

Paul Dourish
Adrian Friday (Eds.)

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UbiComp 2006: Ubiquitous Computing

8th International Conference, UbiComp 2006
Orange County, CA, USA, September 2006
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Preface

Fifteen years after the publication of Weiser's seminal paper in *Scientific American*, ubiquitous computing is a large, thriving field of academic research and commercial innovation. The proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Ubiquitous Computing reflect the strength, diversity and vigor of the research program that Weiser initiated. We hope that you will find much in the papers contained herein to stimulate new and exciting work as we reach forward toward ubiquitous computing together.

The location of the conference, in Orange County, California, was particularly apposite given recent directions in the field. A Pacific Rim location linked the conference to last year's venue in Tokyo, Japan, and provided an appropriate space to reflect on the different implementations and visions of ubiquitous computing in different parts of the world. Two significant elements of local industry – the software industry and the entertainment industry – reflect concerns heavily represented in recent research in ubiquitous computing, with mobile and ubiquitous gaming, for instance, an obvious link. The unique metropolitan setting of the Los Angeles region provided a useful setting in which to develop research agendas in urban computing. Finally, while there are no papers in the proceedings on surfing-based Ubicomp, the cultural focus on healthy lifestyles in Southern California relates to concerns with aging and health as important application areas for ubiquitous computing technologies and solutions.

This year, the conference received a total of 232 paper submissions. These reflected contributions from 31 countries, drawn almost equally from Europe (38%), the USA (32%), and Asia (26%). From these, the Program Committee selected 30 papers for inclusion in the conference, on the basis of a rigorous double-blind review process. Every paper received at least three independent reviews; most received four, and some more. Reviewers were selected as experts in the field, reflecting a range of specific expertise for the content of each paper as well as a general Ubicomp readership.

Our primary concern in the review process was to form a program that reflects the diversity of research activity in ubiquitous computing. The field gains much of its strength from the breadth of interdisciplinary work that it engenders, encompassing computer science, engineering, social science, humanities, arts, and more. As it reflects a maturing discipline, we are as concerned with studies of real-world practice and the realities of ubiquitous computing today as we are with future directions and the potential for ubiquitous computing tomorrow. We are concerned, too, with critical reflection upon our own intellectual and practical histories and research practices. Accordingly, we sought to form a Program Committee that drew broadly from the larger ubiquitous computing community, and the result, we believe, is a vigorously interdisciplinary program that reflects a wide range of contemporary research and intellectual inquiry.

Like many conferences in computer-related fields, the Ubicomp series has seen its submission rate rise significantly over the last few years, from 117 papers in 2003 to 144 in 2004, 230 in 2005, and 232 this year. This trend marks the increasing interest in ubiquitous computing as a topic, the growing reputation of the Ubicomp conference as a forum, and the growing relevance of ubiquitous computing topics to other areas of research endeavor. On the other hand, it poses its own challenges. In order to

remain vibrant and in order to grow, it is important that the conference have space for new ideas and for challenges to received wisdom. The inherently normalizing tendency of peer review creates a tension between innovation and assessment.

Reflecting the record submission rate, this year's roster of 30 accepted papers is also a new record, and we have worked with Conference Chair Cristina Lopes to create space in the conference format for an enlarged program. At the same time, with an acceptance rate of just 13%, Ubicomp remains an extremely competitive venue, making it clear that a commitment to openness and innovation does not come at the expense of quality and rigor in the reviewing process.

Given the large number of submissions and the broad nature of their content, the reviewing process was a challenging one. The members of the Program Committee and the reviewers worked extremely hard under severe time pressure to evaluate papers and deliberate on their merits. The Program Committee members were responsible for finding, assigning, and monitoring reviewers for each paper, as well as for writing reviews themselves and for representing papers at the Program Committee meeting in Irvine in early June. The feedback from reviewers enabled us to make balanced assessments of papers' contributions as well, we hope, as providing useful feedback to authors that will assist in the revision of those papers that could not be included in the program. We are immensely grateful to all who volunteered significant amounts of time and energy to helping us create a strong program for Ubicomp 2006. Conferences of this sort depend entirely on volunteer labor, and we owe a huge debt of thanks to the committee members and reviewers.

Even more, we are grateful to the 639 authors who submitted papers to the conference. Although space restrictions limit the number of papers that can be accepted, this represents a tremendous amount of effort, and the conference depends crucially on the outstanding strength of the submitted work.

Finally, we would like to extend our gratitude to Conference Chair Cristina Lopes and to Local Arrangements Chair Don Patterson for their contributions both to the papers review process and, more generally, to making Ubicomp 2006 an exciting and enjoyable event.

We hope that you find in the program much to inspire and support your own research efforts.

Paul Dourish
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