

Workshop on SIGCHI Public Policy @ CHI2006**Position Statement****Austin Henderson, Pitney Bowes****January 18, 2006****Important Issues:**

I believe the most important thing that SIGCHI can do is take seriously its educational mission (as stated in the ACM constitution) as applied to reaching the general public, and its bodies in government in all branches and at all levels. Goal: awareness of the issues.

The issues that are of particular interest to SIGCHI concern people being able to employ computation in effective and useful ways in their lives. Such employment is both personal and social. Therefore, on all dimensions, design and deployment must both address individual differences and the capacity for negotiating the inherent tensions of a pluralistic social environment. The dimensions at issue include:

1) Medium: As government incorporates computation in its interaction with people (as voters, constituents, as tax payers, as entitlement recipients, etc.), that the mechanisms enable all persons and organizations equally, addressing issues of both disabilities and usability. Goal: Equality of support.

2) Function: HCI has become the voice for user-centered design, the concern for the machinery supporting the activity that everyone want it to support them in doing. This includes the desires of government and people. Goal: Equality of definition.

3) Mode: As the machinery becomes a medium for delivering function, the mode of the delivery must enable all parties to the interaction to negotiate its meaning. The medium must enable each person to impress on others through it their concerns and viewpoints. Goal: Equality of voice.

4) Context: the values of all parties must be attended to, made clear, and addressed in and through our systems. As these will be in tension (e.g., control vs. fluidity, privacy vs. security, safety vs. exploration), the unit and duration of design must be the whole on-going socio-technical practice of the system. Goal: Equality of values.

Previous HCI Policy Work:

In 1999, SIGCHI created a Adjunct Chair for Public Policy on the EEC. I held that chair for the term of that executive and the one following. The executive following adopted an agenda for Public Policy that I did not support and so I declined the invitation to continue as Adjunct Chair. During the period that I was active, the major activities were twofold: to put together a structure for Public Policy within SIGCHI (not completed), and to be the SIGCHI representative and voice in an ACM briefing for the US Congress on important public policy issues in computation. As one of six speakers, I made the usual points about the importance of UI, framed as focusing on getting “the last yard” from the local machine to the user (cf. SIGGRAPH’s advocating broad bandwidth over “the last mile” to the local machine). The briefing was not heavily attended. The briefing was preceded by a breakfast at the National Press Club, which was quite well attended. As a result, the briefing was moderately well reported.