

The SIGCHI International Issues Committee Survey

A Brief Report

Guy Boy, Executive Vice-Chair of SIGCHI

This survey is based on 57 responses to a questionnaire that was sent to the SIGCHI community. I would like to thank very much the members who took the time to answer the questionnaires in a very short period of time (less than two weeks). The results of the survey are quite interesting. Thus, the percentages that I use in this column are based on these numbers and are therefore may not be representative of the SIGCHI community as a whole. Anyway, I wanted to share with you these first results and an interpretation. I expect reactions from you, and you are very welcome to send me comments and viewpoints at Guy.Boy@acm.org.

People who answered were evenly distributed among academia and industry, with a few consultants who provided their viewpoints also.

Table 1 indicates major assets of SIGCHI seen by the members who answered the survey. Industry and academia members recognize that SIGCHI publications are important to our organization. Publications mean reading but also writing. Consultants rate networking extremely high. It seems that conferences are more important to consultants than to other members.

Industry members are motivated by maintaining good awareness of continuing education, industry trends, guidelines, and standardization issues. They look for innovation. They see SIGCHI as a valuable resource. In particular, they are interested by details on practical methods for user interface analysis and design process, for example, effective ways to document designs and to track design decisions and enhancement ideas for the future

of the product. They also look for standards for user interface design, e.g., specifics on spacing around a dialogue and between controls, specifics on layout, and common guidelines for the user interface community.

Academic members are motivated by professional education, research to back up design suggestions, industry trends, design issues, guidelines and standardization issues, and opportunities to interact with colleagues in similar research areas. They cite the SIGCHI Bulletin as an important resource. It is not surprising that they are interested in educational curricula. CHI researchers seem to be motivated by keeping up with the cutting edge.

Consultants see SIGCHI as a professional home. They learn new things there, and obtain new visions.

	Industry	Academia	Consultants
No. interviewed	20	30	13
Publications	70%	73%	31%
Networking	60%	50%	92%
Conferences	25%	23%	38%
Education	25%	27%	31%

Jobs opportunities	10%	7%	8%
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Table 1: Major assets of SIGCHI

Volunteering

46% of the interviewed members are prepared to be new volunteers for SIGCHI, and spend a few hours a week working for it. Some of them are already participating actively in various HCI communities. The majority are from academia. The people who do not want to volunteer are already fairly involved in HCI activities or management activities. It seems that young people would be more prepared to volunteer if they knew more about the job of volunteering at SIGCHI. Communication is a key issue, and we are aware that we should let you know more about what volunteering means for the SIGCHI community. The SIGCHI Bulletin is a tremendous asset for our organization. We report all events, ongoing work and all kinds of facts that you should know about the life of our organization. In particular, Executive Committee meeting reports are there for you to keep track of where SIGCHI is going. Again, you are welcome to provide your own viewpoint on any topic of our agenda. SIGCHI is what we make it!

The CHI Society

40% of the interviewed members are following the evolution of SIGCHI towards the society status. Some would like to see an organization that more fully integrates all perspectives (i.e., psychology, industrial engineering) on HCI and has a less of a com-

puter science bent than it does as a SIG of ACM. They anticipate a shift away from the technical/programmers paradigm to the interaction paradigm. The CHI-expert should become more like an architect for buildings or an industrial designer and less like a psychologist, a programmer or a computer scientists like today. The CHI-expert should become a concept expert (interaction designer). SIGCHI could offer a network for concept work (a conference and/or a www-magazine). Concept work has interfaces to marketing, industrial design, psychology and computer programming.

In addition, they look to the CHI Society to enhance cooperation and coordination between national and regional organizations in this field. At present this coordination is only implemented on a personal basis by double membership.

They are in favor of SIGCHI having more control over its own affairs, including budget, and allowing easily for broad participation especially from the design and social science communities. However, they envision it to be much like SIGCHI is now... except with more resources to provide more services, tools, etc. In particular, it was mentioned that the new CHI Society should have more impact on governmental institutions. SIGCHI will be a focused society that is free to promote HCI effectively as a discipline.

Services

SIGCHI members naturally look for services. Most members see SIGCHI as an information resource. The CHI conference and other smaller conferences are extremely valuable to promote understanding of HCI. Also, Internet access to other people, papers, research, discussions (on line as well as physical) are what people want. They want to keep up with current trends. However, some industry members and consultants say that the CHI conferences lean towards academic and research concerns – which is worthwhile – but it's hard for them to

translate that information into stuff that they can use in the trenches. Among various requests, some members ask for more communication about services to chapters, more international meetings outside North America, and more specific electronic discussion groups.

Even if interviewed members like the electronic presence of SIGCHI, they would like to have better networking capabilities with the international HCI community and an electronic place where one could find HCI-related resources, including studies, references, reports and also calls for tender and international possibilities of collaboration. An email-based customizable newsletter would be welcome, instead of the somewhat static and unsurprising current printed version.

Some would like to see a forum for interaction with others interested in an HCI perspective on educational technology.

Here are some of the statements and slogans that I received that make us feel good about our organization.

- SIGCHI is already doing what I want it to do.
- SIGCHI already provides a number of great resources. I think the one thing I would like to throw out for discussion is a way for those not part of the inside, experienced CHI community to get connected to learn from this community. I see the service being somewhat similar to the mentoring program for the CHI conferences. For example, if I was trying to solve a specific HCI challenge, I could contact someone, describe the problem, then get forwarded to a person (or network of people) that is willing to play the role of mentor. Perhaps the person would listen to my problem, suggest alternate ways to think about it, ask questions I hadn't thought to ask, and suggest resources I hadn't discovered. They might also give me the name(s) of people who have

done similar work or tackled similar problems.

- The energy and people.
- It's focused on HCI and it has a large community, meaning I can usually find someone to help me problem solve.
- Access to new ideas, friends I've made.
- It is the best society for HCI professionals.
- The availability of good minds online.
- It connects competent people in my field of interest.
- Cutting edges of UI design.
- Think to a better future.

Non-American members would like to see enhanced the coordination and cooperation with national organizations, in the European countries for instance. One member would like to see promoted "regional conferences that will be more accessible to more people in our country and/or our cultural background".

Finally, what the members seem to like the most in the CHI community is the energy and people, and SIGCHI's willingness to change and adapt.

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About the Author

Guy Boy is Chair of the SIGCHI International Advisory Task Force, and is Executive Vice Chair of ACM/SIGCHI.

Author's Address

European Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Engineering (EURISCO)
4 avenue Edouard Belin,
31400 Toulouse, France
Tel. +33-5 62 17 38 38
Fax +33-5 62 17 38 39
Email: boy@onecert.fr