

Preface

The Cambridge Workshop on Universal Access and Assistive Technology (CWUAAT) 2008 is the fourth of a series of workshops that are held every two years. The workshop theme, *Designing inclusive futures*, reflects the need to explore in a coherent way the issues and practicalities that lie behind design intended to extend our active future lives. This encompasses design for inclusion in daily life at home but also extends to the workplace and to products within these contexts. For example, given trends in employment sector growth, skills requirements, labour supply and demographic change, there is a need to predict the critical areas where individual capabilities are mismatched with the physical, social and organisational demands of work. This mismatch, which can be addressed within the domain of inclusive design, is pervasively linked to real artefacts in workspaces and their intersection with the health factors that relate to ageing.

Since the inception of the current CWUAAT series in 2002, the scope and specific areas of focus of the workshop have changed, reflecting new directions in both the research and social context. Hence, we have moved from isolated activities in disparate fields such as engineering, therapy and computer science, that were reflected in the first volume's title, *Universal access and assistive technology*, via the integrating themes of *Designing a more inclusive world* and *Designing accessible technology*, to the more unified and holistic perspective evident in the present title: *Designing inclusive futures*. In the context of inclusive design, this reflects the development of theories, tools and techniques as research moves on, and also the need to draw in wider psychological, social, and economic considerations in order to gain a more accurate understanding of user interactions with products and technology. Two consequences of this are evident in the book content: firstly, the increased emphasis on the transfer of knowledge and techniques from research into the wider community as research

programs mature, and secondly, the requirement for connected thinking that can encompass multi-product sequences of actions that are a part of tasks or workplace activities in a variety of social settings.

The book contains the best papers submitted for CWUAAT'08, as judged by an international panel of thirty three reviewers. This panel and the final contributors represent a sample of leading national and international researchers in the fields of inclusive design, ergonomics, universal access, and assistive and rehabilitative technology. We are also pleased to note that there have been significant contributions from researchers in architecture, social housing provision and apparel and fashion design, reflecting the need to understand the wider social and economic context of inclusive and assistive technology design.

This book is divided into the following five parts:

- I. *Understanding Users* focuses on the identification and provision of usable data about user capabilities to designers and methods of using it to reduce exclusion.
- II. *Inclusive Design* presents case studies of inclusive design and research on the theory of applying it to products and daily living.
- III. *Computer Access and New Technologies* looks at research into ICT accessibility and new technology for inclusion, demonstrating that these are still priority focus areas.
- IV. *Assistive Technology* focuses on special purpose design and adaptations for specific impairments.
- V. *Inclusive Environments* examines the context of the inclusive design of products and encompasses architecture, usability, housing requirements and ageing.

As is usual for CWUAAT, the nature of the contributions has been broad, both within individual themes and also across the workshop's scope. We hope this will lead to new solutions to reduce exclusion and difficulty arising from impairment, with special application to our future lives, in the workplace, at home and at leisure.

As ever, we would like to thank all those who contributed to the CWUAAT'08 Workshop and to the preparation of this book. Many thanks are due to all the contributors and also to the non-contributing members of the Programme Committee for the high quality of the reviewing. Thanks are particularly due to Mari Huhtala, who, together with Suzanne Williams, now plays a far greater role in bringing the resulting publication to fruition than ever before. We would also like to thank the staff at Fitzwilliam College who enable us to run the workshop.

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