Event Report

Fifth Eurographics Workshop on
Design Specification and Verification of Interactive Systems

Abingdon, UK, June 3–5 1998

The fifth Eurographics Workshop on Design, Specification and Verification of Interactive Systems was held in Abingdon, UK, from June 3 to June 5 1998. This was the fifth event in a series of workshops which have studied formalisms, tool and methodologies to support the design of interactive systems. The previous events of this series were held at Pisa, Toulouse, Namur and Granada.

The theme of this year's workshop was Modelling and Design. Presentations and discussions focused on models, e.g., of devices, users, tasks, etc., their representations and their role in supporting the design and development of interactive systems.

The workshop was organised by David Duce of Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. It took place at Cosener's House in Abingdon, situated at a picturesque Thames-side position, in the grounds of the medieval Abbey of Abingdon. The format of the workshop aimed to mix formal presentations of papers with discussion sessions.

The program kicked off with an invited talk by Dan Olsen, Carnegie Mellon University, USA, with the title 'Interacting with Chaos'. Starting from the technological gadgets that fit in his pockets Dan Olsen described the diversity of technological artefacts and information forms that surround us and the wide range of uses for these devices. This chaos dwarfs attempts to model information. However, he argued, there is a common ground for all this information which is the human-consumable surface representations. People can and do discover regularities in the information they use. Can we support them discover and exploit the regularity that is inherent in the information they use?

After the 'chaos', came the 'messy stuff' of the social and the experiential: John McCarthy, University College Cork, Ireland, discussed the need to represent the context in which designed artefacts will be used. In his invited talk 'The viability of modelling socially organised activity', he discussed the development of technology as an intervention in socially organised activity. The design of interactive systems, he argued, can be supported by analysis of the accountability of work focusing on the information artefacts used, making explicit the inter-dependency of technology, activity and accountability.

The invited talks set the tone for the discussions. Formal paper presentations were organised in the following sessions:

- Modelling for the Design of Interactive Systems (2 sessions). Various perspectives on modelling were presented: modelling cooperative tasks, the information resources used during interaction, task flows, work processes, etc.
- The Role of Representations in Designing Interactive Systems contributions addressed a diverse range of representations from a simple mark on a paper which only prompts discussions to formal proofs of usability, and the integration of the full range of representations between these two extremes in a single design project.
- Formal Support for the Design of Interactive Systems Papers discussed the pragmatic problems for the progression from specification of interactive systems to their implementation.
- Advances in Model Based Design Papers described developments such as a novel approach to model based design with its routes in linguistics, the automated generation of interfaces to data bases, the interactive development of models in a model based design environement, etc.
- Specification and Verification of Interactive Systems. Whether the aim is to avoid losing a satellite, to help design electronic post-it notes, or to verify media constraints, formal verification was argued to have an indispensable role in the development of interactive systems. The latest developments in this field were presented.

For the discussions, participants were split into working groups which discussed three problems given to them. These were:

- A portable context sensitive city-tourist guide.
- A device to support reading and annotation of documents.
- A cruise control for an automobile.

These problems provided the focal point for discussions on the role of modelling in design, the agency of the modellers, the role of formality, etc.

The formal proceedings of the workshop are published by Springer-Verlag under the title 'Design Specification and Verification of Interactive Systems '98'. This volume contains the invited papers,17 papers presented in the sessions described above and the reports from the working group discussions. A supplementary proceedings including 6 papers presented in a short format is published by Eurographics as part of their series 'Eurographics Workshop Series'.

We wish success to DSV-IS '99 which will be held next year at the University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. Finally we express our gratitude to Eurographics and ERCIM for sponsoring the event, all those who have contributed to its success (authors, reviewers), and especially David Duce for organising it and running it so smoothly.

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