

We are pleased to tell you that your Notes submission, 299, OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups, has been accepted for inclusion in the CHI 2008 Notes Program.

We received 340 submissions and were able to accept 18% of them. The decisions as to which submissions to accept were made after careful reviews by a number of highly qualified professionals around the world. As you can see, we had to be very selective. You should be very proud of your accomplishment.

At the end of this message are the reviews for your submission. Please pay careful attention to fulfilling the requests of the meta-reviewer in your camera-ready version of the paper.

You should receive an email from the publisher, Sheridan Press, by Dec 15, 2007 with instructions to prepare your paper for publication, including insertion of the copyright notice and filling out the copyright assignment form.

Upload your camera-ready paper to the publisher's site as per their instructions (do not send it to us Chairs). It is due Jan 11, 2008.

We will follow up closer to the conference with information about your presentation.

The CHI Conference requires that at least one author of an accepted submission registers and attends the conference to present the paper. Online registration will be open shortly. We urge you to register early at <http://www.chi2008.org> to secure the pre-registration discount. You can also find the Advance Program there.

We are looking forward to meeting you at the conference. Congratulations!

Tiziana Catarci and Boris de Ruyter, CHI 2008 Notes Papers Chairs
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----- Paper 299, Review 5 -----

Title: OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups

Reviewer: Primary AC

Overall Rating

5 (Possibly accept: The paper seems above the line, but I'm not deadset in favor of it.)

Expertise

4 (Expert)

Contribution to HCI

The paper presents the design and implementation of a novel approach for instant messaging supporting the gradual and fluent transition of

interaction among communication partners through visualisations of awareness information on various granularity levels.

The Meta-Review

Most of the reviewers liked this paper because of the design and implementation (esp. Reviewer 2, Reviewer 4).

Reviewer 1 raises very good issues and questions with relation to the visualisation, and Reviewer 3 raises valid concerns that some challenges found in the evaluation could have been avoided in the design.

Other Comments

Areas for Improvement

----- Paper 299, Review 1 -----

Title: OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups

Overall Rating

6 (Accept: I would argue for accepting this paper.)

Expertise

3 (Knowledgeable)

Contribution to HCI

Main contribution : the authors really understand the difficulties of recreating the richness of human communication in CSCW settings and they develop a proper software to share availability to communicate between distant users.

The Review

Positive

+ The paper enriches the debate on what type of information a CSCW software can deliver us when we would like to communicate with a distant user in real time.

Negative

- Authors did not consider two issues from a theoretical point of view (and therefore their technical solutions are not so suitable as they hoped): 1 - how to visualize relevant dynamic information (because user's activity is an ongoing process), 2- how to design icons.

For the point 1, many references exist, but I suggest : Siné J. P. McDougall, Martin B. Curry, Oscar de Bruijn. (2001) The Effects of Visual Information on Users' Mental Models: An Evaluation of Pathfinder Analysis as a Measure of Icon Usability. International Journal of Cognitive Ergonomics 5:1, 59-84

For the second point, I firstly wonder if icons are really useful or the system can just play an audio message. However, I suggest these reference about icons in HCI :

Peter Keller, Catherine Stevens. (2004) Meaning From Environmental

Sounds: Types of Signal-Referent Relations and Their Effect on
Recognizing Auditory Icons.. Journal of Experimental Psychology Applied
10:1, 3

- Even if I really appreciate the main ideas in this paper, I think the main weakness concern the evaluation. Authors claim that OM results from a one-year iterative design process. So, I wonder if they evaluate the mock-up or intermediate releases. However, the informal evaluation is valueless.

Areas for Improvement

+ The paper is well written, clear and understable.

- The main critics concerns the small size of figure2 and figure3, I had to read the paper on the screen to understand the different types of information.

----- Paper 299, Review 2 -----

Title: OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups

Overall Rating

6 (Accept: I would argue for accepting this paper.)

Expertise

4 (Expert)

Contribution to HCI

This short paper offers an innovative approach to gradually initiate interaction across a network and identifies both benefits and drawbacks, as currently implemented. Remote awareness and feedback has typically been a dichotomous affair: it either exists or doesn't exist. The concept of gradual notification, and the future investigation of it, could usefully inform the design of other interaction systems beyond instant messaging.

The Review

This short paper is well-written and understandable. The author(s) frame their argument well, graounding it in an event with which many in the CHI community can identify: interrupting and being interrupted (whther acceptably or not). The paper also presents the results of a pilot study and articulates the features of the existing implementation which bear re-visiting. The results suggest a design requirement for the target's capacity to tailor the system's notification of observer activities to suit the user's local situation.

The associated video was well-timed and gave ample description of what was being illustrated. It was easy to connec tthe points in the video with the points in the text.

Areas for Improvement

The only suggestion I can make is a single word change: "Attention from others is non-obvious in that awareness tools ... constantly gather and disseminate information" reads better as "Attention from others is non-obvious in awareness tools ... that constantly gather and disseminate information."

----- Paper 299, Review 3 -----

Title: OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups

Overall Rating

6 (Accept: I would argue for accepting this paper.)

Expertise

4 (Expert)

Contribution to HCI

An IM system that allows users to gather progressively "approach" another user and negotiate an interruption as well as gather information about whether someone is interruptible.

The Review

This paper presents an IM system that offers some novel affordances for progressively detecting the availability of a target of an IM message, such as the ability to see another's screen, and the idea of the observer needing to do some "work" to initiate a conversation.

However, some of the issues encountered in the evaluation could have been easily foreseen in the design. It seems as if it will probably be annoying to hear 4 levels of sounds before a conversation can begin. Also, interrupting someone to avoid interrupting someone seems counter-productive towards the goal of minimizing interruptions.

Also, in current IM systems, you can view someone's away message without bothering them with an awareness sound; the benefit of the alert sounds is not well argued. That seems unnecessary because there is no need to make the target aware of who is viewing their away message; targets make away messages with the intention that observers will view them and perhaps leave them alone. It is also plausible that a user maybe be willing to give up awareness of observation over something like the current window title in exchange for preventing audio interruptions. I think this problem stems from a core issue that the designers do not appear to have considered the fact that the notifications themselves are interruptions; my reading of this paper is that the interruption begins only when a request for interaction is made. If this is not the case, the authors must make this more clear.

There is also no argument leading from any body of work that might suggest that the information conveyed to the observer is a good predictor of interruptability. I am also surprised that more work from Avrahami is not cited since he has worked on interruptability of IM for his PhD

thesis. There is also no reference to negotiation in video systems such as Montage or CAVECAT and the problems and similar solutions in these systems.

The authors also wanted to show activity of conversation between two people to others. There is a kernel of an interesting idea in that it may be possible that someone already engaged in IM conversation may be interruptible but it could also mean the opposite.

Areas for Improvement

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POST-REBUTTAL REBUTTAL

After reading this paper again (for a 5th time), I do think the overall contributions are worthy, especially the issue of creating social awareness of interruptibility checks, progressive disclosure of information, and the target's awareness of checking are interesting.

I think my issue with the audio interruption is that they are mentally disruptive. The authors don't frame this as interruption because their idea of interruption is when a conversation is actually initiated, but not notification. The awareness indicator is potentially annoying in a similar fashion to AOL's AIM client for Windows, where a box appears momentarily in the corner of your screen to notify you that a friend has logged on or off. The visual distraction creates an "interruption" in the consciousness. The authors don't argue that the awareness indicators are non-distracting and should make a distinction between "distractions" and "interruptions." Also, the in-person situation I was comparing this tool to was environments where everyone has an office with a door and awareness of someone's interruptibility can be somewhat gauged without making yourself visible to them or stopping in their doorway and distracting them (you walk by quickly instead).

If the authors frame their solution as an alternative to preventing an AIM window from appearing and creating a genuine distraction and distinguish this framing from avoiding distraction (which a reader might lump together), the paper will read much better. Although requesting permission to view the screenshots is a lightweight interruption, it is better than the requester initiating a conversation asking "are you busy right now?" This is better for several reasons: one can automatically hit "yes" to send the information (and this can be tied to a keyboard stroke), the recipient gets a lot more information than could have been provided over chat, and the recipient can make a comparison of the importance of his/her request compared to the existing work. It's like responding to "are you busy?" with "here, you decide." In future work, it would be interesting to compare blurred vs. detailed screenshots and when blurring begins to hide task information.

Also, despite the evaluation being informal, I liked the fact that the authors were upfront about the audio being a problem. Perhaps they can mimic the "clicky" sounds that you get on speakers when there is interference from a mobile phone checking in with a cell tower.

I thank the authors for agreeing to changes in response to my criticisms. I'm not sure if they will have room to include all of it, but I hope they revise judiciously.

----- Paper 299, Review 4 -----

Title: OpenMessenger: Gradual Initiation of Interaction for Distributed Workgroups

Overall Rating

6 (Accept: I would argue for accepting this paper.)

Expertise

3 (Knowledgeable)

Contribution to HCI

This paper presents an instant messaging client that includes functionality to increase awareness among distributed group members, and support initiation of conversation in stages rather than via an abrupt interruption.

The Review

Overall, I feel this paper makes a significant, original contribution to the field of human computer interaction. I feel the benefit of the work described in this paper is in exploring ways to better support interaction in distributed group work. To this end, there are a few interesting features in this IM client that I have not seen before in other work:

- users' avatars can be used to signal how busy / interruptable they are; this setting has implications for how easy it is for others to initiate conversation with them.
- the system makes visible who is currently in a conversation with whom
- the system also makes visible who is "watching" whom

The literature reviewed is both relevant and complete enough for a short paper, and the authors do a good job of setting up both the research problem, and the design goals they had for the prototype. The paper does a good job of describing the rationale for the design choices that were made, which is interesting information and very appropriate for a short paper focused more on the design and functionality of the prototype than the evaluation.

That being said, the user study reported in the paper provides some useful insights into how well the design choices supported the behaviors they were intended to support. I really like how the paper discusses both positive feedback from users, and areas for improvement. It lends more credibility to the work that the authors were willing to report shortcomings in the design, and point out limitations to the study.

Areas for Improvement

- The screen captures in the figure on page 3 are blurry and hard to read in the PDF copy I'm reading on my laptop. I am assuming that CHI will distribute the proceedings in soft copy again this year, so the quality of these images should probably be improved.
- The paper mentions sound notifications that go with some of the actions; was the video supposed to have sound, too? I downloaded the quicktime video and it did not seem to have an audio track.