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Preface: Interaction Without Frontiers

This year's BCS-HCI conference marks another first for the conference series; similarly, this year's AFIHM-IHM conference marks a first for that conference series. For 2001 is the first occasion on which the two conferences have combined to transform the idea of 'interaction without frontiers' into reality. So although the proceedings you are reading looks and feels like a standard proceedings in the BCS-HCI series, it is also the proceedings of the annual IHM conference. This volume, Volume I, contains the long papers of this year's proceedings, all in English, while Volume II, which is published by Cépaduès, contains all other contributions (e.g. short papers, posters, videos, workshops, tutorials) and is bilingual. One of the challenges for readers of Volume I is to spot which papers were originally submitted and reviewed in French, before being expertly translated (by their authors) into English. Just looking at the affiliations of authors will not provide sufficient guide. One of the delights for us, as editors, has been being (so unavoidably) introduced to the work of the other language community. Through the two volumes of proceedings from this year's conference, readers can also become familiar with work that they may not have encountered previously because it has traditionally been presented within the 'other' language community.

As in previous years, the standard of accepted papers has been high: fewer than one in three of submitted papers was accepted for publication and presentation at the conference. We are also very pleased to have received written papers from all three of our keynote speakers this year, to provide a permanent reference to the material of their presentations. These represent diverse approaches to HCI research and practice: from the theoretical psychology-based work of Pierre Rabardel to the innovative technology-oriented work of Nadia Magnenat-Thalmann and the practitioner-focused work of Ken Dye.

The theme of this year's conference is 'interaction without frontiers' — a theme that reflects both the physical realities of the conference (bringing together different communities and languages) and current trends in computing development. As this conference illustrates, old boundaries between interaction devices and modalities are breaking down rapidly, as are the traditional borders between countries, communities and academic disciplines.

The theme of the conference is reflected in many of the papers being presented: on novel styles of interaction — with virtual humans, in virtual environments and in mobile computing — and on non-standard input and output technologies. It is

also reflected in the range of work being presented: HCI is no longer viewed as just a branch of applied psychology, or a synonym for implementing and demonstrating novel devices. Rather, HCI is recognised as being a multidisciplinary field of research and practice. So as well as reports of work on novel styles of interaction, we find work that derives from a social sciences tradition (e.g. Adams & Sasse), from engineering (e.g. Al Qaimari & McRostie), from psychology (e.g. Mullin et al.) and from design (e.g. Dragicevic & Fekete). The multidisciplinary nature of the field is considered directly by Denley and Long. To achieve universal usability, we must take every opportunity to cross cultural and linguistic boundaries: this volume represents, in several ways, interaction without frontiers.

Ann Blandford, Jean Vanderdonckt & Phil Gray
June 2001

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