OUX: Building an Open Distributed UX Lab

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Abstract

Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) has been gaining strength in developing areas such as Latin America. HCI is now part of undergraduate curricula in many universities and an increasing number of research groups are working in this multi-disciplinary field. Still, access to resources that are necessary to support HCI study and research varies significantly among institutions and among countries. We propose the development of OUX, an Open Distributed User Experience Lab, which will bring together resources from partnering organizations so UX and HCI can be taught and applied in wide academic and professional communities. OUX will provide access to resources such as sample kits for usability and user experience evaluation, HCI course curricula, case studies, success stories and expertise, workshops and seminars, all in the language of the participants' communities.

Author Keywords

HCI collaboration, Open UX Lab, shared HCI resources, multi-cultural issues.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI). K.4.2 Social Issues.

Introduction

Although hard data is not easy to obtain, Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) has become increasingly popular in Latin America. HCI is now part of undergraduate and graduate curricula in many universities and is the focus of an increasing number of research groups. Good indicators of this interest include the growing number of courses, workshops, conferences, and consulting companies that have been arising in the field during the last two decades.

Admittedly, however, HCI has not yet become a consolidated field throughout Latin America. Brazil has a very active and well-organized HCI community, and some of their contributions to the field have obtained international recognition. Mexico has been making progress in forming a community in the area and now there is even a formal professional society devoted to HCI (AMexIHC, after its initials in Spanish). Other countries in the region have some researchers working in HCI, but still lack critical mass.

One key obstacle for the development of the field has been the lack of access to HCI resources that are appropriate for our cultural contexts, in the languages spoken in the region and that can support HCI literacy and promote research in the field.

We propose the collaborative construction of an Open User Experience Lab (OUX), which will comprise a repository of relevant HCI resources as well as means for supporting collaboration for conducting studies, both remote and on site, which involve user communities in the various locations where lab participants are based.

OUX Organization

The levels of experience of HCI educators, researchers and practitioners in Latin America vary significantly. And so do resources such as educational materials and available infrastructure for supporting user studies and other HCI-related activities. The OUX Initiative will provide means for sharing expertise, resources and user communities.

In Mexico, we have started the definition of a collaboration network that involves a dozen universities and research centers where HCI is being taught or HCI research projects are being conducted. We believe the concept can be extended to include other communities in emerging countries, particularly in Latin America.

OUX will comprise the following initial components:

- A central website that provides access to all participants' shared resources
- A catalog or inventory of available resources, including experts, usability labs, kits for user studies, UX design case studies, usability reports, standardized forms and questionnaires, all in the languages of the participants.
- A network of participant websites and facilities
- A calendar of events including videoconferences, seminars and workshops organized by OUX members.

OUX membership will be open to everyone who can share or can take advantage of available resources for academic or non-profit purposes.

We expect OUX to undergo several stages, from its foundation through a pilot instance with a select

number of participants, to growth and stable state stages in which collaborative activities and events take place regularly and give rise to collaborative projects and benefit wide communities.

OUX Infrastructure

Most countries in the region have national initiatives for high-speed Internet networks. In Mexico, the national open UX laboratory has been promoted in the context of CUDI, the Mexican Internet 2 organization. This network may provide sufficient bandwidth to facilitate remote user studies, videoconferencing and other collaborative activities.

Similar high-speed networks exist in Chile (REUNA), Colombia (RENATA), Argentina (Innova|RED, formerly RETINA), Guatemala (RAGIE), Brazil (RNP), Costa Rica (CONARE), Uruguay (RAU), Ecuador (CEDIA) and Venezuela (REACCIUN). These networks group most of the universities and research centers in each country, thus facilitating communication and collaboration with a large number of related communities.

Open Invitation

Details of the OUX Initiative will be presented at the CHI 2016 Development Consortium. Feedback is expected from the developing worlds communities and all interested parties will be welcome to join the effort.