Conference Report for the International Conference on Computers and Education (ICCE) 2002

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ICCE'02 was located at the Albany Stadium, which is in one of the northern most suburbs of Auckland, and right next to Massey University's Auckland campus. To save on accommodation costs I stayed in the back of a friend's van (she was in Australia). The van was parked in Morningside, a suburb near downtown Auckland, and every day I had to navigate around Auckland and drive to the conference, about 15km away. It was quite bohemian.

ICCE was a large conference. Each of the four days went from 8am to 7pm. There were six parallel streams, consisting of 188 full papers, 261 short papers, and 143 posters. Andy and I presented a short paper. ICCE'02 had 800 submissions, and The two-volume proceedings had 1569 pages. Due to the size of the conference I could, naturally, only attend a fraction of the sessions.

Keynote Presentations

There were three keynote presentations: Allan Collins, Bob Lewis and Tak-Wai Chen. Unfortunately a fear of Auckland rush-hour traffic prevented me attending the keynote sessions (the traffic during off-peak times was heavier than the Christchurch rush-hour). I will, however, describe the papers written by the three keynote speakers (rather than their talks).

Alan Collins spoke on the second day of the conference. His paper describes Knowledge Forum. Knowledge Forum is a computer application that supports collaborative work. Alan found that students using Knowledge Forum in classrooms exhibited many of the characteristics of highly creative communities. Their students were from the 6th and 7th grade at two North American schools.

Bob Lewis spoke on the third day of the conference. Like Alan he examined historical learning communities and applied that analysis to computer assisted learning communities. He concluded that we need to understand the social dimensions of new communication technologies before we can exploit them to enhance worldwide learning.

Tak-Wai Chen spoke on the last day of the conference. He introduced the theory of structured learning and compared structured learning to tribal learning. His software, EduCities, provides a hierarchy of learning communities: Edu Towns, EduVillages, and EduCitizans. The groups were used to mirror physical learning communities to enhance structured learning. For example, a school was represented by an EduTown, and each classroom by an EduVil-

lage (each student is an EduCitizan). His paper did not provide any evaluation information of EduCities.

Papers

There were a number of interesting papers, however few were strongly related to my current research direction. Here are descriptions of some that were interesting:

Lorrae Ward spoke about how technology is actually used in New Zealand secondary schools, and the actual barriers to technology use. She is an ex-secondary school teacher who worked in a technology-rich school. At her school all the supposed (theoretical) barriers for technology use had been removed. For example, there was ample teacher training, many computers, and a fast network. She noticed that despite this, some teachers were not using computers in their class.

Her paper describes a methodology for a study she is currently doing (for her Ph.D.). In her talk she gave some preliminary results. She believes that many teachers are not using computers in their classrooms because the teachers are scared of having all their teaching methods on-line for the world to see.

Rosemary Phillimore described her experiences moving her software engineering course more online. She discovered that her students got the most gain by simply putting her lecture slides on-line. She now teaches by putting the boring stuff on-line and doing the interesting stuff in the lecture.

My Presentation

My presentation was on the first day. I was supposed to talk second in my paper session (the first paper session on the first day), but the first speaker had technical problems so I spoke first. As I have given this talk a number of times before, I anticipated and answered any possible questions during the talk possibly too well. The only question was about possible future extensions to the experiment.

To make up for this, I tried to ask questions in most other talks, and actually had someone approach me during a coffee break saying he enjoyed one of my questions. This led to an interesting discussion about multiple language use in software environments.

Conclusion

Overall I enjoyed the conference, but there were a couple of things I disliked. Both are minor. The papers in the conference proceedings were ordered by subject rather than by the time the presentation was being given. Even the papers from the invited speakers (the first three papers in the first book) were in the opposite order to the order they spoke in. While not seeming a big problem, it was hard to find papers relating to presenters, and I had to carry around both volumes of the proceedings (1500 pages), rather than just one at a time. My other gripe is that the conference should have hired translators for some speakers. The conference is an international conference with many presenters being non-native speakers of English. Translators would stop language being a barrier for understanding; especially for some speakers' understanding some questions from the audience.