Symposium feedback and reflection

Halfway to the Future 2019

_____

Halfway to the Future (HttF) was a symposium held in Nottingham, UK on the 19th and 20th November 2019 focusing on the past, present, and future of HCI and design-based research. The event had over 180 attendees from 14 countries, with 6 keynotes from 8 distinguished international academics. All presenting authors and keynotes took part in panel discussions grouped by six core themes of work. The symposium was inspired by the 20th anniversary of the founding of the Mixed Reality Lab (MRL) at the University of Nottingham. The MRL is an interdisciplinary research group deeply rooted in HCI and design, and explores the potential of ubiquitous, mobile and interactive technologies to shape everyday life from a range of settings including the home, work, and public spaces.

We solicited feedback from attendees following the symposium and, in this document, we describe the feedback received, the rationale behind why we organised the event in that particular way, and our response and insight into what can be learned from our approach.

We received multiple pieces of feedback from participants who enjoyed the event and found it valuable, although we have omitted them from this response document.

Our hope is that the feedback and reflection documented here can be used by others in future event organisation.

Joel E Fischer, Sarah Martindale, Martin Porcheron, Stuart Reeves, and Jocelyn Spence

Halfway to the Future 2019 General Chairs

WHAT WE DID	WHY WE DID IT	FEEDBACK	RESPONSE
During panel discussions, participants were able to ask questions either by raising their hand for a microphone or by using an online service (sli.do).	We offered people not comfortable or confident with asking questions to have a mechanism of doing so with ease. Additionally, we chose to video record the symposium sessions to support later documentation of the event. In order to provide a way for people to ask questions without consenting to audio collection, sli.do was used.	There were a couple comments regarding the use of sli.do. One, that it "kill[ed] the atmosphere of the room and [made] the audience less likely to ask questions", and another calling for a 'rebalancing' of questions in-person and through sli.do (e.g. by still encouraging people to step up to a mic or ask questions they've seen on sli.do). Another comment was to ensure "people to introduce themselves when they ask a question as there'll always be a bunch of folks in the room who aren't yet familiar with everyone".	We agree that more could have been done to balance the discussion. Given our reasons for including sli.do, we would still encourage the use of digital platforms for Q&A at live events. We left the management of sli.do and floor questions to the session chairs but perhaps this could have had greater scaffolding to facilitate the experience. For example, questions could have been projected or individuals could be invited to ask their question they posted to sli.do in person. We think introducing yourself is good practice and we'd agree this should be encouraged.
We had two types of paper at the symposium: short (2k word)	In planning the programme, it was felt that keeping to time in	The level of slack per session (around 20 minutes or so) was	We would retain the use of slack time in sessions but would

papers looking to the future of HCI and design-based research, and reflective (6k word) papers. Short papers were given a 5-minute presentation slot and reflective papers received a 10-minute presentation slot. We then gave a minimum of 20 minutes to panels and roughly 40 minutes for keynotes. The remaining time in the 2-hour session slot was "slack" and would be consumed by a longer panel discussion if there was excess time.

terms of every session starting at the correct time was important (allowing people to drop in/out of the main symposium session as is necessary and common practice at conferences and symposia). Therefore, we added slack time to each session to allow for overrunning talks and technical issues.

found to be excessive sometimes if the session chairs kept to time. In these cases, feedback from an attendee was that panel discussions became quite long.

Another person raised that 2-hour sessions felt too long (cf. a CHI session which lasts 1hr 20mins).

reduce the level of it (e.g. to ten minutes). This would avoid lengthy panel discussions and could potentially allow for shorter sessions.

We video recorded all of the symposium talks.

This was to allow for documentation of the event after the fact and was not intended for broadcast or distribution.

Several people have asked for videos of various talks, but we do not have necessary consent or the resources to distribute them.

We see three things to deal with here: authors reciving copies of their own videos, attendees wanting to see videos of the event, and public access to videos.

			We can (and have) shared presentation videos with presenters upon request. Many authors chose to withhold distribution rights in relation to the captured video, however, we are exploring how we can release the videos of those who did provide consent (and additionally allow all authors to retrospectively provide such consent if they wish).Future events should do this upfront to streamline the process.
Each paper presenter was invited on to the panel for their session.	This was to complement the fact that all talks at the symposium were relatively short (e.g. 5/10 minutes).	One attendee commented that panels with large numbers can be "hard to make interesting and balanced at the same time". Suggestions for dealing with this was 1-on-1 discussions with the keynote or adding in one or two of the paper presenters.	We were aware panels of this size would be challenging. If paper talks were longer or included a bit of time for questions following the presentation, then perhaps there could have had fewer panellists.

			We aren't sure that there is an "ideal" way to structure this but think that there is value in trying different approaches.
Each session typically consisted of a keynote, followed by reflective papers and then prospective papers. There was a short moment for clarification questions after each talk but we asked for substantial questions to be held back for the panels.	We wanted to ensure there were plenty of questions for the panel discussions.	One attendee commented that we could have included 5/10 minutes to allow for discussion amongst the audience. This could have allowed them to use sli.do, as well as increasing audience participation. This would likely also be valuable to attendees for networking.

Another attendee commented that they liked the lack of breaks between talks, however. | This is a potentially beneficial idea for an event like HttF and something that should be considered in a future event. Given talks were 5–10 minutes in length, this time should be controlled carefully so as not to consume too much of the session time. |
| We did not distribute paper programmes, and our only "swag" was a reusable cup. The venue had Wi-Fi thus attendees | Paper programmes are a waste of resources and we did not see the purpose in giving attendees materials for two days only. | Several attendees commented that they appreciated our efforts to reduce waste. | We would not have changed anything regarding this. Not all attendees took a reusable cup; thus, we could have purchased |

were encouraged to browse the programme on our website.			fewer cups (approx. 75% took one).
We asked attendees to send their slides before talks but did not consider that attendees would need any additional resources.	We did not consider that authors would deviate from a "typical" presentation format. One who did ask to present in an unconventional format did not specify their needs, which nearly led to an unintelligible presentation.	One point raised in feedback was that some presenters might "need additional technical resources such as props, microphones, cameras etc."	Given the symposium themes, we should have expected different presentation styles. In future, before the event programme chairs could ask presenters for additional needs and stress the need for all aspects of their presentation to be easily heard and seen by all.
We made sure our event was as inclusive as possible. Our badges were handwritten only but included space for pronouns. We also had gender-neutral toilets. Before the event, we asked and checked with each attendee their dietary and access requirements.	We wanted Halfway to the Future to be as inclusive as possible, and also wanted to simplify registration/badge pickup.	Several attendees' comments that our inclusion of gender-neutral bathrooms, pronouns, food options were appreciated.	We would strongly encourage any future event to follow similar steps.