

Proceedings of
the Second European Conference
on
Computer-Supported Cooperative Work

ECSCW '91

Edited by

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KLUWER ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS

DORDRECHT / BOSTON / LONDON

ISBN 0-7923-1439-5

Published by Kluwer Academic Publishers,
P.O. Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Kluwer Academic Publishers incorporates
the publishing programmes of
D. Reidel, Martinus Nijhoff, Dr W. Junk and MTP Press.

Sold and distributed in the U.S.A. and Canada
by Kluwer Academic Publishers,
101 Philip Drive, Norwell, MA 02061, U.S.A.

In all other countries, sold and distributed
by Kluwer Academic Publishers Group,
P.O. Box 322, 3300 AH Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Cover Design by Steve Xerri,
sponsored by Kluwer Academic Publishers

Printed on acid-free paper

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Printed in the Netherlands

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From the Conference Chair

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all the participants at ECSCW '91 to the city of Amsterdam. I trust the beauty of this city, and the long cooperative tradition of The Netherlands will inspire our debates.

It is a hope of the Conference Committee to help develop a distinctively European profile within CSCW. While the official language of the Conference is English, we are addressing a multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual ensemble, whose socio-political context is undergoing unprecedented, large scale, rapid change. Our differences in language reflect differences in work practices, social traditions, and emotive imagery which cannot simply be translated, transferred, or transplanted. Contradictions and conflicts at many European levels give the "cooperative" in CSCW special significance and magnetism. The emphasis within the worldwide CSCW community on understanding the specifics of practical, situated action before embarking on computer interventions has a special relevance, far wider than our own research field. As several of the authors remark, the combination of social theory with system design as CSCW intervention may signal the emergence of new paradigms. Their nature and methodologies will be debated furiously. But it seems certain they will be more humble: the old emphasis on canonical forms will be displaced by works in which "many voices" are heard.

At a practical level, we have planned for a small conference in which dialogues and debates are supported and encouraged. There will be ample time and space for meetings and encounters within the formal program, in the Trippenhuis, and in pleasant local cafes and bars. We believe the formal program is exciting. There are at least three invisible influences on its quality that should be mentioned.

First, there is a special "thank you" to those at the conference whose papers were not accepted. They contained many thought provoking and interesting studies and ideas. These efforts, while not on "public display", will surely benefit the level of informed debate within the conference and within the field of CSCW generally.

The second invisible influence is the European Commission CO-TECH program. This has encouraged and supported the emergence of a network of European researchers stretching from Finland and Scotland to Spain and Yugoslavia. Without this support the fragmentations of language and geography would have prevented the mutual learning and friendships that have made CSCW as a field, and both the '89 & '91 conferences possible.

Third and last, there is the invisible work of the Conference, Program, and International Committees. Their members reflect the real geography of CSCW, stretching from Russia and Japan through Europe to California and Brazil.

I would like to thank all those on the committees who have spent much of their own time and energy in preparing for the conference, all the authors, and the participants who made ECSCW'91 possible.

Enjoy the conference, enjoy Amsterdam.

Mike Robinson

From the Program Chair

It is a pleasure to welcome participants to ECSCW '91. I hope that you find the Program we have put together for the Conference stimulating and informative. The field of CSCW has been evolving and developing rapidly since its formal inception in the mid-eighties. While debates about the very nature of the field continue to rage, both technical and empirical work has broadened and deepened our understanding of cooperative work and how we can support it through computing. This common concern with the support requirements of cooperative work has helped focus the efforts of people from a wide variety of disciplines, one of the hallmarks of the emerging CSCW community. We hope that we have captured some of the excitement of the field, with its interdisciplinary commingling, its prototype systems, and its analyses of actual use of systems in these Proceedings.

This is only the second European CSCW Conference, yet in the intervening years since the 1989 Conference in Gatwick, UK, we have witnessed an explosion of interest within Europe. Special interest groups, international projects, newsletters, books, and journals on the topic are being set up. For this Conference, 88 manuscripts from 16 countries together with a number of panel proposals, were submitted to the Program Committee. Each paper was blind reviewed by several members of the Program Committee. Once again, we decided to maintain a single-track Program for the majority of the Conference. This has undoubtedly benefits in terms of ensuring a shared view on the issues raised at the Conference, and as a focus for ongoing discussion. However, it has also required the Committee to make very difficult choices in the selection process. Many papers of interest were not able to be accommodated in the Program. We hope that you find the papers selected to be of interest, and to reflect diverse aspects of this inter-disciplinary field. In an effort to provide a forum for additional voices, the Program Committee encouraged a number of authors to organize small parallel workshops for a short period during the Conference. While this idea has been acted on by some, it generated a number of organizational problems, and future Program Committees will need to address this problem of encouraging wider participation without losing the common focus that has been at the heart of CSCW Conferences to date.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the Program Committee and their colleagues for their hard work in reviewing the large number of manuscripts and providing feedback to authors, to the authors who submitted manuscripts for review, and to all you participants who will make this Conference a living affair. We are particularly keen to make this Conference one where there is adequate time for questions and comments around the

presentations, and this has been a factor in the choice of a relatively small venue for the meeting, and the small number of papers accepted for presentation. We hope that the papers in this volume, together with the panels and informal discussions that will take place over the next few days in Amsterdam, will stimulate you and contribute to the continued growth of the CSCW field. Enjoy!

Liam J. Bannon

Special Thanks

Chairing the ECSCW '91 Program Committee over the past year has been problematic given my lack of an institutional base, and so I would like to especially thank people at Amsterdam, Mike Robinson and Andrei Roussakov, for handling additional work on my behalf. I would also like to thank Kjeld Schmidt for his excellent work on producing the Proceedings. Finally a number of institutions helped me in a variety of ways: Computing Services, University College Dublin; Institute for Computer & Systems Sciences, Copenhagen Business School; Dept. of Information Processing, University of Umeå; and the Center for Innovation & Cooperative Technology in Amsterdam.

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