chapter 6

HCI in the software process

**HCI in the software process**

- Software engineering and the design process for interactive systems
- Usability engineering
- Iterative design and prototyping
- Design rationale

**the software lifecycle**

- Software engineering is the discipline for understanding the software design process, or life cycle
- Designing for usability occurs at all stages of the life cycle, not as a single isolated activity
The waterfall model

Activities in the life cycle

Requirements specification
- designer and customer try to capture what the system is expected to provide can be expressed in natural language or more precise languages, such as a task analysis would provide

Architectural design
- high-level description of how the system will provide the services required by the system into major components of the system and how they are interrelated needs to satisfy both functional and nonfunctional requirements

Detailed design
- refinement of architectural components and interrelations to identify modules to be implemented separately. The refinement is governed by the nonfunctional requirements

Verification and validation

Verification
- designing the product right

Validation
- designing the right product

The formality gap
- validation will always rely on some extent on subjective means of proof

Management and contractual issues
- design in commercial and legal contexts
The life cycle for interactive systems cannot assume a linear sequence of activities as in the waterfall model. Lots of feedback!

Usability engineering

The ultimate test of usability based on measurement of user experience. Usability engineering demands that specific usability measures be made explicit as requirements.

Usability specification
- usability attribute/principle
- measuring concept
- measuring method
- now level/ worst case/ planned level/ best case

Problems
- usability specification requires level of detail that may not be possible early in design satisfying a usability specification
- does not necessarily satisfy usability

Part of a usability specification for a VCR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute: Backward recoverability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Measuring concept: Undo an erroneous programming sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring method: Number of explicit user actions to undo current program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Now level: No current product allows such an undo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worst case: As many actions as it takes to program-in mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planned level: A maximum of two explicit user actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best case: One explicit cancel action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ISO usability standard 9241 adopts traditional usability categories:

- **effectiveness**
  - can you achieve what you want to?
- **efficiency**
  - can you do it without wasting effort?
- **satisfaction**
  - do you enjoy the process?

### Some metrics from ISO 9241

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Usability Objective</th>
<th>Effectiveness Measures</th>
<th>Efficiency Measures</th>
<th>Satisfaction Measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suitability for the task</td>
<td>Percentage of goals achieved</td>
<td>Time to complete a task</td>
<td>Rating scale for satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate for trained users</td>
<td>Number of power features used</td>
<td>Relative efficiency compared with an expert user</td>
<td>Rating scale for satisfaction with power features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learnability</td>
<td>Percentage of functions learned</td>
<td>Time to learn criterion</td>
<td>Rating scale for ease of learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error tolerance</td>
<td>Percentage of errors corrected successfully</td>
<td>Time spent on correcting errors</td>
<td>Rating scale for error handling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Iterative design and prototyping

- Iterative design overcomes inherent problems of incomplete requirements
- **Prototypes**
  - simulate or animate some features of intended system
  - different types of prototypes
    - throw-away
    - incremental
    - evolutionary
- **Management issues**
  - time
  - planning
  - non-functional features
  - contracts
Techniques for prototyping

Storyboards
- need not be computer-based
- can be animated

Limited functionality simulations
- some part of system functionality provided by designers
- tools like HyperCard are common for these

Wizard of Oz technique

Warning about iterative design
- design inertia – early bad decisions stay bad
- diagnosing real usability problems in prototypes...
- ... and not just the symptoms

Design rationale

Design rationale is information that explains why a computer system is the way it is.

Benefits of design rationale
- communication throughout life cycle
- reuse of design knowledge across products
- enforces design discipline
- presents arguments for design trade-offs
- organizes potentially large design space
- capturing contextual information

Design rationale (cont’d)

Types of DR:
- Process-oriented
  - preserves order of deliberation and decision-making
- Structure-oriented
  - emphasizes post hoc structuring of considered design alternatives

Two examples:
- Issue-based information system (IBIS)
- Design space analysis
Issue-based information system (IBIS)

- basis for much of design rationale research
- process-oriented
- main elements:
  - issues
    - hierarchical structure with one ‘root’ issue
  - positions
    - potential resolutions of an issue
  - arguments
    - modify the relationship between positions and issues
- gIBIS is a graphical version

Design space analysis

- structure-oriented
- QOC – hierarchical structure: questions (and sub-questions)
  - represent major issues of a design
  - provide alternative solutions to the question
  - the means to assess the options in order to make a choice
- DRL – similar to QOC with a larger language and more formal semantics
the QOC notation

Psychological design rationale

- to support task-artefact cycle in which user tasks are affected by the systems they use
- aims to make explicit consequences of design for users
- designers identify tasks system will support
- scenarios are suggested to test task
- users are observed on system
- psychological claims of system made explicit
- negative aspects of design can be used to improve next iteration of design

Summary

The software engineering life cycle
- distinct activities and the consequences for interactive system design
Usability engineering
- making usability measurements explicit as requirements
Iterative design and prototyping
- limited functionality simulations and animations
Design rationale
- recording design knowledge
- process vs. structure