Proceedings of the 14th Biannual Conference of the Italian SIGCHI Chapter

CHItaly '21, 11-13 July 2021, Bozen-Bolzano, Italy, and online (www)

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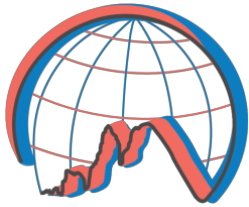**Long Research Papers Chairs:** Rosella Gennari, Maria De Marsico

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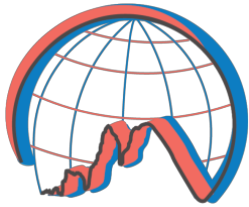
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In memory of Gregorio Convertino (1972-2021)

We dedicate CHItaly21 to Gregorio, the Italian pioneer who chartered frontiers of common-ground, awareness and collective intelligence around the USA building bridges between theory and practice, industrial needs and academic rigour. Not only was Gregorio an excellent manager and a fine scholar, he truly was a wonderful person who will be deeply missed.

Foreword

CHItaly 2021: Frontiers of Human-Computer Interaction

Rosella Gennari, Maria De Marsico, Alessandra Melonio, Cristina Gena, Luigi De Russis, Lucio Davide Spano, Luca Chittaro and Antonella De Angeli

Where are the frontiers of Human-Computer Interaction? What theories, methodologies, tools, and sensitivities do researchers, designers and practitioners need to explore uncharted territories? These are the questions that inspired CHItaly 2021, the 14th edition of the biannual conference of the Italian SIGCHI Chapter. Some initial answers are documented in the proceedings and summarised in this foreword alongside a reflection on future frontiers of hybrid scientific conferences.

The original focus of inquiry was on transcending disciplinary, communication and national boundaries, reaching out to new scholars, engaging the public, and supporting internationalisation. The COVID-19 pandemics abruptly challenged us to explore unexpected frontiers of space and time in evolving virtualities fraught with uncertainties. Unlike most human-computer interaction conferences, CHItaly 2021 was planned as a hybrid meeting with the aim of reconfiguring physical and digital spaces to mutual benefit. The Free University of Bozen-Bolzano infrastructured the physical space for scholars and citizens within changing local, national and international safety legislation. The technical chair (Fabio Butussi) and the digital frontiers chairs (Fabio Morreale and Ilaria Torre) infrastructured the connection between Bozen-Bolzano and the rest of the world.

The conference started on July the 11th with the first edition of the Interactive Experiences track at CHItaly. Marìa Menéndez-Blanco, Ceçil Uğur Yavuz and Jennifer Schubert curated this hybrid exhibition to connect artists, the conference attendees, the local population and the virtual public. It included eleven artefacts authored by international artists, researchers and designers to spark foundational critical discourses, such as reflections on AI and user profiling, human-technology symbiosis, and digital obsolescence. In parallel, six workshops (selected by Barbara Rita Barricelli and Catia Prandi) provided the venues for speculating about equality, diversity and inclusion in machine learning and virtual reality, imagining trans-urban futures, reflecting on socio-political consequences of digitalisation in rural regions, and exploring the space of outdoors-related HCI, virtual games and extended realities. Finally, the doctoral colloquium, chaired by Fabio Paternò and Daniela Fogli, provided a venue for young researchers to share and refine their work.

Prof. Albrecht Schmidt opened the conference with a keynote about the effect of AI on serendipity while exploring the overlapping frontiers between recommendations, choices and chances in human behaviour. The scientific program consisted of 13 long papers (about 24% acceptance rate) and 22 short papers selected from all the remaining long and short-paper submissions. The final resulting overall acceptance rate is about 42%. Following the conference theme, they addressed cognitive, societal and technological frontiers between HCI & Education, HCI & AI, and HCI & well-being, with a unique focus on equality, diversity, and inclusion of heterogeneous users. Finally, Prof. Paola Bertola closed the conference with a keynote on the influence of big data on fashion, reflecting on how active

customers may give rise to virtual communities of practice that promote sustainability and equality principles.

When writing this editorial, CHItaly 2021 eagerly awaits its participants for an inspirational and engaging meeting. Several indicators show that the conference has successfully mobilised a diverse, international audience. Thanks to the publicity chairs (Mehdi Rizvi and Federica Caruso) and the website chair (Eftychia Roumelioti), the call for contributions exceeded expectations. CHItaly 2021 achieved the highest number of contributions ever recorded by the Italian SIGCHI Conference. They included 83 papers (54 long and 29 short), 11 workshops, 15 interactive experience contributions, 11 doctoral consortium abstracts. Around half of the papers were authored by Italian scholars, 37% by European Scholars, 8% American and 6% Asian scholars.

The scientific reputation of SIGCHI Italy and the effort of the internationalisation chairs (Andreas Bollin, Fernando de la Prieta Pintado, Netta Iivari, and Valentina Nisi) played an instrumental role in this achievement. Nevertheless, such an outstanding performance warrants speculation on the impact of hybrid conferences in opening up local academic communities, increasing the number of voices and democratising participation across boundaries of space, time, economic and environmental resources. Thanks to the sponsorship of Sparkasse and the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano CHItaly 2021 offered very competitive fees to both physical and virtual attendees, challenging economic models of scientific dissemination in practice and pioneering the frontiers of post-COVID HCI conferences.

Organizing Committee

Steering Committee

Maristella Matera

Politecnico di Milano
maristella.matera@polimi.it

Massimo Zancanaro

University of Trento
massimo.zancanaro@unitn.it

General Chairs

Antonella De Angeli

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
antonella.deangeli@unibz.it

Luca Chittaro

University of Udine
luca.chittaro@uniud.it

Long Research Paper Chairs

Rosella Gennari

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
gennari@inf.unibz.it

Maria De Marsico

Sapienza University of Rome
demarsico@di.uniroma1.it

Short Research Paper Chairs

Alessandra Melonio

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
alessandra.melonio@unibz.it

Cristina Gena

University of Torino
cristina.gena@unito.it

Digital Frontiers Chairs

Ilaria Torre

University of Genova
ilaria.torre@unige.it

Fabio Morreale

University of Auckland
f.morreale@auckland.ac.nz

Internationalisation Chairs

Andreas Bollin

University of Klagenfurt, Austria
andreas.bollin@aau.at

Netta Iivari

University of Oulu, Finland
netta.iivari@oulu.fi

Valentina Nisi

University of Lisboa, Portugal
valentina.nisi@tecnico.ulisboa.pt

Fernando De La Prieta Pintado

University of Salamanca, Spain
fer@usal.es

Proceedings and Accessibility Chairs

Luigi De Russis

Politecnico di Torino
luigi.derussis@polito.it

Lucio Davide Spano

University of Cagliari
davide.spano@unica.it

Interactive Experiences Chairs

María Menéndez-Blanco

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
maria.menendezblanco@unibz.it

Seçil Uğur Yavuz

Design & Arts, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
secil.uguryavuz@unibz.it

Jennifer Schubert

Design & Arts, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
jschubert@unibz.it

Workshop Chairs

Barbara Rita Barricelli

University of Brescia
barbara.barricelli@unibs.it

Catia Prandi

University of Bologna
catia.prandi2@unibo.it

Doctoral Consortium Chairs

Daniela Fogli

University of Brescia
daniela.fogli@unibs.it

Fabio Paternò

CNR-ISTI
fabio.paterno@isti.cnr.it

Publicity Chairs

Mehdi Rizvi

Politecnico di Milano
syedmehdi.rizvi@polimi.it

Federica Caruso

University of L'Aquila
federica.caruso1@graduate.univaq.it

Sponsors Chairs

Floriano Zini

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
floriano.zini@unibz.it

Angela Locoro

Carlo Cattaneo University - LIUC
alocoro@liuc.it

Technical Chairs

Fabio Buttussi

University of Udine
fabio.buttussi@uniud.it

Christian Zeni

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
christian.zeni@unibz.it

Local Chair

Hannes Hell

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
hannes.hell@unibz.it

Webmaster

Eftychia Roumelioti

Free University of Bozen-Bolzano
eroumelioti@unibz.it

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