

*John Rheinfrank and Bill Hefley When interactions was first conceived, the intent was to offer a forum for new and radical ideas that would significantly influence software design and development practice. It is now clear that interactions has actually given visibility to two different kinds of ideas. One we expected, the other was a surprise.*

We expected to see articles and interviews that focused on the effect to our computing resources by people as they live, learn, work and play. To our delight, we discovered that contributors were dealing with meta-ideas—ideas that support the creation of ideas, innovations that stimulate innovations.

As economist Paul Romer suggests, these kinds of ideas compound our capacity to create ideas and introduce a multiplier into their growth. This was evident in several of the *interviews* entries we. They allowed us to peek into the cockpits of four of the world's most respected research and development cultures. In these conversations we discovered a history of overriding concern for both commercially transferable ideas and the animating insights that reveal, support and implement a stream of these ideas. The interviewees pre-occupation with and passion for this two-level discourse has had a profound impact on the success of their ventures. They make it clear that the most significant meta-ideas are not the ones that they have now, but the ones that are being shaped.

Vincent of our current meta-ideas may be historical artifacts. They fit with a model era that leave us unprepared for the challenges of the future. *Mass production*—as a meta-idea—was the basis for decades of derivative innovations. *Human-outside* give us the capacity to reach enormous numbers of people with affordable products and services. *Thermbal organization* showed us how to control ideas in

order to maximize their incremental impact. But we are confronting the limits of all of these ideas.

So then, what is the new landscape of meta-ideas and where can it take us? In the first issues of *Interactions*, authors have hinted at the following replacement meta-ideas: *User Customization*—everyone expects things that precisely fit their needs, wants and capacities, that can easily be reshaped to resonate with changes in context or condition; *Networked Industries*—economies of synergistic interdependence, where industries are defined by the localized dominance of essential components rather than the traditional presence of a comprehensive leader; *Nodal Organization*—semi-autonomous, relatively small-scale initiatives that derive their influence and power from the relationships among each other.

The ideas that will actually shape our ideas almost certainly lie beyond these and have a more radical ring. The movement points toward daring innovations that have distinctly biological overtones. As Kevin Kelley predicts in *Out of Control*, we will see the "marriage of the horn and the made." This suggests directions in our work that include ideas like self-organization, adaptation, self-repair, autonomy, and contextualization. Whatever the outcome, it is clear that those who take the lead in discovering, then taking advantage of this emerging landscape of meta-ideas, are the critical source of vitality for our field. ☺