

Research Issues in the Design of Online Communities

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Keywords

Online communities, virtual communities

TOPIC: ONLINE COMMUNITIES

Online communities are rapidly becoming a part of how we work, play, and learn. But how are they designed? What is already known in this emerging field? What are the key questions for future research? Online communities are becoming increasingly pervasive in the personal and professional lives of people from all strata of society; however, our knowledge about them is not increasing apace. The purpose of this workshop is to bring together researchers in this new area to begin to address these questions, and to support the growth of this research field.

Research in this field is interdisciplinary, drawing on diverse fields including anthropology, architecture, computer science, human factors engineering, political science, psychology, and sociology. Consequently, researchers often do not have adequate opportunity to interact with one another. This workshop aims to bring people from these diverse fields together, and also to introduce researchers from related fields to the CHI community.

Research issues for discussion include:

Purpose and Benefits

- What practical and social needs can be met with this technology? What risks or problems do they create?

Communication

- In what ways can communication among groups of people be facilitated?

Identity

- What affordances are possible to enable users to express their personal identity? How do these differ by media type?

Social Problems And Governance

- How are standards of behavior for online communities defined? What sorts of problems tend to emerge and how can they be managed?

Events, Time, Size

- What is the role of regular events in building a sense of community? How do communities change over time? How does the number of members affect the dynamics of a community?

Research Methodology And Ethics

- How can online communities be studied? What ethical issues arise in the study of human subjects in online contexts?