

# SIGCHI Turns 40: Honoring the Past, Celebrating the Present, and Envisioning the Next 40

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## ABSTRACT

This Special Interest Group (SIG) will collaboratively explore potential futures of the ACM Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI) on the organization's 40th anniversary. Taking stock of where we are now, forty years after inception, our goal will be to engage members of the SIGCHI community in a participatory approach towards imagining how SIGCHI might evolve, and how it can ensure that the elements it values most, such as connection, inclusion, and equity, among others, can be nurtured as the field evolves, and technologies come and go.

## CCS CONCEPTS

• **Human-centered computing;**

## KEYWORDS

Future of SIGCHI

### ACM Reference Format:

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## 1 SIGCHI TURNS 40

The ACM Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI) [3] is an organization that has now been around for 40 years, sponsoring its flagship ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI) series [1] as well as several smaller and more specialized conferences (currently 23) in the field of Human-Computer Interaction, and supporting individual and community contributions in numerous ways. SIGCHI was born at a time when the field was just emerging [2, 4], at the Gaithersburg Conference in 1982. Since this pivotal meeting, SIGCHI has mobilized significant contributions to the humanization and ease of use of technology, driving societal impact through its support and strengthening of an ever-widening field of human-computer interaction (HCI).

In 2022, SIGCHI will revisit its forty year-history in various ways, to honor its past, celebrate its present, and envision the next forty years. As we get together with many of our community members at the CHI conference in New Orleans and virtually across the globe, for the first time in years, this conversation will make space for interested SIGCHI members to participate in brainstorming and shaping SIGCHI (and HCI) futures. Led by the current SIGCHI Executive Committee (EC), this visioning exercise will also examine

and discuss various commitments and responsibilities that must be fulfilled for desired futures to emerge. In the remaining part of its term, the EC will be engaged in doing the groundwork needed.

## 2 WHAT IS SIGCHI?

To many in our community, it is unclear what SIGCHI really is, and whether/how it is different from the ACM CHI Conference. Knowing what SIGCHI is and does, and the scope within which it can enact change, is a critical first step to imagining its upcoming 40 years. This will also be our focus in the first five minutes of the SIG. We will clarify, for instance, that SIGCHI is an organizational unit of the ACM, along with other SIGs that are committed to the growth of different sub-disciplines within Computing. SIGCHI sponsors 23 conferences in addition to CHI; each of these conferences is committed to nurturing particular research areas within HCI. The SIGCHI EC is entrusted with a portfolio of responsibilities, some determined by pre-existing bylaws and others by current leadership, and covers a number of topics central to the wellbeing of our community and needed to support a thriving research environment for all members.

The current EC, collaboratively organizing this SIG, consists currently of 19 members. This includes the previously elected *Past President* (Helena Mentis), newly elected *President* (Neha Kumar) and *Executive Vice-President* (VP) (Shaowen Bardzell), *VP Finances* (Andrew Kun), *VP Membership & Communications* (Tamara L. Clegg), and two *VPs at Large* (Adriana S. Vivacqua and Naomi Yamashita) whose roles entail taking on responsibilities depending on the current needs of SIGCHI. The six newly elected members then appoint four additional VPs: for *Conferences* (Susanne Boll), *Operations* (Kashyap Todi), *Chapters* (Matt Jones), and *Publications* (Pejman Mirza-Babaei), and identify areas for Adjunct Chair roles. We currently have the following Adjunct Chairs: for *Awards* (Josh Andres), *Accessibility* (Stacy Branham), *Equity* (Cale Passmore), *Partnerships* (Susan Dray), *Knowledge Sharing* (Simone Kriglstein), *Volunteer Support* (Priya Kumar), *Community Support* (Luigi De Russis), and *Sustainability* (Nic Bidwell).

What each of the above members works on exactly, and how these roles are enacted over a three-year term, depends on the EC members' individual and collective goals and visions. These volunteers contribute significant chunks of time to understanding the needs of the SIGCHI community, using the mechanisms currently available to them, and devise ways to address these needs. This community-centric approach relies greatly on whose voices we (are able to) hear, and thus it is crucial that venues such as this SIG that we propose can take place at regular intervals and in diverse contexts. The EC therefore has come together to organize this SIG as a collective, with each of the 19 members contributing towards listening, facilitating, and brainstorming.

## 3 WHAT WILL WE DO?

We will solicit participation from the broader SIGCHI community, as inclusively as possible, advertising our SIG well in advance using regular SIGCHI communications channels such as Twitter, Facebook, Discord, LinkedIn, as well as our SIGCHI-members mailing list. Below we lay out our before/during/after plans.

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### 3.1 Before the SIG

To ensure that we make the most of our 75 minutes together and hit the ground running, we will start our discussions a month prior to CHI, inviting CHI attendees and SIGCHI members (particularly their overlap). We will ask these participants to help generate a live, shared Google document, with questions structured into three main sections: *conferences*, *people*, and *global-local*, and *miscellaneous* as an additional “catch-all” section. The EC will look over this document prior to the SIG to identify 3–5 areas to focus on.

### 3.2 During the SIG

We will spend the first five minutes, as mentioned above, clarifying what SIGCHI is and does. In the next ten minutes, we will present a summary of the live document, identifying topics for 3–5 breakout sessions. In the next twenty minutes, we will distribute participants into these sessions as they attempt to brainstorm over the identified topics of discussion. In the following twenty minutes, we will ask participants to switch sessions, contributing to advancing conversations on a new topic. The final twenty minutes will be spent summarizing conversations and finalizing plans for following up. Each breakout session will be “hosted” by a group of EC members whose roles are focused on the topic in question.

The SIG will aim to accommodate participants present in the room and online. For in-person attendees, we will make sure they have access to “creative stimulants”, that is, historical artifacts such as punch cards, floppy disks, etc., and we will share images of these with online attendees. These will hopefully help participants in their brainstorming process, helping them connect creatively and collaboratively. We will use speculative design approaches as we discuss possibilities for the future of SIGCHI, looking widely at our conferences, communities, research areas, and more.

### 3.3 After the SIG

*Sharing Ideas:* As with virtual open sessions that are summarized and reported on the SIGCHI Medium publication (<https://medium.com/sigchi>), we will ensure that all conversations are recorded for archival, perhaps to be revisited forty years later. Affinity diagrams, low-fidelity prototypes, etc. will all be welcomed, recorded, and shared with the wider community. We hope that visual note-takers will consider participating, and help capture discussions in nonverbal form (*sketchnotes*). This practice has been effective in past EC activities such as the SIGCHI Equity Talks in 2021.

*Seeding Future Conversations:* We hope that our SIG will spark interest and influence future discussions within the community. For this, we will prepare a summary *Community Square* article for *ACM Interactions*<sup>1</sup> about the key outcomes, with an invitation to more members of the community to participate.

*Visibilizing Volunteering:* SIGCHI is a volunteer organization; it succeeds when its volunteers thrive. The activities we undertake in this SIG will make visible the labors and initiatives of SIGCHI volunteers that sustain and grow the infrastructures that we may frequently take for granted, such as our conferences, equity and inclusion efforts, and more. It is important, we believe, for these

inner workings to be better understood, before they can be reshaped effectively.

*Enacting Change:* As we summarize the takeaways of the SIG, we will invite attendees to volunteer in the various different subcommittees of the EC, where they can actively participate towards enacting the change that they brainstormed about. We hope that this will give participants the opportunity to be in charge of the change they’d like to bring to SIGCHI.

## 4 TO WHAT END?

For SIGCHI to develop into a more community-centric organization, where it is responsive to the needs of a wide variety of SIGCHI members and not only a select few, it is important that we make space for venues such as this SIG. We hope to hear from an audience featuring members of the CHI and SIGCHI communities from all of the four decades of SIGCHI, from “pioneers” to newcomers, to understand our organization’s past, and identify pathways for SIGCHI to evolve in the next 40 years so that we continue to contribute to the growth of HCI in creative and impactful ways. We hope that this SIG can be one of several steps to this end.

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<sup>1</sup><https://interactions.acm.org/>