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# An Overview of HCI in India

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## Abstract

In this presentation, I trace the evolution of the three phases of practice and research of HCI in India from 1990 to 2015. This presentation is extended from my previous article on the history of usability in India from year 2011 [1].

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HCI, India.

## ACM Classification Keywords

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## HCI in India

The technology scene in contemporary India must be considered from two perspectives – India as a go-to destination for low-cost, high-quality software development, and India as a rapidly growing market of information technology hardware and software products. The HCI community in India has been shaped by these two strong currents, and the practice, education, and research reflects this picture.

The HCI practice in India can be broadly divided into three phases. The first generation of HCI practitioners in India were primarily employed by multi-media content producers, e-learning content producers, and subsequently the “dot-com” companies between the years 1990 to 2000. This was the first phase. This is

when designers and other creative professionals got their first taste of designing for information technology (IT) products.

After year 2000 the second phase began. This is when the mainstream IT industry started hiring many HCI practitioners in order to improve the usability of their offerings. A large part of this industry has been made of Indian companies such as Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, and Wipro. A large part of business of these companies is comes from software development services for clients in the developed countries. Another large part of the industry consists of multinational companies such as Microsoft, HP, Yahoo!, ABB, GE, and Google, who have set up their global software development centres in India. The HCI practitioners in these companies are designing for a global audience and are deeply influenced by global trends in HCI practice.

The third phase began in year 2005, when a third generation of companies started developing hardware and software products for the Indian market. This was triggered by the growth in mobile phones and websites for travel and e-commerce. Like everywhere else, new devices and new technologies have become popular, available and affordable in India. This is when many Indian HCI professionals started designing for Indian users for the first time.

Though education and research in HCI has been around in India a bit longer than industrial practice, it did not gain much popularity till year 2000. A notable trend in India is that HCI is predominantly located within the discipline design in the academic world also. With increasing demand for professionals in the field, several

masters programmes related to interaction design were started in Indian design schools. Research followed education, and conferences followed research. Several industrial research labs were set up in India about this time. In the years that followed, some universities started offering masters and PhD programmes in HCI, interaction design and related areas. The first India HCI conference focussing on peer reviewed research publications was organised in year 2004 with support from the Indo-European Systems Usability Partnership project. In year 2014, the conference completed 10 years.

### Looking Ahead

India has seen almost continuous economic growth since 1993. A significant portion of this growth is powered by economic liberalisation, the growing middle class, large numbers of youth, and also by the increasing penetration of information and communication technologies. As the infrastructure and the business climate improve, India is seemingly becoming a living lab. It needs many new products and services that can thrive in resource-limited settings and high sociocultural diversity. Today, such products and services are being tried out by many users for the first time. Possibly, some of these products and services may suit the needs of users in other developing countries with similar contexts.

### References

1. Anirudha Joshi, Saurabh Gupta. Usability in India (book chapter) in Ian Douglas, Zhengjie Liu (Eds.). *Global Usability*, Springer, 2011.