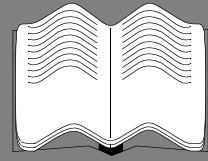


Book Review

Gerard Torenvliet, Editor
chi-Bulletin-Pubs@acm.org



Review of: *Interaction Design - Beyond Human Computer Interaction* review by Sri Hastuti Kurniawan

Interaction Design - Beyond Human Computer Interaction by Jennifer Preece, Yvonne Rogers, and Helen Sharp. ISBN:0-471-49278-7, \$57.95 John Wiley & Sons, 2002

This new book by information systems specialist Jennifer Preece, cognitive scientist Yvonne Rogers, and software engineer Helen Sharp raises two questions. First, in what ways is this book different from their first excellent and well-known textbook on HCI? Second, in what ways does this book indeed cover issues that are 'beyond human computer interaction'?

The diverse experience and expertise the authors bring to the table provides a positive background for this book. Their approach succeeds in making the book appropriate for a varied audience, including students, designers, and researchers. The authors also positively differentiate this book from their first work by extending their pedagogical approach through the incorporation of examples, exercises, assignments and interviews with prominent figures in HCI community. They were also able to extend and enrich the content of their first book. Furthermore, they provide an accompanying web site with links to online resources, practical examples, and templates for conducting various usability evaluations. This is a big plus for academics adopting the book as a textbook for HCI courses.

The book consists of 15 chapters which, unlike the authors' previous book or some other HCI textbooks, are well structured around the different stages of a system development cycle. More specifically, Chapters one through five cover the basics of HCI, starting from conceptual design and requirements solicitation, with treatment of issues related to the social aspects of computing. Chapters six through nine focus on system analysis and design, covering issues like use cases and prototyping. Finally, for an introductory HCI textbook, chapters 10-14 give a very extensive coverage of usability evaluation methodologies.

Although there is some repetitious content (which may be designed to recall previous sections, but that is unnecessary for more advanced readers), the book provides a smooth read. In terms of content flow, the choice to cover evaluation methods early on may help students get their hands wet with evaluating actual interfaces much earlier in a course. For some students, this approach may be more effective than a singular focus on HCI theories and paradigms.

Unfortunately, the authors were less clear in demonstrating how this book goes 'beyond' human-computer interaction. HCI is defined by the ACM as "a discipline concerned with the design, evaluation and implementation of interactive systems for human use and with the study of major phenomena surrounding them". While this book does go beyond the standard ways of presenting HCI concepts that other textbooks may have adopted and does an exceptional job in applying methodologies of HCI to the study of interactive systems, it leaves it as an exercise for the reader to determine in which way the materials presented in the book go beyond traditional definitions of HCI.

Another drawback of the book is that although its title indicates that it is about interaction design, this term is never clearly defined. One of the interviewees featured in the book stated that "interaction design is a design discipline." Then, in the preface, the authors define interaction design as "designing interactive products to support people in their everyday and working lives." Later, the authors use a quote to define interaction design as "the design of spaces for human communication and interaction." While it is useful for readers to get various views of interaction design, more terminological rigour is needed to help the readers clearly understand the various nuances of meaning.

In summary, this book is pedagogically well structured and presented, and so is recommended for use in teaching HCI classes. However, given the lack of rigour in defining the discipline of interaction design, it is perhaps premature to call it an interaction design book.