

Preface

Over the last twenty years, perhaps best marked by the emergence of the ubiquitous computing programme, digital interactive technology has found itself in increasingly diverse contexts, and correspondingly applied in a growing number of creative ways. One key development is the increasing prevalence of computing power and significant digital infrastructures in everyday public places, such as museums and galleries, city streets and arts venues. This book addresses the challenges that such settings pose to the design of interactions that occur with, as well as around, computer interfaces. It comes at a time when there is an ever-growing body of work within the field of human-computer interaction that investigates technology in a wide range of public and performative settings. As such this book offers a timely empirical and conceptual contribution to this burgeoning body of work.

The purpose of this book is to provide both practical and theoretical use for a variety of audiences, particularly speaking to computer supported cooperative work and human-computer interaction communities; but it also proves a reference point for other fields, such as museum studies and performance literatures. This broad perspective means that this book can provide the resources for a shared or bridged perspective between computer scientists, artists, technologists, curators, and performers. Accordingly, Chaps. 4–7 present a series of broadly accessible empirical studies of interaction with technology ‘in the wild’, gradually building up a body of concepts, culminating in a design framework for public interactions with technology (Chap. 8). In the conclusion (Chap. 9), the book meets up with the introduction, suggesting a variety of ways in which elements of the book may be ‘read’ for these different audiences.

The bulk of this book was developed while working at the University of Nottingham’s Mixed Reality Laboratory. My Ph.D. supervisors Steve Benford and Claire O’Malley (not forgetting my original supervisor, Mike Fraser, who escaped to Bristol) are owed the greatest debt. Much of the work in this book would not exist in its current form without their ideas, creativity, experience, encouragement, feedback and care. I also owe a debt of gratitude to my Ph.D. examiners, Paul Luff and Boriana Koleva, for their insights and contributions to the final stages of the process. Various others have helped me in some way along this journey, so I list them here (in

no particular order, and no doubt omitting several): Andy Crabtree, Jennifer Sheridan, Alan Dix, Holger Schnädelbach, Martin Flintham, Tom Rodden, Barry Brown, Eric Laurier, Katie Fraser.

Being stationed at the Mixed Reality Lab itself was instrumental in developing the studies presented in this book. Many of the projects drawn on here are the result of years of hard work by various members of the lab, particularly for Equator projects.

Various artist groups, including Welfare State International, Blast Theory, as well as individuals such as Brendan Walker of Aerial, and Rachel Feneley of Lakeside Arts, Nottingham, are also to be acknowledged for making the studies present in this book possible.

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