

Panel Session: Designing for the User

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Panelists

Prof. Ron Baecker, Dept of Computer Science, University of Toronto
Dr. Gale Moore, Executive Director of the Knowledge Media Design Institute, University of Toronto
Prof. Andrew Clement, Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto
Dr. Jutta Treviranus, Manager, Adaptive Technology Resource Centre, University of Toronto

Abstract

For the development of interactive systems, the requirements and design processes are inevitably intertwined. Good design requires a detailed understanding of the users' needs and capabilities, but the very act of design can change the user community in subtle and interesting ways. For example, some design decisions will affect who will end up actually using the system, by excluding some potential users or by attracting others. Demonstrating and evaluating new designs will change the expectations of potential users, often opening up new possibilities for further design. In such a context, the idea of a complete and consistent statement of user requirements is meaningless. Instead, the design process itself becomes a process of exploring users' requirements.

Many different approaches to design of interactive systems have been proposed over the years: participatory design, user-centered design, universal design, human-centred design, and so on. But how well do these design techniques capture and incorporate the users' real needs? What are the differences and similarities between them? To what types of design are they suited, and how and when can they be applied?

This evening panel session aims to explore these questions in a lighthearted and entertaining manner. During the evening, we will attempt to match up a real live user with one of our panelists, who are all experts in various different design disciplines. In the tradition of the British TV Show, "Blind Date", the identities of the panelists will be concealed from the user, and our user will have to select between them based purely on what they say in answer to her questions, and the questions from the audience, who will be invited to help our user to make a choice.

This panel session is organised and sponsored by the University of Toronto's Knowledge Media Design Institute, and will take place in the Ballroom of the Royal York Hotel. Buffet food and refreshments will be served.