

Happy New Year!

The New Year always invites reflection and speculation – a chance to reflect on the past and a chance to speculate on the future. In this column, we will accept that invitation. With gratitude, we want to acknowledge the contributions of those who have led ACM over the past 50 years and who have created the “First Society in Computing.” With gratitude, we want to acknowledge the contributions of those who have led SIGCHI over the past 14 years and who have created a major presence in the human-computer interaction (HCI) field. With hope, we want to speculate on what we hope to accomplish over the next two years, the term of our office,

Fifty years is a long time. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM). This year also marks the 50th anniversary of electronic computing in the USA. Building on a tradition from Pascal’s adding machine, to Leibniz’s calculator, to Babbage’s analytical engine, Eckert and Mauchly built an all-electronic computer – ENIAC – based on von Neumann’s architecture.

Most ACM members cannot remember a world without ACM. For half a century, ACM has provided a forum for computer professionals to meet and interact. It has also helped foster and shape computer science and related disciplines. While the world of computing has moved from the original projection that a “few” computers would serve the world’s need towards a reality of ubiquitous computing, ACM and its members have not only kept pace, but actively defined the path. ACM is not a static society, but one that evolves as the

50 Years ACM, 14 Years SIGCHI



world of computing changes. An important means for this evolution are the special interest groups which provide forums for new interest areas. Of course, we believe that the most special of these SIGs is SIGCHI.

Fourteen years is a long time. This year marks the 14th anniversary of SIGCHI. In 1982, in Gaithersburg, Maryland, a conference on human factors in computer systems was planned and conducted by volunteers without the support of a national or international parent organization. One obvious effect of getting this “critical mass” of HCI folks in one spot at one time was the value they saw in meeting together to focus on HCI. Another important effect was the beginning of discussions about how to best continue these meetings that lead to the formation of ACM SIGCHI in 1982, Lorraine Borman and Raoul Smith assumed leadership of SIGCHI and we were officially chartered as a special interest group of ACM.

Most SIGCHI members can remember a world without SIGCHI. For many of us, SIGCHI’s creation offered the forum that we did not enjoy previously for meeting and interacting with others who shared our interest in HCI. For others, having a paper at a CHI conference or participating in the conference’s doctoral consortium, was the standard of excellence toward which they measured progress in their graduate education. For many of us, SIGCHI is a communication channel that lets us keep current on issues like education, standards, or international activities. And, yes, SIGCHI is a social event, too. It supports conferences at which parties are an important part of our professional lives and births of “CHI babies” are announced

on our mailing lists. In short, SIGCHI is many things to many people.

Most (and we would hope all!) of us do not want to think of a world without SIGCHI. But, SIGCHI, like the field of HCI and the world in general, is not static but must continue to evolve. In the past fourteen years, we have moved from a single conference on HCI to include, among others, CHI, UIST, CSCW, DIS, IWUI, and VRST. We have moved from a society with a Bulletin as the only formal publication to one that supports *interactions* and *Transactions on CHI* as publications. Within the HCI community, we have moved from conference proceedings being archival records to having proceedings viewed as a premier publication forum. We have moved from being a USA-based society to a global society. In short, SIGCHI has evolved and must continue to evolve to provide the forum that our members want and need. Continued evolution has been necessary for our past success and remains necessary for our future success.

Two years is a very short time. Two years is the term of elected SIGCHI officers. This is the first column that we write for you as SIGCHI’s co-chairs and the first time we present to you the actions of the current Executive Committee that are intended to guide the continued evolution of SIGCHI. Executive Committee activities are currently directed in four areas: (1) increasing the value and usability of SIGCHI for our members (including distribution of publications, membership directories, job banks, trade shows, local SIG support), (2) being a focal point for HCI in the world (including being proactive in the standards arenas, maintaining visibility with government and other agencies, provocatively representing HCI issues in a popular forum); (3) create an environment to draw all areas of the HCI community (including reaching out to societies such as HFES, UPA, and ASD, defining a policy for cooperating societies); (4) be the heart of SIGCHI members’ professional network (including establish-

ing an HCI continuing education program, job bank, directory of tools).

Over the next two years, you will hear more from us about these programs. In return, we would like to hear more from you. Contact information is listed inside the cover of each Bulletin. If these are the programs you sense SIGCHI needs; if there are other programs you sense we need, please let us know. We will use this column to communicate to you, please do not hesitate to communicate to us.

We express our thanks to Lorraine Borman, Raoul Smith, Don Norman, Francine Frome, Phyllis Reisner, Austin Henderson, Wendy Mackay, Peter Polson, and Jim Miller who have proceeded us as co-chairs of SIGCHI. We hope to continue the tradition they have started.

Finally, we express both our thanks and our hopes to you. We thank you that you have entrusted leadership of SIGCHI to us. We hope to engage in an active dia-

logue with you over the next two years about our directions.

Mike & Guy

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