



Foreword

There have been many developments since the first ICAD, in 1992. First, the technology has radically developed. In those days it was necessary to attach external, music hardware to your computer to make it capable of making any 'interesting' kinds of noise. But (as those of us seeking funding for such additional equipment predicted) even better facilities are now available on built-in cards. Just as significant as the technological development has been the change in attitude. Whereas a computer making sounds was once seen as odd – and certain only to annoy – it has become an assumption that sound is one aspect of nearly all interfaces. Although the sounds may now be present, it cannot be assumed that they are well designed and this can only add to the common negative reaction to the use of sounds. (See, for instance, Pemberton, 1996). It is as if designers feel obliged to use sounds – because they can, but in practice the contributions to this conference demonstrate that there is still a lot to learn about how sounds can best be used.

The word 'international' in a conference title can be used to lend credibility and prestige to the event, but ICAD is one conference that really deserves the epithet. This year it is being staged in Scotland, the first time outside the USA and the contributions show a truly international spread with papers from 12 different countries.

Turning to the range of topics covered this year. It has been suggested that most 'buzzwords' have a half-life, a time beyond which they lose their original (usually precise) meaning, and enter everyday language. This has already happened to 'multimedia', for instance. It would seem that 'sonification' is now approaching that age. A large number of authors in this conference listed this among their keywords, yet it seems that almost each one of them had a different meaning implied by the word. In those terms, it cannot really be identified as a theme.

Spatialized sound has been feasible for some time. So, as might be expected, its application is represented as a common topic. Another evidently growing area is the use of non-speech sounds in interfaces for blind users. Again, it is only right that this should be getting established within the ICAD community since it is one advantage of auditory interfaces which in the past was perhaps more talked about than demonstrated.

It is customary for judges who make selections from the work of others to offer consolation by suggesting that the act of selection was difficult, but it was truly the case in this instance. A total of 51 submissions had to be whittled down to a programme of 39 and in so-doing we had to discard some papers that were of eminently publishable quality. (And we are not just saying that because we ended up rejecting some of our own work!)

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For those people attending the conference, we hope it is an enriching and enjoyable experience. For those of you reading these proceedings after the event, we are sorry you missed it, but hope that they capture the essential essence and are a useful resource.

Alistair Edwards & Stephen Brewster, ICAD'98 Chairs.

Reference:

Pemberton, S. (1996). Views and Feelings: Beep Beep! *SigCHI Bulletin* **28**(3):. Also available at: <http://www.acm.org/sigchi/bulletin/1996.3/views.html>