

Reflections on the CHI 96 Doctoral Consortium

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COMMON
GROUND



SIGCHI sponsors a doctoral consortium (DC) as a preconference event to the annual CHI conference. The DC is an opportunity for doctoral candidates to come together and present their thesis research to each other and to a panel of advisors from the CHI community. This article presents some reflections on this year's consortium from the participants' point of view, including comments about the DC and our experience, DC activities which took place during the main CHI conference, suggestions for next year, and some closing remarks. We also provide information on how to access the HTML versions of our brief DC summaries as well as where to find a web page of our web pages.

The DC Class of '96

This year, the doctoral consortium took place over three days. On the first evening, we met in an informal setting, over dinner in a restaurant. During the next day and a half, we took turns presenting and discussing each of our twenty thesis topics. We then heard from an industry panel and concluded with a closing discussion session. After spending these full days together, we had indeed bonded and become the DC Class of '96!

Reflecting back on the consortium and CHI 96, we can appreciate several characteristics, activities, and discussions of the consortium. Some of the highlights include:

- the interdisciplinary and cross-cultural nature of the consortium. The DC class of '96 consisted of eleven men and nine women from the United States, Canada and Europe, representing computer science, psychology and

library science and presenting a variety of topics (see list below). In this way, the DC was an interdisciplinary gathering, reflecting the nature of CHI and the focus of the conference on meeting on "common ground." While we were each working on a very focused area of human factors research, we had the opportunity to discover the interrelationship between the various areas and build new bridges. In addition, it was extremely interesting to see how doctoral research differed in how it was done and what it tried to do between different departments, and more obviously between North American and European researchers.

- a meeting of peers (for years to come!). Since all of us are doctoral candidates, we are all likely to graduate within one to three years of one another. In this way, we really are like a "class of '96" and will be "growing up" in the CHI community together.
- the feeling of an "open forum." In addition to the more formal thesis presentations, the consortium was also a forum for honest and open discussion - a place where we could discuss and hear about issues we might not hear about otherwise. In this setting, students who were further along in their research shared and gave advice to others. For example, we discussed the pros and cons (and hurdles) of working with industry partners for data collection. Several students had different experiences with this and provided new insights to those who were considering this type of data collection in their research. Many of these informal discussions continued during breaks and the CHI-sponsored meals.

Other DC Activities at CHI 96

This year, there were several other DC activities which took place during the main conference. These included our participation in the interactive posters (a specially designated area was provided for DC students), a presentation about the consortium within a new type of conference session -- "Conference Reviews: Retrospective on Pre-Conference Events" (Simon Kaplan, DC '96 co-chair presented), and the participation in a new SIG this year "Students at CHI" (Casey Boyd and Jennifer Kaye (DC class of '95) organized the SIG and Ben Anderson, Michael Byrne, and Stacie Hibino (DC class of '96) participated in a panel during the SIG). These activities provided links between the DC participants and the rest of the CHI 96 attendees -- they not only allowed us to share and discuss our research with a larger audience, but they also provided a forum in which we could give back to the CHI community.

Suggestions for Next Year

We spent some time, particularly at the end of the consortium, reflecting on our DC experience and making some suggestions for next year. While we felt the formal presentations were extremely important and useful, we also felt that we could have used more time for general discussions and/or roundtable sessions. In addition, we were also interested in more advice and information on job searching and various job experiences - including information on the process of applying for postdoc, academic, and industry positions as well as what it means to do research in these different settings. In this light, it would be interesting to hear from recent DC

graduates as well as other CHI community veterans.

Closing Remarks

The CHI 96 doctoral consortium was a great experience and we would highly recommend it to any doctoral candidate in any CHI-related field (i.e., it's not just limited to Psychology and Computer Science graduate students!). It was indeed a privilege to participate in such an interdisciplinary event meeting on common ground. We'd like to take this opportunity to give special thanks to SIGCHI for supporting such an event and to the CHI 96 DC advisors - who not only gave us advice and feedback and asked us challenging questions during the consortium, but who also continued to encourage us and introduce us during the rest of the CHI conference.

How to Find Us

Our two-page thesis summaries were published in the CHI 96 Conference Companion. These summaries are also available in HTML format by pointing your favorite web browser to:

<http://www.acm.org/sigchi/chi96/Doctor-Consort/>

Many of us have individual web pages. A master list of these web pages (thanks to Ben Anderson) is available at:

<http://pipkin.lut.ac.uk/~ben/CHI96DC/index.html>

If you are someone in academia or industry who have or know of positions available at your institution or company, look us up (some of us are nearing the final stages of our graduate student careers and welcome advice and information regarding the job search)! If you are a potential participant of DC '97, contact us for more information about the application process and our experience in this year's doctoral consortium. We look forward to meeting more and more of you at future CHI conferences and SIGCHI-sponsored events!

CHI 96 Doctoral Consortium Participants and Topics

Providing Explicit Support for Social Constraints: In Search of the Social Computer; Ben Anderson, Loughborough University of Technology

Effects of Field of View on Task Performance with Head-Mounted Displays; Kevin Arthur, University of North Carolina

A Computational Theory of Working Memory; Michael D. Byrne, Georgia Institute of Technology

Putting Context Into Design; Steven J. Clarke, University of Glasgow

The Effects of Information Accuracy on User Trust and Compliance; Jean E. Fox, George Mason University

Harnessing the Interface for Domain Learning; David Golightly, University of Nottingham

Understanding the Role of Configuration Management Systems in Software Development; Rebecca E. Grinter, University of California, Irvine

Extending and Evaluating Visual Information Seeking for Video Data; Stacie Hibino, The University of Michigan

Direct Learner Attention With Manipulation Styles; Shirley J. Holst, University of Nottingham

Formal Modelling of Task Interruptions; Francis Jambon, CLIPS-IMAG

Visualizing Patterns in the Execution of Object-Oriented Programs; Dean F. Jerding, Georgia Institute of Technology

Supporting Interactive Information Retrieval Through Relevance Feedback; Jürgen Koeneemann, Rutgers University

Interface Agents for Interacting with Virtual Environments; Britta Lenzmann, University of Bielefeld

Towards Organizational Learning: Growing Group Memories in the Workplace; Stefanie N. Lindstaedt, University of Colorado, Boulder

Improving Communication In Programming-by-Demonstration; Richard G. McDaniel, Carnegie Mellon University

Providing Awareness Information to Support Transitions in Remote Computer-Mediated Collaboration; Susan E. McDaniel, The University of Michigan

Toolkits for Multimedia Awareness; Ian Smith, Georgia Tech

Usability and the Software Production Life Cycle; Suziah Sulaiman, South Bank University

Exploring the Information Landscape; Elaine G. Toms, University of Western Ontario

Multimedia, Mental Models and Complex Tasks; David Williams, Loughborough University

CHI 96 Doctoral Consortium Advisors (Faculty)

Tom Carey, Co-chair, Universities of Guelph and Waterloo, Canada

Simon Kaplan, Co-chair, University of Queensland, Australia

Melissa Monty, Hewlett-Packard Corporation, USA

Yvonne Wærn, University of Linköping, Sweden

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to Tom Carey and the DC Class of '96 for their editorial comments on an earlier draft of this article.

About the Author

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