



## The SIGCHI Bulletin: A Retrospective

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I first got involved with SIGCHI in 1991, when I went to CHI '91 in New Orleans, since I had had a demo accepted. It was a great conference, and I got to hang out with some quite well-known HCI people in jazz bars in the evening as well. It was my first ever visit to the USA, which added to the excitement: only a few months earlier I had been for the first time to the (then still) USSR for the very first East-West HCI conference, as relations thawed under Gorbachev, and consequently I was on the streets of Moscow during the coup against Gorbachev. It was an exciting year for me in many ways.

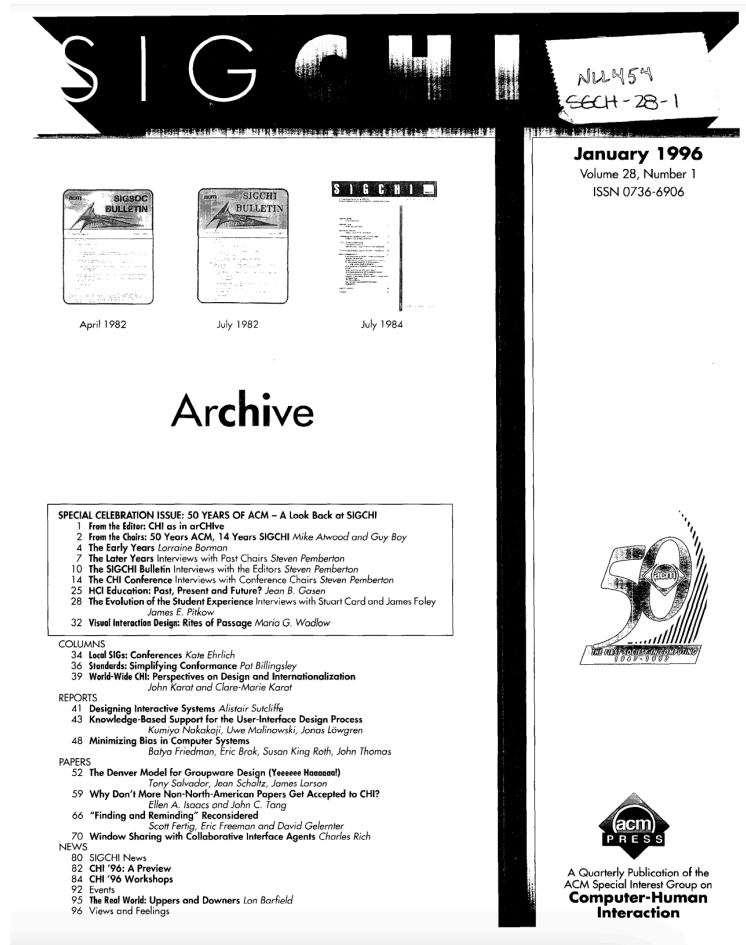
It is weird to think back and realise that SIGCHI in 1991 wasn't yet nine years old! The first pre-CHI conference that founded SIGCHI and the whole HCI discipline had been in 1982 in Washington, DC; the first conference actually called CHI was in 1983. It was really early days, but to a young researcher like me, that wasn't obvious.

That first pre-CHI conference in 1982 had been organised because the Washington, DC Chapter of the ACM had too much money in their bank account and as a non-profit were looking for ways to reduce their \$10,000 surplus for the benefit of the discipline. With a grant of \$2,000 dollars to get started, a group of people decided to organise a conference on Human Factors, expecting around 250 to turn up. In the end more than 900 went, returning somewhere close to \$100,000 back to the Washington, DC chapter, causing them an enormous headache, but really kicking off our discipline.

Having gone to CHI '91, I hadn't planned to go to CHI '92 in Monterey, California, but since CHI was coming to Europe for the first time in 1993, to Amsterdam no less (where I live), I anticipated I'd get to go again then.

But then something happened: the co-chairs of that coming Amsterdam conference needed a local arrangements chair, someone who knew the conference, but also the city. They decided that that was me. As a result, I had to go to the planning meetings that happened after CHI '92, and so got to go to CHI '92 after all (still one of my favourite CHIs)!

I really enjoyed the meetings and got on well with the people involved, and so I decided I'd like to get more involved. As it happened, *Interactions* magazine was just coming up to speed at that time, and the editor of the SIGCHI member publication, [SIGCHI Bulletin](#), was leaving to be editor of *Interactions*, and so they were looking for a new Bulletin editor. The advert fitted me perfectly! I had experience editing a newsletter, I had edited large publications, and my employers would support me. The decision process took longer than anyone expected I think, and when the invitation arrived to come to a meeting in Los Angeles (the following day!), I was in a cabin in the middle of a forest in Sweden, halfway on an overland trip to the third East-West HCI conference.



COVER OF THE JAN 1996 SIGCHI BULLETIN

I was the fourth editor of the Bulletin, and I edited it for more than five years in the end (longer than intended: my resignation letter somehow fell through the cracks, and for a time I was editing both the Bulletin and *Interactions*. I still remember the look on the face of the then-chair of SIGCHI when he came up to me to tell me that ACM were complaining that I wasn't delivering the Bulletin in a timely manner, and I had to remind him that I had resigned). It was hard work, but a lot of fun, and I got to know a lot of great people.

The Bulletin came out quarterly in issues of about 100 pages. It was principally directed at members, and was intended to contain timely information. If I look at a typical issue, I see half a dozen columns, one from the SIGCHI chairs, and then ones on Local SIGs, Education, Standards, Design, and Students. Then there are reports from conferences and workshops, a couple of technical papers, and finally news: new publications, dissertations, calls for papers, events, minutes from SIGCHI Executive Committee meetings, and all ending with a light-hearted opinion piece.

Occasionally, I would run a special issue. Notable ones that spring to mind include one on [Interaction Design Education](#) in July 1994, an issue marking the [ACM's 50th year with a retrospective on SIGCHI](#) in January 1996, and the issue bidding [farewell to the Apple Advanced Technology Group](#) in April 1998.

Another thing we did during my tenure was experiment with publishing both on paper and electronically. In 1994 we planned, in 1995 we experimented, and in 1996 officially published the Bulletin electronically, one of the first publications to be published on the web (you can still see what we did at [my website](#)).

According to the ACM Digital Library, it has been more than 25 years since the last issue of the SIGCHI Bulletin appeared, so I'm really glad that SIGCHI is restarting a membership publication. The old SIGCHI Bulletins contain an immense amount of history about us and how our field has developed, and a similar publication is an excellent way for SIGCHI to keep members in touch with what is happening, and the decisions being made.