work needs to be done in this area and how to follow up the workshop. Before finishing, the organisers will sum up the findings of the day and we hope that the group will go out for a social activity in the evening as a further step towards building a community.

2.3 After the Workshop

The submitted papers will be published in dedicated proceedings in electronic and printed form. Following on from the example of the previous workshops in this series (e.g., [2]), we also plan to publish a journal special issue, with *Universal Access in the Information Society*, with submissions solicited from workshop attendees.

REFERENCES

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