

COMPUTER SUPPORTED COOPERATIVE WORK

Peter Thomas (Ed.)

CSCW Requirements and Evaluation

CSCW 的需求与评估

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Contents Summary

List of Contributors	xiii
1 Introduction: CSCW Requirements and Analysis <i>P. J. Thomas</i>	1
2 CSCW and Requirements Analysis: Requirements as Cooperation/Requirements for Cooperation <i>L. Brooks and M. Jones</i>	10
3 "They're Supposed to be Fixing it": Requirements and System Re-design <i>J. Hughes, J. O'Brien, M. Rouncefield and T. Rodden</i>	21
4 Cooperation, as Requirements Analysis and CSCW <i>L. A. Macaulay</i>	39
5 User Requirements from a Group Perspective: The Case of Distance Learning Mediated by Computer Conferencing <i>T. Kurland and P. Barber</i>	57
6 Early Evaluation of the Organisational Implications of CSCW Systems <i>K. Eason and W. Olphert</i>	75
7 Coordination Breakdowns: How Flexible is Collaborative Work? <i>S. Easterbrook</i>	91
8 The Why, How and What to Evaluate of Interaction Technology: A Review and Proposed Integration <i>J. H. E. Andriessen</i>	107

9 Measures of Process	
<i>A. Monk, J. McCarthy, L. Watts and O. Daly-Jones</i>	125
10 Dealing with Uncertainty – Perspectives on the Evaluation Process	
<i>D. Randall, M. Twidale and R. Bentley</i>	141
11 The Use of Breakdown Analysis in Synchronous CSCW System Design	
<i>S. A. R. Scrivener, S. Pongutá Urquijo and H. K. Palmén</i> ...	157
References	173
Indexes	185

Contents

List of Contributors	xiii
----------------------------	------

1 Introduction	
<i>P. J. Thomas</i>	1
2 CSCW and Requirements Analysis: Requirements as Cooperation/Requirements for Cooperation	
<i>L. Brooks and M. Jones</i>	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 Promoting Cooperation in Requirements	12
2.2.1 Conditions for Cooperation	13
2.2.2 Facilitating Cooperation	15
2.3 Cognitive Mapping	16
2.4 Empirical Results	19
2.5 Conclusion	20
3 "They're Supposed to be Fixing it": Requirements and System Redesign	
<i>J. Hughes, J. O'Brien, M. Rouncefield and T. Rodden</i>	21
3.1 Introduction	21
3.2 The "nth" Phase in the Requirements Process?	23
3.3 Considering Systems in Use	25
3.3.1 The Technology Resources Centre	25
3.3.2 Requirements	27
3.3.3 "Policy" vs. "Process"	29
3.4 The Bank	30
3.5 Conclusion: "Requirements" and "Configuring the User"	37

4	Cooperation, Requirements Analysis and CSCW	
	<i>L. A. Macaulay</i>	39
4.1	Introduction	39
4.1.1	Designing Usable Systems	40
4.2	Approaches to Requirements Analysis	42
4.2.1	Traditional Approaches	42
4.2.2	Participation	42
4.2.3	The Design Team	43
4.2.4	Group Sessions	43
4.3	Characteristics of Group Session Approaches	47
4.3.1	Communication Between Group Members	47
4.3.2	Sharing of Information	47
4.3.3	Coordination and Control of Shared Objects	47
4.3.4	Sharing of Workspace	48
4.3.5	Organisation and Common Under- standing of the Work Process	48
4.3.6	Decision Making	48
4.3.7	Facilitation	48
4.4	Research Issues	49
4.5	Prototype CRC Tools	50
4.6	Evaluation of the CRC Prototype	51
4.7	Research Issues for CSCW	53
5	User Requirements from a Group Perspective: The Case of Distance Learning Mediated by Computer Conferencing	
	<i>T. Kurland and P. Barber</i>	57
5.1	Introduction	57
5.2	On Approaches to the Evaluation of CCS	58
5.3	Objectives of Case Study	59
5.4	Case Study: Distance Learning via Computer Conferencing	60
5.4.1	Operational Constraints of the Study	60
5.4.2	Background to Case Study	60
5.4.3	Objectives of CCS Implementation	61
5.4.4	The CCS Environment: CAUCUS	61
5.4.5	The Structure of a Conference in the CAUCUS Environment	62
5.4.6	Course Material Structure and Schedule for the Computer Conference	62
5.4.7	Participants	62

5.5	Examining the Social Organisation of the Students' Learning Activity in the CCS Environment, and the Problems they Encountered	64
5.5.1	Educational Rationale	64
5.5.2	Operational Factors and Communication Knowledge	65
5.6	Investigation of Participants' Communication Problems	66
5.7	Some General Implications	70
5.8	Summary of Other Findings	71
5.9	Recommendations and Further Development	72
5.10	Conclusions	74
6	Early Evaluation of the Organisational Implications of CSCW Systems	
	<i>K. Eason and W. Olphert</i>	75
6.1	Organisational Impact	75
6.2	Approaches to Evaluation	76
6.2.1	The Logical-Positivist Approach	76
6.2.1.1	Usage Scenario Building	77
6.2.1.2	Predictions and Valuations	77
6.2.1.3	Time and Effort	77
6.2.2	The Interpretative Approach	77
6.3	The User Cost-Benefit Assessment Method	78
6.4	Evaluating the Impact of a Mobile Communications System	83
6.5	Reflections on the Use of the User Cost-Benefit Assessment Method	87
6.5.1	Validity	87
6.5.2	Strengths and Weaknesses of the Method	88
6.5.3	The Development of the Method	88
6.6	Conclusions	89
7	Coordination Breakdowns: How Flexible is Collaborative Work?	
	<i>S. Easterbrook</i>	91
7.1	Introduction	91
7.2	E-Mail and Communication Problems	91
7.2.1	Advantages of Email	93
7.2.2	Conflictual Features of Email	93
7.2.3	Coping Strategies	94
7.3	Definitions	95
7.3.1	Shared Understanding	96

7.3.2	Coordination Breakdowns	96
7.3.3	Conflict	97
7.4	The Role of Breakdowns	98
7.4.1	Breakdown Mechanisms	98
7.4.2	Breakdown Techniques	100
7.4.3	Harmonising Mechanisms	101
7.4.4	Harmonising Techniques	102
7.5	Discussion	104
7.6	Conclusions	106
8	The Why, How and What to Evaluate of Interaction Technology: A Review and Proposed Integration	
	<i>J. H. E. Andriessen</i>	107
8.1	Introduction	107
8.2	HOW to Evaluate: Methodology for Interaction Technology	109
8.3	Four Research Traditions	111
8.4	Choice of Evaluation Approach	113
8.5	WHAT to Evaluate: A Model of Distributed Social Interaction	114
8.5.1	Outcomes	116
8.5.2	Interaction Processes	117
8.5.3	Input	120
8.6	Group Evolution	122
8.7	The Complete Evaluation Process	123
9	Measures of Process	
	<i>A. Monk, J. McCarthy, L. Watts and O. Daly-Jones</i>	125
9.1	Introduction	125
9.2	Common Ground, Effort and Social Salience	127
9.2.1	Common Ground as Agreement in Recall ...	127
9.2.2	Subjective Ratings	128
9.3	Surface Features of Conversational Content	129
9.3.1	"I", "We", "You"	129
9.3.2	Corefering Expressions and Explicit Topic Openings	129
9.3.3	Breakdown	130
9.4	Conversational Structure	131
9.4.1	Topic Mention	131
9.4.2	Utterance Length, Overlap and Interruptions	132
9.4.3	Gaze	133
9.5	Discussion	134
9.6	Conclusions	138

10 Dealing with Uncertainty – Perspectives on the Evaluation Process	
<i>D. Randall, M. Twidale and R. Bentley</i>	141
10.1 Introduction	141
10.2 Evaluation in a Specific Context – Retail Financial Services.....	144
10.3 Conclusion – What is Evaluation?	151
 11 The Use of Breakdown Analysis in Synchronous CSCW System Design	
<i>S. A. R. Scrivener, S. Pongutá Urquijo and H. K. Palmén</i>	157
11.1 Introduction	157
11.2 Background	158
11.2.1 Design at a Distance: The Loughborough–Adelaide Studies	158
11.2.2 Breakdowns	160
11.3 Usability Evaluation and CSCW	162
11.3.1 Evaluating the Usability of CSCW Systems.....	162
11.3.2 The Role of the Model of Interaction in Breakdown Analysis	163
11.4 Breakdown Analysis.....	165
11.4.1 Stage 1: Transcription and Categorisation of Breakdowns.....	165
11.4.2 Stage 2: Causal Diagnosis	167
11.4.3 Stage 3: Remedy Prescription	167
11.4.4 Distribution of Breakdowns: Session 3 of the Adelaide–Loughborough Study	168
11.5 Conclusions.....	169
Appendix.....	172
 References	173
 Name Index	185
 Subject Index	188

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Chapter 1

Introduction: CSCW Requirements and Analysis

Peter J. Thomas

The nature of the design process has been an abiding interest for theorists and practitioners of all design and engineering disciplines. In the case of information systems design, this interest has been developing against the background of a growing body of "technical" and "non-technical" knowledge about the design of such systems and a corpus of examples of large-scale information systems engineering projects. It is now recognised that successful information systems development needs to be underpinned by a clear focus on the situations of use and the needs of users.

Although undoubtedly true of information systems design, this approach is also valuable in the development of groupware systems and the discipline of computer supported cooperative work. In particular, two activities – *requirements analysis* and *evaluation* – traditionally seen as discrete activities in design, are now understood to be interleaved processes in the development of systems to support cooperative work: systems which themselves rest on (i) an understanding of the requirements that "social and organisational factors" impose, and (ii) the development of more encompassing measures of "evaluation". For requirements analysis – seen as a prerequisite activity in software development – the notion of "requirements gathering" as a procedural and mechanistic process has moved towards a view of "requirements engineering" as the process of gathering "non-functional requirements" that can affect systems development and performance. One effect of this has been to increase the importance of "organisational and social factors" in design. For CSCW this means that requirements analysis is focused on precisely those factors that are central to the support of cooperative work through technology, with the additional possibility that cooperation itself can be made a part of the requirements analysis process. In the case of evaluation, the recognition of the interleaved nature of the design process means that evaluation can usefully take place at several points.

This volume in the Springer-Verlag series contains chapters which

develop these themes further, all of which draw on accounts of the design of systems to support cooperative work and which serve to inform CSCW as an intellectual discipline. The collection is based partly on a UK CSCW SIG/NPL meeting in 1993 which examined the evaluation process in relation to CSCW. The addition of commissioned chapters focused on the requirements engineering process provides a broader view of the interrelated nature of requirements engineering and evaluation. The chapters range in focus (requirements for collaborative systems to the nature of collaborative tasks), methodology (ethnographic studies and case studies) and perspective (cognitive-psychological to ethnographic). All agree, however, that the traditional view of both the requirements engineering process and the evaluation process need to be reinterpreted for the development of groupware. This traditional view of the iterative design life cycle, with the stages of requirements capture, design decisions and specification, implementation, testing and finally evaluation, is critically examined in the chapters in this volume. For requirements analysis, the aim is to "get at" the users' needs; for evaluation the aim is to "tune" the system to make sure that it really does meet those needs.

Although this approach can be argued to only weakly meet the needs of current designs for IS/IT, it is stressed in the chapters in this collection that such a view is inappropriate for CSCW systems, which are intended to support complex group activities, and which inevitably involve complex social and organisational issues. Even if the traditional view of the system design life cycle were to meet the challenge of CSCW systems, then the specific data collection and analysis methods which have been used may be inadequate to meet the needs of such systems. In the case of both requirements engineering and evaluation, the chapters in this collection propose new approaches to the system design life cycle, new data collection methods and new ways of analysing the rich and complex data which those methods generate.

In Chapter 2, "CSCW and Requirements Analysis: Requirements as Cooperation/Requirements for Cooperation", Laurence Brooks and Matthew Jones examine the nature of requirements analysis. They suggest that, in contrast to the traditional understanding, requirements analysis is rarely perceived as a cooperative activity, rather being seen as an "extraction" process where requirements are "mined" from passive users (which may involve conflict, coercion, competition and even combat). This lack of cooperation may be the root cause of problems with the development of large-scale information systems, and – due to the ever increasing dominance of IS in organisations – a root cause of failure. In contrast, they describe an approach which is based around negotiation and cooperation, drawing on the work of Habermas, Vickers and Hunter and on their analyses of interviews with IS developers about the RA process, from an ethnographic, social-organisational perspective. Their