

*Proceedings of the
First European Conference on
Computer Supported
Cooperative Work*

Delegates' copy

EC-CSCW '89

13th - 15th September 1989

The Hilton Hotel, Gatwick, London, UK

With support from Computer Sciences Company

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Introduction from the Conference Chair

Just four years ago, "Computer Supported Cooperative Work" was an obscure term known only to a few people. That's not to say that CSCW research wasn't being done - just that those doing it didn't have a rallying call. Then, in December 1986, the first CSCW conference was held in Austin Texas. I was lucky enough to be there and sensed the excitement of new horizons and the flowering of a vision. By the second conference in September 1988 in Portland, Oregon, CSCW had become a hot research topic and journalists were beginning to write about Workgroup Computing and Groupware.

European delegates and authors had been present at both conferences, but in relatively fewer numbers than those of the host country - the USA. So at an informal meeting of the Europeans attending the Portland conference it was agreed that a European event was needed to establish a European focus. By December 1988 the organisation I work for - Computer Sciences Company Limited - had agreed to underwrite a European CSCW event and I duly established a committee. We then faced a difficult decision: should the event be a low key workshop or a full blown conference? Furthermore, with the next CSCW conference planned for 1990, when should the European event be held? After much debate, we decided that the best long term strategy would be to hold full scale European CSCW conferences in alternate years to the US conferences - a decision endorsed by our US colleagues via our CSCW liaison officer - Irene Greif.

Furthermore, we thought it important to gain momentum as quickly as possible and therefore to hold the first European event this year. This left us with a highly ambitious schedule to organise the conference in less than eight months. Despite the compromises forced on us by this timescale, the conference has been organised in the time available and with a full programme of papers (selected from over sixty submitted abstracts). The efforts of all committee members - Liam Bannon, Steve Benford, John Bowers, Giorgio De Michelis, Irene Greif, Pam Knibb, Lorna Meek, Agneta Olerup, Wolfgang Prinz, Mike Robinson, Tom Rodden, Rolf Speth and myself - are to be commended - particularly the work done by John Bowers, our Programme Chair. We hope that we have done enough to achieve our objectives - indeed I anticipate being able to announce a venue for the 1991 European conference during EC-CSCW'89.

The motivation for having a European conference is not only to get Europeans together, but also to highlight some of the special perspectives that Europe has to offer the international, collaborative, CSCW effort. One such area is the derivation of a theoretical framework for CSCW. Another became apparent at last year's Portland conference where Scandinavian papers addressing the work design process figured prominently in discussions. Both topics will be debated in their own rights at EC-CSCW'89, but I hope that the latter will also serve to remind us that the creation of computer tools is not the prime goal of CSCW work. Our objective must surely be to improve the group work process in general, regardless of the tools, techniques and environments involved.

As far back as 1979, when visiting Japan, a group of European managers were told that,

"... your firms are built on the Taylor model - even worse, so are your heads. With your bosses doing the thinking while the workers wield the screwdrivers, you are convinced deep down that this is the way to run a business ... only by building on the combined brainpower of all its employees can a firm face up to

the turbulence and constraints of today's environment ... this is why [our large companies] foster within the firm such intense exchange and communication. This is why they constantly seek everybody's suggestions ... "*

Our goal must be to seek organisational forms, design processes and associated computer-based tools that complement our European culture and environment. I suggest that this is a worthy focus for this conference.

You will see in your conference programme that there is a slot on Thursday evening for discussion of a COST programme. COST supports the creation of pan-European research collaboration in all disciplines by funding the administration and travel expenses of approved programmes. A proposal for a COST programme in Cooperation Technology has recently been put forward and the purpose of the Thursday evening meeting is to publicise and discuss the initiative.

COST, however, is not the only focal point for European CSCW research. The current ESPRIT call for proposals specifies at least two CSCW related projects; and the recently established "Foundation for Cooperative Work Technology" intends, among other things, to undertake active research in CSCW by linking a number of European research establishments.

All these initiatives are in their planning stages and will be important influences on future European CSCW activities, so I urge delegates to discuss their implications and influence their protagonists. Above all, try to get involved in some way or other in these collaborative ventures. Consider yourselves part of a world-wide CSCW team and take every opportunity to try out CSCW tools and techniques when collaborating with your colleagues. By utilising the tools we are designing, we have a better chance of ensuring their usability in the real, practical world.

So, my overall message to EC-CSCW'89 delegates is not only to enjoy the comprehensive conference programme, but also to consider how you can contribute to the "collective brainpower" of the international CSCW effort. Each and every one of us has something to contribute. If you can make that contribution by doing research using collaboration tools, then so much the better.

Paul Wilson, August 1989

*Quoted in: Cooley, Mike, "Why our vision of the next century should be in a class of its own", The Guardian, London, 11th August 1989.

Preface from the Editors of the Proceedings

Welcome to the Proceedings of EC-CSCW'89: the First European Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work.

When the call for papers for EC-CSCW'89 was first circulated in February 1989, we were unsure as to what the response might be. Although we were aware of the success of previous CSCW conferences hosted in the USA, the extent of European research remained to be seen. However, we were delighted by the response to the call. As well as interest in organising workshops and meetings, nearly seventy abstracts were submitted for consideration, making the task of selecting work for presentation particularly difficult. After extensive discussion, the Programme Committee selected thirty two abstracts to be developed into full papers and presented at the conference.

Alongside a programme of presented papers, we wanted to provide the opportunity for the general dissemination of unrefereed contributions via an open forum for discussion: the Paper Fair. In addition, those authors whose abstracts were not accepted for presentation were invited to submit their papers to the Paper Fair.

Consequently, this volume contains the proceedings of the conference in two parts.

Part One consists of those papers accepted by the Programme Committee for presentation at EC-CSCW'89. These are in five sections which represent major research areas in CSCW and correspond to the organisation of the sessions throughout the conference:

- **Human Sciences and Empirical Methods** covers experimental and observational studies of CSCW and associated technologies, as well as attempts to understand CSCW in terms provided by the human sciences.
- **Applications** largely contains reports of the design and implementation of CSCW tools and systems in a wide variety of currently existing or anticipated contexts.
- **Organisational Issues in CSCW** concerns the problems which have to be confronted when CSCW technologies are introduced into real organisational situations.
- **Underlying Technologies** contains those papers most concerned with the development of the technological basis required for CSCW applications.
- **General Issues in CSCW** collects a number of papers addressing broader issues in CSCW research, as well as considering the very concept of CSCW itself.

Part Two comprises the papers and other notices submitted to the Paper Fair. These appear ordered alphabetically by first author. The intention of the Paper Fair is to allow the distribution of a variety of information such as project reports, preliminary explorations, brief sketches and papers of more general or background interest.

Finally, it should be noted that, due to having to meet printer's deadlines, some of the papers may not be included in the bound volume. It is hoped to include late contributions as loose inserts.

We hope that you find these proceedings a useful companion during the conference and a helpful reference in the future.

John Bowers (Programme Chair), Steve Benford (Proceedings Coordinator),
August 1989

Acknowledgements

The Conference Committee wishes to thank the Computer Sciences Company for generously supporting EC-CSCW'89, both in terms of finance and personnel.

The Programme Committee would also like to thank Chris Brotherton, David Gilmore, Phil Leather (all of the Department of Psychology at the University of Nottingham), Robert Young (Department of Computer Science, Queen Mary College, University of London) who assisted in the selection of papers for this conference, and Pippa Hennessy (Department of Computer Science, University of Nottingham) who also helped in many ways.

Contents

Part One: Papers for Presentation

Human Sciences and Empirical Methods

- 19 Preliminary Experiments with a Distributed, Multi-Media, Problem Solving Environment

Randall B. Smith (Rank-Xerox EuroPARC, UK & Xerox PARC, USA), Tim O'Shea (Rank-Xerox EuroPARC, UK & The Open University, UK), Claire O'Malley (The Open University, UK), Eileen Scanlon (The Open University, UK), Josie Taylor (The Open University, UK)

- 35 Mechanisms of Cognitive Change in Peer Interaction: Implications for the Design of Computer Supported Cooperative Learning Environments

Richard Joiner (The Open University, UK), Agnes Blaye (Universite de Provence, France)

- 45 The Dynamics of Small Group Decision Making Over the E-mail Channel

Danielle Fafchamps (Hewlett-Packard Laboratories, USA), Dave Reynolds (Hewlett-Packard Laboratories, UK), Allan Kuchinsky (Hewlett-Packard Laboratories, USA)

- 59 Cooperatives in the USSR

Alexander Vershkov, Andrew Roussakov (ICON Industrial Communication Network, Soviet-British Joint Venture)

- 63 Automatic Information Processes in Document Reading. A Study of Information Handling in Two Intensive Care Units

Else Pettersson (University of Uppsala, Sweden)

- 73 Working in Harmony: An Examination of Computer Technology in Air Traffic Control

R.R. Harper, J.A. Hughes, D.Z. Shapiro (Lancaster University, UK)

87 Experiences in Designing the Hohenheim CA Team Room
Thomas Ferwagner, Yingdi Wang (Staatliche Akademie der bildenden Künste
Stuttgart, West Germany), Henrik Lewe, Helmut Krcmar (Universität
Hohenheim, West Germany)

102 Group Working in the DHSS Large Demonstrator Project
Graham Storrs (Logica Cambridge Ltd, UK)

121 Adding Audio and Video to an Office Environment
Stephen Gale (Hewlett-Packard Laboratories, UK)

Applications

133 AI Techniques for Supporting Human to Human Communication in
CHAOS
C. Bignoli, C. Simone (Università di Milano, Italy)

148 Supporting the Design of Office Procedures in the DOMINO System
Frank Victor, Edgar Sommer (Gesellschaft für Mathematik und Datenverar-
beitung, West Germany)

160 The Activity Model Environment: An Object Oriented Framework
for Describing Organisational Communication
H.T. Smith, P.A. Hennessy, G Lunt (The University of Nottingham, UK)

174 The Impact of Case Tools on Teamwork of Information Systems
Developers
Stanislaw Wrycza (The University of Gdansk, Poland)

190 Building Conversations Using Mailtrays
Tom Rodden, Ian Sommerville (The University of Lancaster, UK)

204 A Design Tool for Autonomous Group Agents
Thomas Kreifelts, Frank Victor, Gerd Woetzel, Michael Weitass (Gesellschaft
für Mathematik und Datenverarbeitung, West Germany)

215 Experiences in Building a Configurable CSCW System
Jean Dollimore, Sylvia Wilbur (Queen Mary College, London, UK)

226 CoAUTHOR: A Hypermedia Group Authoring Environment
Udo Hahn, Matthias Jarke (Universität Passau, West Germany), Klaus Kreplin (Triumph-Adler AG, West Germany), Marisa Farusi, Francesco Pimpinelli (Direzione Olivetti Ricerca, Italy)

Organisational Issues in CSCW

247 Aspects of Cooperation in a Distributed Problem Solving Environment
Arne Nylund (University of Tromsø, Norway)

261 Inter-Organisational Information Systems as a Tool for Computer-Supported Co-operative Work
Reima Suomi (Turku School of Economics and Business Administration & Sampo Insurance Company Limited, Finland)

276 Requirements of Activity Management
Steve Benford (The University of Nottingham, UK)

Underlying Technologies

289 Relevance of the X.500 Directory to CSCW Applications: Directory Support for Computer Based Group Communication
Wolfgang Prinz (Gesellschaft für Mathematik und Datenverarbeitung, West Germany), Paola Pennelli (Tecnopolis - CSATA Novus Ortus, Italy)

303 Conference Toolkit: A Framework for Real-Time Conferencing
Amedeo Bonfiglio (ARG spa, Italy), Giuseppe Malatesta (Olivetti spa, Italy)
Francesco Tisato (Università della Calabria, Italy)

317 Knowledge-Based Office Automation and CSCW
Michel Tueni, Jianzhong Li (Bull, France)

General Issues in CSCW

- 331 Information Domains in CSCW
Pippa Hennessy (The University of Nottingham, UK)
- 343 Cooperative Prototyping Experiments: Users and Designers Envision A Dental Case Record System
Susanne Bødker, Kaj Grønboek (Aarhus University, Denmark)
- 358 CSCW: Four Characters in Search of a Context
Liam J. Bannon (Aarhus University, Denmark), Kjeld Schmidt (FCI Informatics Research Centre, Denmark)
- 373 The Psychology of Cooperation - Consequences of Descriptions. The Power of Creative Dialogues
Unni Holand, Thore Danielsen (Norwegian Telecommunications Administration Research Department, Norway)

Part Two: Paper Fair

- 389 The Elementary-Pragmatic Model: A Possible Approach for Setting Up User Model
Ivano Bison (Università di Trento, Italy), Luigi Colazzo (Università di Trento, Italy), Daniela Malinverni Silvestri (Università degli Studi di Bari, Italy), Luisa Mich (Università di Trento, Italy)
- 402 CoNeX: Coordination and Negotiation Support for Expert Teams in Project Management
Udo Hahn, Matthias Jarke (Universität Passau, West Germany)
- 406 Modelling Group Communication Structures: Analysing Four European Projects
Pippa Hennessy, Steve Benford, John Bowers (University of Nottingham, UK)

- 421 Considerations for a Framework for CATeam Research
Helmut Krcmar (Universität Hohenheim, West Germany)
- 436 Computer Aided Modelling of Costs in the Road Haulage Transport
Bernard Kubiak (University of Gdansk, Poland)
- 449 Approaching Group Communication by means of an Office Building
Metaphor
Christian M. Madsen (Aarhus University, Denmark)
- 461 A Theory of Document Processing Machines - Praxiological and
Cybernetical Approach to Information Systems
Tomasz Rawinski (Technical University of Gdansk, Poland)
- 469 Multimedia Conference Across Wide-Area Networks
Jože Rugelj (J. Stefan Institute, Yugoslavia), Adriano Endrizzi (Joint Research
Center of CEC, Italy)
- 476 The 'Laboratory for Cooperation Technologies' and Italian Initia-
tives on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work
Thomas Schäl (University of Technology (RWTH) Aachen, Federal Republic of
Germany & RSO Futura, Italy), Buni Zeller (RSO Futura, Italy)
- 489 Identifying Decision Makers for Large-Scale Group Decisions
Christian Stry (Technical University of Vienna, Austria)

