

Marilyn Mantei Tremaine

A New Vision for SIGCHI

The election has passed and Wendy Mackay and I suddenly find ourselves at the helm of SIGCHI, steering her through some exciting and adventurous times. We are delighted with the executive committee who will be helping us with this task: Angel Puerta, our new Vice Chair for Conference Planning; Robert Mack, re-elected to serve as Vice Chair of Operations; Dan Olsen, re-elected to the position of Vice Chair of Publications; Jean Scholtz, re-elected to Vice Chair of Finances and Barbee Teasley, our new Vice Chair of Communications. Michael Atwood, SIGCHI's past chair will

guide us with his years of accumulated wisdom. We also have a new *Bulletin* Editor, Joe Konstan, who will take over from Steven Pemberton, who has been performing the Herculean task of editing both the *Bulletin* and *Interactions*.

What are these exciting times ahead? What uncharted waters is SIGCHI ready to move into? We foresee at least four major issues facing SIGCHI, some of which are continuing sagas already familiar to SIGCHI members and some of which are new avenues of opportunity that we believe SIGCHI should take advantage of. The issues are (1) *internationalism*, (2) *public outreach*, (3) *intra-societal cooperation* and (4) *the changing electronic infrastructure*.

Although the home office for SIGCHI, that is, ACM's headquarters in New York City, is American, nearly fifty percent of SIGCHI members are from

countries other than the U.S. We view this as a healthy change and encourage the growth of multi-national and therefore, multi-cultural composition within SIGCHI. SIGCHI has long held in balance the stresses and strains between technologists and humanists, practitioners and researchers, engineers and artists. Its multi-national nature should do nothing but enrich this already rich collection of members.

This growing membership shift reflects a need for SIGCHI to respond more and more to member needs that are different from American members. To this end, the makeup of the SIGCHI governing body needs to reflect SIGCHI's international composition and its publications need to address different approaches to research and practice across the world. Likewise, its flagship conference, CHI'XX, when held in other countries, needs to reflect the cultural norms associated with its location. CHI is currently a distinctly American conference. This is fine when it takes place in the U.S., but we need to rethink its culture and practices in addition to expanding its international offerings if we are to best serve our worldwide membership.

The second issue of public outreach reflects an extraordinary opportunity for the world of HCI researchers and practitioners. Because of the widespread proliferation of computers, the dominance of only a few forms of operating systems running these computers, and the ubiquity of software in multiple devices that people commonly use, the problems with computer interfaces are widely apparent. A new role that SIGCHI can play is once of making users publicly aware that these problems are fixable through good HCI practices and continuing HCI research. I would like SIGCHI to continue to push on public policy, as it did by getting HCI included in the U.S. presidential report

on important issues in information technology. I see this push extending to the European Union and other centers of software activity.

The third issue of intra-societal cooperation reflects the growing complexity of the HCI field and its development into multiple sub-disciplines and organizations. I see the role of SIGCHI as one of supporting and fostering this growth and building communication bridges across this diversity, not one of assimilation into a uniform CHI culture. SIGCHI has already been using its Development Fund to foster such growth, but it needs to also explore cooperative arrangements with other related societies and organizations in the form of joint conferences, workshops, publications and membership advantages.

Finally, the fourth issue of the changing electronic infrastructure reflects a complete change in the way a society like ACM SIGCHI does business. Much of what a special interest group does for its members is to disseminate information. This has been traditionally done through its paper publications, e.g., newsletters, conference proceedings and journals. With increasing use of web pages plus the distribution of SIGCHI's intellectual contribution through the ACM Digital Library, this task has been made both easier and more complex. First, it has become more expensive for SIGs to distribute their more volatile information because of the increased cost of servicing web pages. Second, it is not know how to build a cost recovery model for electronic distribution. Third, SIGCHI is a society based on volunteer efforts. We build up this volunteer base through face-to-face meetings with a continuing influx of new members. As information seeking becomes easy electronically, we lose this personal connection to our future volunteers. Since all the Special Interest Groups within ACM are

faced with the changes brought on by the electronic infrastructure, we see SIGCHI working with the heads of the other SIGs to help set ACM policy and generate creative solutions for building their respective electronic communities.

In closing, I would like to say that no Executive Council can guide its society without input from its members. Please send your comments and suggestions to *chi-Chair@acm.org*. To ensure that we get advice, I have also created a new position on the SIGCHI board called ADVISOR. Stuart Card, Judith Olson and Don Norman have

already graciously agreed to serve in this role. To repeat, these are exciting times in which SIGCHI can truly make a difference to the HCI Community, I'm looking forward to the two years ahead!

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