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The Scottish HCI Community

For many people, the first things that come to mind when you think of Scotland are its mountain wilderness, glacial valleys and lochs (lakes), which makes it a preferred holiday destination. More recently, Scotland has also become the center of attention for HCI and UX researchers and practitioners from all over the world: Scotland's biggest city, Glasgow, will host CHI 2019, the biggest and most prestigious annual ACM SIGCHI conference, which is annually attended by around 2,500-3,500 people from all over the world.

In an interview with Martin Halvey, a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor) at the University of Strathclyde and one of the theme leaders for the HCI theme of the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance (SICSA)¹, he explained that Scotland has a long history in HCI, dating back over 30 years. The Scottish HCI Centre was formed in the mid-1980s, while the first MobileHCI conference was held in 1990s in Glasgow. The Scottish HCI community currently comprises over 350 representatives from all universities in Scotland with diverse interests and needs. SICSA supports the Scottish HCI community through various events and activities, facilitating communication and collaboration amongst its members.

The SICSA HCI theme supports three main activity types: (1) community get-together events, where individuals or groups can meet, network and collaborate; (2) a doctoral consortium for PhD students which is part of the annual SICSA conference for PhD students, where students gather to share their work and get feedback for their research; and (3) a pre-CHI Day that collects work from Scottish institutions that will be presented at CHI conference. SICSA also supports one-off events proposed by the community; recent workshops have covered a wide range of topics including digital humanities, conversational interaction, and child computer interaction. The broad range of events reflect the diverse research interests of its members, and each event is usually free to members of the SICSA community.

¹ <http://www.sicsa.ac.uk/research/research-themes/human-computer-interaction/>

Many of the SICSA events have been organised by universities, but there is also a growing trend of industry-university collaboration to promote HCI and UX practice. The SICSA-organised DemoFest, for example, is an annual technology showcase of leading Informatics and Computing Science research in Scottish Universities. The event is organised by SICSA and ScotlandIS (the trade body for the digital technologies industry in Scotland) to bring together prominent industry leaders as keynotes to inspire and collaborate with the academic research communities.

Scotland's HCI community is very vibrant and open. Martin added that HCI researchers in Scotland are very active in the international community, both through publications at internationally leading events, but also through volunteering to lead and make those events happen. Hosting CHI 2019 provides an amazing opportunity for the HCI community in Scotland to embrace more possibilities to expand their HCI and UX research.

Bringing CHI 2019 to Glasgow, Scotland will not only bring a more international flavor to the Scottish community, but will also share the with the world beauty of this country, including its vibrant art and comedy, great food, and spectacular natural world, creating unforgettable memories for CHI 2019 participants.