



*The Interdisciplinary Journal of  
Human-Computer Interaction*

## Guidelines for Authors

This document is intended to help authors in the early stages of preparing a paper for submission to a special issue of *Interacting with Computers*.

### Overview

#### **Editorial Structure of *Interacting with Computers* Special Issues**

*Interacting with Computers* special issues are proposed by one or more prospective guest editors, in a written presentation to the Special Issues Editor – a member of the journal's General Editorial and Management Board. (See the "Guidelines for Guest Editors" for details of the proposal process.) When a proposal is accepted, the guest editor(s) are placed in control of the issue, using an online manuscript processing system developed by the journal's publisher, Elsevier Science. (Guest editors will provide details of this facility to submitting authors.) Final acceptance decisions are made by the Special Issues Editor, but in close consultation with the guest editor(s). Otherwise, the guest editor(s) supervise the submission schedule, recruit reviewers and review the suitability of work submitted by authors.

#### **Writing for An Interdisciplinary Journal**

*Interacting with Computers* has a fundamental interdisciplinary ethos that is applied to individual papers as well as to each issue. The Editorial Boards are strongly committed to publishing only papers fulfilling the minimum requirement of accessibility to readers with HCI interests who nevertheless are not specialists in a particular subject area. At the same time, papers should be of interest and relevant to such specialists. Authors should attempt to describe work that crosses traditional boundaries among the many disciplines that comprise the study and practice of HCI. Take care to address an interdisciplinary audience, by ensuring that the contribution is comprehensible to the majority of readers in *Interacting with Computers'* diverse readership.

Papers can be made more interdisciplinary by giving them both a wider context and a forward-looking and speculative perspective. Applications-orientated work should be explicit both about the utility and generalisability of content, and about the broader implications of the set of empirical or theoretical issues to which the work relates. In papers of research interest, authors are encouraged to be explicit about the applied relevance of the work. If a paper is addressing theoretical issues, authors are expected to make a serious attempt to relate such material to problems in its application. If authors are dealing with practical aspects, they are expected to make an attempt to go beyond "show and tell" by developing a discussion of the broader relevance of the project. While it is not a requirement that every paper submitted to *Interacting with Computers* adopt such a perspective, authors might consider these suggestions as a useful means of introducing and managing interdisciplinary relevance.

### Paper Types

The description of paper types that follows is approximately the same as that for regular issues. However, for special issues, the mix of paper types and determination of whether the submissions adequately fit the theme are decided by the guest editor(s). A paper which does not fit the theme, but which nevertheless seems to be of sufficient quality, may be submitted to the General Editor, Dianne Murray ([dianne@soi.city.ac.uk](mailto:dianne@soi.city.ac.uk)), to be considered for publication in a regular issue.

## Research

Research papers may be orientated towards theory or may contain the findings of experimental work. Typically, they will contain both. Such papers should place the work in context by describing the practical consequences of the work for the design, evaluation and use of computer systems. Authors should not assume that all readers will be familiar with, or even interested in, the full details of experimental design and statistical analysis, or in complex mathematical or logical formalisms. While such detail is often necessary in the body of a paper, authors should ensure that these aspects are clearly described in plain English. The use of appendices is discouraged, since these tend not to be read.

## Applications

While a considerable amount of HCI work is applied to specific products within the commercial and industrial sectors, such work is of little utility to the international community if it is only described with respect to a particular application. Authors are advised strongly to use such work as examples in support of the more general points that need to be made. This approach also may help to avoid many of the typical objections to publication of material that otherwise might betray sensitive information to competitors.

## Critical Reviews

*Interacting with Computers* publishes reviews, either of individual pieces of work, or of entire areas, which can advance the current state of human-computer interaction. A well-written review of this type can make a substantive and original contribution in its own right. Eclecticism is both encouraged and supported. In the process of describing the targeted work, authors are expected to provide critical commentary. This commentary should give the reader insight and an ability to fit the work into a broader context, with the means to judge the review's relative contribution to the field of HCI.

## State-of-Art Reviews

*Interacting with Computers* welcomes reviews that give a critical overview of a topic for the benefit of readers who are not familiar with the literature and who work in other disciplines. Although it is beneficial for these reviews to meet some of the criteria given for "critical reviews" the major objective of this type of review is to give a clear, self-contained account of the chosen topic, and to demonstrate its broader relevance to the entire field of HCI.

## Unorthodox Submissions

*Interacting with Computers* is prepared to publish papers when referees agree about the quality of the submission, but when some aspect of the work is contentious or "risky" and goes against prevailing orthodoxy. The referees may publish a commentary paper immediately after such a paper, in the same issue. In such cases, the author has a right to reply, again in the same issue. Used judiciously, this approach may illuminate areas of controversy that exist currently either in the theory of, or approaches to, HCI.

## Reports of Failures

Surveys of the potential readership of *Interacting with Computers* suggest that one of the needs of the HCI community is for a forum to enable publication of papers that fail either to replicate previously reported results or to support claims made by systems manufacturers. Traditionally, such papers are very difficult to publish, but this journal is prepared to seriously consider submissions in this category. However, much care is required in the preparation of such papers -- they must not be libelous. Authors are recommended to phrase claims carefully and to make extremely clear the evidence on which they are based.

## Submission Process and Format

As noted in the Overview above, papers for *Interacting with Computers* are submitted and managed using an online manuscript processing system developed by the journal's publisher. The guest editor will provide prospective authors with details of access to and use of this system, which requires Internet access. If the online nature of this system is a hardship for any authors, they should contact the guest editor to make alternate arrangements for submission of their papers.

A great deal of useful information can be conveyed in very brief papers which address a single issue while still meeting interdisciplinary requirements. Extremely long papers may not be read by many people, particularly those not in academia. Authors thus should take care to be as succinct as possible and to avoid needless repetition. The typical

special issue paper contains 10,000 (or fewer) words as estimated by the MSWord word count tool. Authors will be asked to shorten papers that exceed this length, although exceptions will be considered.

The main parts of submissions are as follows:

### **Authors' Details**

In an e-mail to the guest editor, the corresponding author should provide name(s), affiliation(s) and e-mail addresses of all authors, as they are to appear at the beginning of the final paper. Do not include these details on the first page of the paper that is uploaded to the online manuscript processing system. That would compromise your identities during blind refereeing. Do, however, leave sufficient space on the first page for these details, perhaps using placeholder text, so that the authors' details may be added in the final version without disrupting pagination. In the e-mail, also include the voice phone and fax numbers of the corresponding author – the individual who is representing the paper's authors in correspondence with the journal.

### **Title**

Titles are an extremely important part of a paper. If they are not attractive and informative then readers may not look at the paper. Titles thus should be adequately descriptive while still being succinct. Titles running more than two lines of text are discouraged.

### **Abstract**

Abstracts are crucial for confirming a reader's intentions to read a paper. They should provide an extremely brief overview of the issues addressed, the approach adopted and the conclusions drawn. It is particularly important that the practical consequences of the work are made explicit in the Abstract. This should be between 100 and 150 words in length. An abstract is a summary of key aspects of the paper, not an introduction to the paper.

### **Keywords**

Whereas keywords serve to characterize the typically different nature of the several papers in a regular issue, they are less useful in a special issue, since it has a (hopefully) consistent topical theme. Therefore, in a special issue, only the editorial introduction will feature keywords following the abstract. The guest editor(s) should confer with the authors whose papers are to appear, to arrive at a list of no more than six keywords to represent the theme of the special issue – including, if necessary, some words that represent a paper or papers that diverge significantly and importantly from the general approach taken.

### **Executive Summary**

Special Issue papers do not require an executive summary, if the paper has been summarized in the guest editor's introduction to the issue (as it should be). Ignore the provision for Executive Summaries in the author's guidelines for regular issues of *Interacting with Computers*. Wherever the two sets of guidelines differ, the guidelines you are reading now rule, for special issues.

### **The Body of the Paper**

The style of the paper will, of course, be mainly determined by its contents. You should consider using sections, particularly for providing a clearly delineated introduction and conclusion. No more than three levels of section should be used and they should be informatively titled. The use of sections is encouraged, since this adds to readability.

### **References**

References can be an important part of a paper because they place a paper in its historical context. It is possible to either under- or over-reference. A balance between the two needs to be struck. Authors should be wary of over-citing their own work relative to the work of others. References never should substitute for explanation; there should be little loss of immediate comprehension in a paper if they were to be removed. If footnotes are used, they also should be expendable. Wherever possible authors should cite publicly available work that is available readily from most libraries. Generally speaking, doctoral and masters theses should not be cited. If web sources must be cited (discouraged), the full URL and date that the site was last accessed successfully by the author(s) should be included in the citation. The *Publications*

*Manual* of the American Psychological Association provides a specific format for electronic references.

In the body of the paper, references should be made by using an identifiable name or names. Each time a work is cited, the authors' surnames plus year of publication should be provided. If the cited work has more than three authors, use the first author's surname followed by "et al" and the publication year. Do not use "op. cit." or other shorthand for subsequent citations of the same work; fully cite the work as was done in its first appearance. Where there are multiple references to an author or authors within the same year, the date should be followed by the letters 'a', 'b', etc. Multiple references should be separated by semicolons.

In the reference section, at the end of the paper, full references should be provided to facilitate readers obtaining them, in alphabetic order (not numbered on the left column). Journal references should follow the style:

name(s); year; reference title; journal title, (volume number: issue number); page numbers.

Book chapters and papers in conference proceedings should follow the style:

names(s); year; reference title, book/proceedings title; name of editor(s), (if appropriate); chapter number. (if appropriate); place and date of conference; publisher; page numbers.

Please see a recent issue for style examples. Otherwise, follow the *Publications Manual* of the American Psychological Association. **Note:** An insistence on consistent style from issue to issue is a hallmark of professionally edited publications. At times, style at variance with standards causes delays in publication deadlines, because staff must edit non-complying submissions purely for style, with a risk of introducing significant errors in the text. The editors sincerely appreciate efforts by authors to conform to style as much as possible.

Following is a sample of Reference section style, for various types of publications:

- Surname, FirstInitial. (2000). Gauging the extent of internalization activities. *Design for Global Markets 2* (Proceedings of the International Workshop on Internationalization of Products and Systems, Baltimore, Maryland USA, 13-15 July 2000), 125-136.
- Surname, FirstInitial. (2000). Behavioural effects of attitudes toward constraint in CASE: the impact of development task and project phase. *Information Systems Journal* 10, 151-163.
- Surname, FirstInitial. & Surname, FirstInitial. (Eds.)(1996). *Computers, Communication & Mental Models*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Surname, FirstInitial. & Surname, FirstInitial. (2002). Certifying usability (professionals): A scheme to qualify practitioners. *Interactions* 9:1, Jan/Feb, 7-9.
- Surname, FirstInitial. & Surname, FirstInitial. (1999). Consumer Trust in an Internet Store: A Cross-Cultural Validation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 5:2. Available at <http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol5/issue2>, last accessed April 22, 2002.

## Figures and Photographs

Authors may use figures, diagrams, tables, and black and white photographs, where appropriate. For the first submission, these may be included separately and their approximate locations marked in the main body of the paper. The publishers may choose to have figures redrawn to fit house style.

All figures must be clearly numbered, titled and bear an appropriate, descriptive legend. It is crucial that the axes of graphs be clearly labeled and that traditional conventions concerning graphs be observed.

Colour photographic material is discouraged, because in most cases such illustrations must be converted to black-and-white, with a significant reduction in detail. In part because of this colour limitation and in part due to the simple limitations of resolution in the A5 publications format used in printing the journal, line art is preferred over either photographs or screen shots. In all cases, authors should plan for such halftone illustrations to be printed at full page width in the journal, to enhance readability.

All illustrations must be submitted in separate .tif (preferred) or .jpg files, clearly named to identify the content without the need to open the file, even if the author(s) choose to insert them within the paper as submitted. The entire paper may be submitted in either LaTeX or MSWord format via the online manuscript management system. (The system provides for uploading files containing illustrations and figures.)

## Non-English Notations

It is likely that some authors will need to include mathematical or logical expressions in their papers. Use of such notations should be supported fully by prose descriptions as some readers will have difficulty with such representations.

As with footnotes, relatively easy comprehension of paper contents should be possible even if the notations are ignored.

Authors may wish to include computer programs or parts of programs in their papers. The problems of typesetting computer programs are notorious. Wherever possible, such material should be supplied in camera-ready form (.e.g., .tif files) so they can be treated as artwork. Since many readers will not be familiar with a particular language or language variant, authors should consider using a readily readable pseudocode, where possible. When using any notational form, a glossary of terms that defines the notation should be included.

## **Refereeing Process**

The guest editor responsible for your submission will appoint at least two referees. They will not know your identity. Referees are instructed to consider both intellectual content and style, and the general suitability of the paper. The guidelines that are provided to referees for considering submissions are available to authors, upon request to the guest editor(s). The guest editor(s), after discussions with the Special Issues Editor, will reply directly to authors about the editorial decisions regarding their papers. Generally, papers will fall into three categories:

- acceptance for publishing (possibly with minor revisions)
- rejection
- recommendations to develop the submission further

Whatever the editorial decisions, comprehensive comments will be provided via the guest editor. Authors are required to accommodate these suggestions in any subsequent resubmissions of the paper – including resubmission for a regular issue, if for some reason the paper cannot be accepted in timely manner for the special issue. Further refereeing with either the same referees or new ones will take place if papers are recommended for further development. In general, authors may expect a reply within three months from the initial submission.

Updated 11 August 2003 – DLD