Evaluation of groupware

CT334/434: CSCW

CSCW Basics

- Intro to Group Work
- Intro to Groupware
- Design of Groupware
- Evaluation of Groupware

Learning Outcomes

- After attending this lecture and reading the additional literature, you should be able to:
  - Explain what evaluation is
  - Understand what/when/how evaluation can be performed
  - Understand what type of knowledge can be derived by different evaluation methods
The Context

Better Team performance?

Improved organisational structure?

people

task

organisation

technology

Functionality, efficiency, usability

Simplified task structure?

The Context

A difficult task

• The evaluation of CSCW systems is difficult, because
  – Many different factors affect their success
  – Many disciplines study these factors
  – The interaction occurs over long time periods

What to evaluate?

1. Does it work? (functionality)
2. Does it work well enough? (efficacy)
3. Is it workable with? (usability)
4. Does it follow the standards laid down by various bodies? (standards)
5. What does it do to those who work with it? (individual effect)
6. What does it do to their work? (group effects)
7. What does it do to those they work with and for? (organisational effects)
8. What does it do to the world beyond work? (societal effects)
Evaluation criteria

- **Functionality**: reliability, robustness, efficiency, technical novelties
- **Efficacy**: does the system do what is intended/needed?
- **Usability**: interaction design issues
- **Standards**: consistency with requirements of various standards-making bodies
- **Individual effect**: psychological issues
- **Group effect**: socio-political issues
- **Organisational effect**: profit, security, changes
- **Societal effect**: cost/benefit, changes, socio-political issues

When to evaluate?

- **Concept evaluation**
  - Analyse potential impact of new socio-technical system on the basis of scenarios
  - Before implementation -> requirements (four principles of groupware design)
- **Prototype evaluation**
  - Test if the applications function as they were planned and whether user-interfaces are usable
  - During implementation -> grounded design decisions
- **Operational evaluation**
  - Evaluate impact of technology on work setting, communication, social interaction, quality of work and organisational efficiency
  - After implementation -> adoption knowledge & requirements for new technology

HutchWorld

- **Virtual Worlds to enhance social support and information exchange among caregivers and patients**
  - **Information services**: contact information, links to the institution's web site and related web sites, Seattle Transport, transportation, shopping and restaurants
  - **Social services**: bulletin board services, notes, gifts and small exchange, real time communication in 3D environment and text chat area
  - **Recreational services**: users can make music together by interacting with sculptures in a 3D environment, create a personal journal, web browse and play games
- **Microsoft Research & Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center**
HutchWorld (2)

- **Concept evaluation**
  - Meetings with patients, caregivers & medical staff early in design
  - Observations in hospitals, schools, and research facilities
  - What: functionality, usability, individual and group effects
    - Physical world metaphor, social support, restricted entry
- **Prototype evaluation**
  - Early prototype tested on site with real users
    - Organisational effect: problems with technology deployment (staff training)
    - Functionality: chat-room did not achieve critical mass, asynchronous communication was needed
    - Individual/group effect: users felt obliged to talk
  - Later prototype tested at Microsoft
    - Usability
- **Operational evaluation**
  - Portal version: limited field trial

How to evaluate?

- **Inspection methods**: evaluators ‘inspect’ an interface according to a set of criteria
  - Heuristics (HCI)
- **User observations**: evaluators observe users performing tasks within a semi-controlled setting
  - User testing (HCI)
  - Laboratory experiments (cognitive/social psychology)
- **Verbal methods**: evaluators ask users their opinion
  - Interviews, Questionnaires, Focus Groups and Customer Feedback (social psychology & marketing)
- **Field studies**: evaluators study people interacting within their world
  - Ethnography (HCI)
  - Conversation Analysis and Interaction Analysis (Ethnomethodology)

Heuristic evaluation

- Evaluation by experts according to, guidelines for good design, or checklists of usability.
  - Inexpensive, fast and easy
  - Too general; tend mainly to address usability
  - Group/societal/organisational effects may be lost
  - Research on community is working on heuristics for sociability
Heuristics for CSCW

1. Provide the means for intentional and appropriate verbal communication
2. Provide the means for intentional and appropriate gestural communication
3. Provide consequential communication of an individual's embodiment
4. Provide consequential communication of shared artifacts (i.e. artifact feedthrough)
5. Provide protection
6. Management of tightly and loosely-coupled collaboration
7. Allow people to coordinate their actions
8. Facilitate finding collaborators and establishing contact

Laboratory experiments

- Collect quantitative data about selected factors, attempting to control other influences
- Hypotheses testing
  - Compare prototypes (prototype evaluation)
  - Study social dynamics (operational evaluation)
- Decontextualised and artificial setting
  - Difficult to select a representative sample
  - Short observation

Laboratory settings
Verbal methods

• Questionnaires, interviews, focus groups
• Can be used to investigate several dimensions
  – individual/social/organisational/societal effects
• Self-reports
• Useful at every stage of the evaluation cycle

Questionnaire: example

• Collaborative writing
  – 41 participants
  – 3 groupware
  – 83% word
  – Benefits
  • better product
  – Drawbacks
  • Making the task more difficult

Ethnography

• Contextual approach that requires a prolonged period of immersion in the social setting being studied
• Special skills are required to the researchers
  – they should become ‘part of the team’ or
  – ‘hang around’ without interfere
• Huge amount of data is collected
  – audio and videotapes, field notes, descriptions and diagrams of the work setting, and samples of various artefacts
• Useful to investigate group/organisational/societal effects
Ethnography: example

Conversation/Interaction Analysis
- Study real group interactions as revealed by their conversation and actions
- Data driven;
- Used on video-conferencing, e-mail,
- Understand what people do, not why they do it
- Useful to investigate group/organisational/societal effects

Example
- On-line Aibo Discussion Forum
  - Technological essences + 75% -8
  - Life like essences + 48 -12
  - Mental states + 60 – 4
  - Social rapport + 59 – 8
  - Moral standing + 12 -2

WHAT!? They Actuaty THREW AWAY aibo, as in the GARBAGE?!?! That is outrageous! That is so sick to me! Goes right up there with Putting puppies in a bag and than burying them! OHH I feel sick...
Summing up

- CSCW evaluation is complex
  - Several evaluation criteria
  - Several methods
    - Inspection
    - User observations
    - Verbal methods
    - Field study

Conclusion

- Multiple methods should be used to evaluate CSCW
- Choice depends on the questions to be addressed and the training and skills of the researchers

Additional readings

- Preece - chapter 10 -
- Evaluation of cooperative systems project http://www.comp.lancs.ac.uk/computing/research/cseg/projects/evaluation/index.html