
“Accessibility Challenge” – a game show investigating the accessibility of computer systems for disabled people

Maggie Morgan

School of Computing
University of Dundee
Scotland, DD1 4HN
NewellMorgan@yahoo.co.uk

Chris Martin

School of Computing
University of Dundee
Scotland, DD1 4HN
cjmartin@
computing.dundee.ac.uk

Janet Hughes

School of Computing
University of Dundee
Scotland, DD1 4HN
jhughes@
computing.dundee.ac.uk

Vicki Hanson

IBM T.J. Watson Research Center
19 Skyline Drive, Hawthorne
NY 10532, USA
vlh@us.ibm.com
and

Leverhulme Visiting Professor
School of Computing
University of Dundee
Scotland, DD1 4HN
vlhanson@
computing.dundee.ac.uk

Abstract

A professional live theatre event in the form of a game show will raise awareness of the challenges computer technology provides to older and disabled people and the pros and cons of various accessibility options which can be found within some software. It will also demonstrate one way in which theatre can be used within HCI research and development. This will be a stimulating event with a serious purpose.

A pilot version of the event proved successful as a pre-dinner activity at a recent conference of Computer Science Teachers, where very positive evaluation results were obtained. It has since been modified to focus particularly on HCI issues of accessibility.

Keywords

Theatre, user-centred design, accessibility, disability.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2 [Information interfaces and presentation]: User Interfaces: *User-centred design*.

“ACCESSIBILITY CHALLENGE” GAME SHOW

A game show will be presented where the audience will be divided into two groups who will compete against one another to show their knowledge of the functional

needs of older and disabled people and the accessibility features of current software. Multiple choice questions and an electronic scoring system with individual keypads will be used to compare the performance of the two groups. To increase the interactivity and the enjoyment of the event, members of the audience will be encouraged to discuss the issues with their immediate neighbours before answering the questions.

The presentation team will consist of the person who devised the game show (the game show host) and two professional actors who will act a range of characters with various disabilities. Each character will present their story – who they are and the effects of their disability on their interactions with technology. They will then present the audience with multiple-choice questions concerning accessibility of technology. The answers will include both serious and humorous possibilities, for example:

(A visually impaired business woman): “Which options make it most difficult to read enlarged text when web browsing?”

- A) Material being in a PDF file
- B) Small buttons
- C) A dirty screen
- D) Hard coding on the columns

After the audience has responded to each question, the actor – staying in role as the disabled character – will interact with the audience discussing their responses, and any issues which arise from the issues addressed in their comments and questions.

The session will conclude with a discussion on the value of presentations, such as “accessibility challenge”, to

raise awareness of the issues of HCI accessibility for older and disabled people.

BACKGROUND

A pilot version of this event was staged at the 12th Annual ACM ITICSE conference on computer science education in Dundee in 2007 [1]. The audience was composed of 76 people (in two sessions) 31 self reported as having minimal knowledge of accessibility issues, 31 with some knowledge and 13 with significant knowledge. They were very lively and fully engaged with the performance which they enjoyed. A paper questionnaire showed that 85% of the audience rated the event as excellent or good as an awareness raising event, 90% agreed or strongly agreed that the event showed the importance of teaching accessibility issues, 70% that the experience gave them a much better sense of needs of real users that would have been obtained from a lecture, and 80% that the theatrical performance made the event memorable.

Logistical Needs

The proposed event, which will last between 45 and 60 minutes, should take place in the Conference Centre as a back screen or white wall is needed for projection of the multiple choice questions. Required performance space does not need to be large and should, if possible, be close to the audience to facilitate easy interaction.

Reference

[1] 12th Annual ACM SIGCSE Conference on Innovation & Technology in Computer Science Education (ITiCSE), Dundee, Scotland, 25-27 June 2007.