
Crowd-powered Interfaces for Creative Design Thinking

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Abstract

Crowdsourcing is a powerful approach for tapping into the collective insights of diverse crowds. Thus, crowdsourcing has potential to support designers in making sense of a design space. In this hands-on workshop, we will brainstorm and conceptualise new user interfaces and crowdsourcing systems for supporting designers in the design process. The workshop consists of developmental discussions of ideas contributed by the participants. In brainstorming and design sessions in groups, the participants will ideate new crowd-powered systems and user interfaces that support the designer's divergent and convergent thinking.

Author Keywords

Creative Design Thinking; Creativity; Creativity Support; Crowdsourcing.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.m [Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI)]: Miscellaneous

Introduction

Design is a creative problem-solving process [1]. It is iterative in nature and is comprised of multiple incremental phases, *i.e.*, ideation, exploration, optimisation, and reflection [7]. Typically, design starts by defining preliminary criteria and constraints. These preliminary ideas change as

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the understanding of the problem space develops, and the solution space expands to contain multiple design alternatives [17, 23]. The subsequent exploration within this solution space leads to exploration and optimisation, until a satisfying design solution is reached. In between frequent iterative switching of design phases, designers constantly reflect on their design decisions for sensemaking [7, 22].

Supporting creativity in design has been considered as one of the grand challenges in Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) [26, 27]. Research on supporting creativity stems from a long line of research on augmenting humans that goes back to the 1950s [13] and 1960s [8]. Given the inherent emphasis of crowdsourcing in collecting insights rapidly, inexpensively and accurately, it has been suggested as a key approach for supporting creativity [2, 31].

Crowdsourcing has been applied to a broad range of creative processes, from supporting research [29] to helping unfold complex scientific problems [5]. Involving the crowd in a creative process leads to several fundamental challenges, especially when it comes to design problem solving. However, it has been considered effective in inducing creative stimuli for design ideation [2, 12].

In this one-day workshop, our focus is to explore how to best exploit crowdsourcing in augmenting the design process, throughout its distinct identified stages: ideation, exploration, optimisation and reflection. On a concrete level, the workshop examines the potential of crowdsourcing in this exciting use case with interactive group discussions and hands-on exploration.

Objectives of the Workshop

In this workshop, we bring together scientists and practitioners interested in supporting creativity in different types of design scenarios through crowdsourcing. The

one-day workshop is organised as a hands-on and participant-driven hack-a-thon event. We invite participants to bring forward their ideas already prior to the actual workshop and, during the workshop, design novel crowd-powered applications and user interfaces supporting designers in their design process. This may happen with either simple digital design tools or traditional paper prototyping. While the workshop theme focuses on creativity support through all design phases, we specifically encourage participants to think beyond the ideation phase of the design process. Doing so, we set to inspire the design of next-generation crowd-powered systems that support creativity in either a single or multiple design phases.

The workshop theme fits well with several areas relevant to the conference theme, such as creativity support tools, Human-Computer Interaction, Social Computing, Crowdsourcing, Design Thinking, collaborative applications, co-creating environments and boundary-crossing designs.

Related Work

As knowledge work is being transformed and the World Wide Web has thoroughly permeated our work practices, the interest in supporting creative work through different digital approaches is growing.

The goal of designing creativity support systems is to make “more people more creative more often” [24, 25]. Shneiderman identified eight creative activities that could benefit from being supported by creativity support systems: searching, visualizing, consulting peers, thinking, exploring, composing, reviewing, and disseminating [24]. The majority of creativity support systems, however, focus only on the ideation phase [9, 30].

Crowdsourcing is the practice of outsourcing tasks on an online platform to a crowd of people via an open call for

contributions [16]. The crowdsourcing approach comes in several distinct flavours. Among them, microtask and macrotask labour, crowdfunding, crowd contests and games with a purpose (GWAP) are few to name. Crowdsourcing is especially effective in situations that require human cognition for decision-making, such as creative work. Organizations have recognized the potential of crowds, with companies such as Innocentive, Quirky and OpenIDEO finding success in Open Innovation [3].

The combination of crowdsourcing and creativity support is promising for several reasons. Both the practice of crowdsourcing and creativity support systems were analogously compared to the introduction of the sewing machine [24, 20], creating new opportunities for income in regions of the world that previously did not have access to the international labour market. Further, humans excel in recombination, analogical transfer and divergent thinking. Machines fall short in these fundamental characteristics needed for creativity. Moreover, creativity is a social process. Studies from psychology show that groups of people with diverse backgrounds provide high quality ideas and can outperform skilled experts [14]. Crowds offer this diverse set of skills because they are heterogeneous [19, 28], providing different contexts and backgrounds leading to diverse ideas [6].

Key Themes of the Workshop

We structure the workshop around the design process with its four key phases. Please note that many times these phases overlap with each other and are executed in cycles. Still, there exists a fine boundary between each, demanding a specific structure to the design tasks.

The common challenges under these four themes include, but are not limited to, proposing user interfaces for:

- preventing cognitive overload of the individual designer,
- efficiently communicating and explaining design criteria and constraints to the crowd,
- supporting peak-productive moments ("bursts") of an individual's creativity with the collective intelligence of the crowd, *e.g.* the selection among design alternatives,
- automating repetitive tasks in group ideation, and
- designing concepts for interaction and collaboration between Artificial Intelligence and human agents in creative tasks.

Next, we will briefly expand on the design stages that the workshop focuses on.

Ideation

Design ideation involves, but is not limited to gathering relevant information, building initial design criteria, defining design constraints and developing inspirational and creative stimuli for innovative and creative design thinking.

Under this theme, we welcome ideas addressing and exploring interactive ways to support the act of design ideation using collective insights of the crowd. The goal of this theme is to augment the designer's creativity and cognition during ideation with the crowd. The theme aims to develop improved software and user interfaces that empower designers to be more productive and more innovative.

Exploration

Design exploration many times is considered as part of the ideation. It comes after the introduction of preliminary design criteria, based on which expert designers generate a set of base design solutions. These base solutions become

Morning Session

09:00 – 09:30:
Welcome and getting
to know each other

09:30 – 10:00:
Design exercise

10:00 – 10:30:
Topic discussion and
group formation

10:30 – 11:00:
Coffee break

11:00 – 12:00:
Work in groups

Afternoon Session

13:00 – 15:00:
Work in groups

15:00 – 15:30:
Coffee break

15:30 – 17:00:
Final presentations
and discussion

Table 1: Preliminary schedule of the workshop.

seed geometries to generate a large design space comprised of hundreds and thousands of design alternatives. This exploration may lead to re-definition of the preliminary design criteria and designers may move back and forth between ideation and exploration, until a complete understanding of the design space is achieved.

In this theme, we invite researchers to submit ideas related to crowdsourcing the process of exploration of the solution space. We are interested to investigate how the creation of design alternatives can be supported by a heterogeneous crowd with diverse skill sets.

Optimisation

Exploration and Optimisation both rely heavily on the preliminary design ideation. Optimisation refers to the act of reducing the design space based on selective constraints. Once a satisfying design is achieved the designer may proceed with modifying or optimising the selected design to achieve maximum performance output. This theme invites, but is not limited to, papers related to crowdsourcing the design optimisation processes and supporting convergent thinking with the crowd.

Reflection

Reflection refers to sensemaking [22] and happens multiple times and often between frequent switching of design phases, due to the cyclic nature of a design process. This theme will explore interfaces supporting sensemaking and reflection on ideation, exploration and optimisation of design solutions with the collective intelligence of the crowd.

Workshop Organisation

The workshop is organised as an interactive and participatory hack-a-thon. The focus of the workshop is on creating designs and prototypes within the workshop itself.

The preliminary schedule for the workshop is summarised in Table 1. The main purpose of the session in the morning is to acquaint the participants with each other and to discuss the ideas for future crowd-powered design creativity support systems contributed by the participants. After the welcome and a short interactive introduction of the participants, participants will be introduced with a hypothetical yet realistic design scenario and will be asked to brainstorm interaction models to support design creativity using helpful insights from the crowd.

Following this exercise, participants will discuss their contributed ideas and will form teams around a subset of the ideas. The afternoon is occupied by collaborative work in smaller groups. The purpose of these break-out sessions is to sketch out ideas or even build first prototypes of user interfaces and crowd-powered creativity support systems. In a final presentation, the teams will present their solutions and designs to the group.

The workshop does not require a special venue or hardware. Only a projector is required (which the organisers can bring, if needed). The workshop organisers will bring a set of supporting materials (stationary items and grid sheets) to support the hands-on sketching and design of low fidelity paper prototypes and mockups. The organizers will further support the participants with a set of crowdsourcing design heuristics in the form of playing cards [4].

Participants and Recruitment

The workshop is open to a broad audience to stimulate the workshop participants by exposure to new points of view from different disciplines. We welcome a diverse set of members from the creativity and DIS community, as well as from diverse research fields, such as, but not limited to, Design, Communication and Social Science, Sociology, Psychology, Computer Science, and Human-Computer



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Interaction. Participants do **not** require special technical skills, as the prototypes created in the workshop can also be of low fidelity.

The organisers will publicise the call for participation on a dedicated website and in mailing lists (Computational Design Groups, CSCW, CHI Announcements, etc.). Furthermore, the organisers will actively recruit participants through their own networks in the computational design, HCI, crowdsourcing and Ubicomp communities.

How to Participate

The workshop is hands-on and emphasises informal group discussions over presentations of individual position papers. To this end, participants will **not** be required to submit a formal contribution to the workshop. Instead, participants will be asked to submit at least one idea for the group work in the workshop in an online application form. The submitted ideas will be shared with the other participants in the workshop. The ideas will form the basis for the formation of teams in the workshop. Submitted ideas are not final, and participants are free to change their idea or join other groups. Submitted ideas should be specific rather than broad. The goal is to generate ideas that a small group of 3–5 people can work on at the workshop.

More information will be published on a dedicated website providing a link to the online application form.

Organisers

The workshop organisers are experienced researchers in computational design and crowdsourcing across several contexts. Our past workshops [10, 11, 15, 18, 21] brought together diverse teams of researchers and students. Many participants have continued working on their projects beyond the workshops, generating impactful publications and fruitful collaborations.

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