Social Networking Comes of Age: It’s Not Just for Teens Anymore

By Catherine M. Burns, Chair, Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making Technical Group

Introduction by Pamela Savage-Knepshield, HFES Bulletin Features Editor

Most HFES Technical Groups (TGs) have a presence on the Internet through the Web sites that they maintain. Most HFES members probably have a personal online profile or two on Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Twitter, Okrut, Friendster, LinkedIn, or any of myriad other social networking sites. On these sites, friends, family, and others who share a common interest, hobby, or profession come together to share photos, news, and gossip and get advice.

Some TGs have begun to leverage the power of social networking to come together to share HF/E stories, get advice, find jobs, collaborate to solve HF/E issues, and yes, even gossip. Here anyone – students, professionals, and academics – can exchange information anywhere, anytime. Just think of all the connections you will make and how many HF/E people you will know when you attend the next Annual Meeting!

At last count, almost 500 members were connected through the HFES group on LinkedIn, http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=163326&goback=%2Egdr_1236188905508_1. Four TGs – Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making (CEDM), Perception and Performance, Surface Transportation, and Systems Development – also have groups. The number of members affiliated with each TG on LinkedIn is growing, and the CEDM TG, whose LinkedIn group has been around the longest, has almost 300 members, as well as a group on Facebook.

We asked the CEDM LinkedIn group “owner,” Catherine Burns, to share with us her professional experiences using these two social networking sites.

Over the past year, the CEDM TG has begun using LinkedIn and Facebook to enhance communication among our members. These social networking sites have been growing in popularity, and because many of our members already belong to at least one of these sites, the TG was prompted to look into how we could use them to our benefit. Some quick research on the growth of social networking, particularly for professional associations, confirmed that it would be worth trying. Informal discussions with my students pretty much clinched it (even though some were horrified that their professors might join Facebook and see their latest party photos!). There was obviously something useful emerging in social networking, and we realized that we needed to take part in it.

We have had a presence on LinkedIn and Facebook for about a year now, and there are differences between the two. LinkedIn is a site with a professional flavor. People’s profiles list their areas of expertise and current and past professional positions. Site members build lists of contacts that can be used for networking. Through the group on LinkedIn, CEDM TG members are able to view one another’s expertise profiles and build connections. They can ask to be introduced to other members, a feature that is very helpful for those seeking employment or doing hiring. I’ve had several introductions pass through me in the last few months, so I know that this feature is very useful.

Facebook has a different flavor. Emerging from college social networking, it is much more casual in nature, and people’s profiles may include just about anything, such as pictures of their pets and children and their political leanings, musical interests, and latest social events. Despite this, many companies host groups on Facebook, and even President Obama has a profile on this site. Facebook is no longer just for the college crowd! The site also has job postings, discussions, and space for exchanging photos, Web links, or videos. At last count, the CEDM TG had 107 members on Facebook.

What about Privacy?

To date, our group has had no issues with our use of the sites, and everything has run smoothly. Concerns about privacy are largely allayed by the fact that it is up to members to manage their own privacy settings. Both sites provide many ways to tailor how
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much personal information can be seen, and I do recommend that members explore the privacy settings thoroughly. In fact, I recommend that people new to the sites build their profiles first and experiment with the sites before joining any groups. It’s useful to run some checks to make sure that you are sharing only information that you are comfortable sharing. As a final rule, you should never post anything on the Internet that you wouldn’t want others to see.

As for the potentially uncomfortable overlap between your personal profile and your professional one, if you manage the profiles well, I think problems can be avoided. LinkedIn is a great resource for investigating people’s professional experience, but it’s nice to learn about the hobbies and interests of members as well. It all helps to build a stronger community, and that’s why we are here.

Management Issues

From a management perspective, it would nice if the sites were integrated with each other so that postings and activities on each site could be coordinated. This is a disadvantage of using two sites. It would also be helpful to integrate site postings with other TG news releases, such as our newsletter. On Facebook, it would be helpful if there was more group information displayed in the individual profiles. The sites are continually evolving and adding new features, so there may be ways of doing things that I haven’t discovered yet. I’m cautious about wishing for more features, because most of the time my students will tell me that they are already there!

I do keep an eye out for inappropriate postings on our group sites, but to date, there haven’t been any. The Facebook group is open, and anyone can just sign up, but on LinkedIn, potential members must ask for approval to join our group. I generally approve requests, but in order to protect the group, I don’t approve people who are clearly recruiters or marketers.

Seeding the sites with content to foster discussion is always a challenge. I make an effort to post items to our group sites, but I definitely appreciate it when other members take part.

I recommend that other TGs give social networking sites a try. Be sure to link to the CEDM TG when you do so our members can take advantage of one another’s TG sites and form a larger HFES TG social network online!

Ergonomics in Design Online Delivery

As you know, you may choose to receive either online or print delivery of your free 2009 issues of Ergonomics in Design. (You can also choose to receive both formats for an additional $30.)

The online EID is available via the IngentaConnect.com platform. If you have not already registered for access on IngentaConnect, please log in at hfes.org and select “Register for my online subscriptions” to download instructions for registering. Registration takes just a few minutes, and within 1–2 business days, HFES will authorize your access.

If you wish to receive the print version of EID this year, please contact the HFES Member Services Department, and staff will update your preferences in your member record. Call 310/394-1811, fax 310/394-2410, or e-mail membership@hfes.org.

New Grad Program Emphasizes the Business of Human Factors

By Brian Cronk

Missouri Western State University in St. Joseph, Missouri, is pleased to announce that a new master’s of applied science degree in human factors and usability testing will be introduced in August.

This degree is unique, in that it combines the core courses often associated with an MBA (including economics, marketing, organization theory, and organizational communications) with specific coursework and experience in human factors. The goal is to educate master’s-level professionals with both the general business skills necessary to succeed as part of a multidisciplinary team and the research, design, and technical skills necessary to contribute meaningfully on usability and user-centered design.

Graduates will gain practical experience working on a variety of industry projects. The campus, just north of the Kansas City airport, gives us easy access to a number of telecommunications, aircraft, medical technology, financial services, GPS, and consumer products companies.

More information on this exciting degree program is available in the HFES Graduate Program Directory at http://www.hfes.org/web/Students/gradschools/missouriwestern.html or on our Web site, http://www.missouriwestern.edu/psychology/graduate.html.

Companies interested in forming relationships for internships or research projects are encouraged to contact me at cronk@missouriwestern.edu.

Brian Cronk is a Board of Governors Distinguished Professor of Psychology at Missouri Western State University.
Technical Groups

User-Centered Product Design Award Submissions Invited

By Stan Caplan and Dianne McMullin

The Product Design Technical Group (PDTG) invites submissions for the 8th Annual User-Centered Product Design Award. This award recognizes outstanding product design and the methods used to specify and achieve the design. Emphasis is placed on innovative and user-centered approaches to HF/E and industrial design.

Submissions may address products, software, or systems that are purchased for use in the home, in the workplace, or while mobile. They may include consumer, commercial, and medical products but exclude military equipment or systems. The product or system being nominated must be operational and capable of being marketed with no more than minimal changes. Products already on the market for more than three years will not be considered.

The deadline for submitting nominations for the award is May 15, 2009. Complete submission requirements are available at the PDTG Web site: http://www.hfes.org/pdtg/. Nominations should be submitted via e-mail to Dianne McMullin at dianne.l.mcmullin@boeing.com.

For more information or to volunteer to serve on the award selection committee, please contact Stan Caplan, scaplan@usabilityassociates.com.

Take Advantage of Your Benefits!

As an HFES member, you are no doubt aware of many of the benefits of membership, such as complimentary subscriptions to our regular publications and discounts on books, proceedings, and standards. But did you know that there are many other benefits available to you? All HFES members are entitled to the following:

- Discounted registration fees for the HFES Annual Meeting
- Free online access to the HFES Digital Library-Archive
- Access to the members-only HFES Career Center for résumé posting and job searching (http://www.hfes.org/web/CareerCenter/Career.aspx)
- 20% off software, workload assessment tools, data analysis tools, and other products from the Human Systems Information Analysis Center (formerly CSERIAC)
- 15% off Taylor & Francis books and subscriptions to Ergonomics
- 15% off John Wiley & Sons books and other resources
- 15% off selected books from Academic Press
- Discounts on car rentals from Hertz, Alamo, and National

Take advantage of all of your membership benefits, and tell your friends and colleagues who have an interest in human factors/ergonomics that HFES membership is an excellent value. Let them know that they can apply online at http://hfes.org.

Member Services Available at HFES.org

The HFES Web site is a rich source of information, particularly for members. If you haven’t visited hfes.org lately, here’s a quick summary of just a sampling of services.

- Search the online member directory. Unlike the printed Directory and Yearbook, the online member directory is updated several times a day, so it’s the most up-to-date source of contact information to enhance your networking activities.
- Update your member record. Please keep your information updated to ensure that other members can reach you via the online directory, to receive any online or print publications you requested, and to receive e-mail news and updates from HFES.
- Search jobs or post your résumé in the Career Center. Only HFES members can search job postings or post a résumé (and keep it confidential if desired). There are 1,005 employers registered with the Career Center, and over the last two years they have posted 425 jobs.
- Create a consultant listing (if a Full Member or Fellow). Enhance your consulting and expert witness services by creating a listing in the online HFES Consultant Directory. The fee is $150 for individuals or $250 for companies.

Log in today to take advantage of these and other valuable member services, or contact the Member Services Department at 310/394-1811 or membership@hfes.org.

IEA

IEA/Liberty Mutual Award

The International Ergonomics Association (IEA) and the Liberty Mutual Research Institute for Safety present an annual award to recognize outstanding original research leading to the reduction of work-related injuries and/or to the advancement of theory, understanding, and development of occupational safety research. The Liberty Mutual Medal is awarded to the authors of a scientific paper that meets criteria for innovation and impact. The most prestigious award of its kind in the field of occupational ergonomics and safety, it carries a stipend of $10,000.

The 2008 medal was awarded to an Australian-based research team led by Andrea Shaw of Shaw Idea. The research project, commissioned by the New South Wales (NSW) Mine Safety Advisory Council, was a comprehensive investigation of occupational health and safety management within the NSW mining industry. The project report, entitled Digging Deeper, can be downloaded from http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/minerals/safety/consultation/digging-deeper.
NEW!

**AUGMENTED COGNITION: A PRACTITIONER’S GUIDE**
Edited by Dylan D. Schmorrow & Kay M. Stanney

Augmented Cognition: A Practitioner’s Guide represents the first comprehensive publication dedicated to formalizing the study and practice of augmented cognition. This guide pulls together a vast array of information into a single source and provides valuable advice on how to study and practice in this field successfully. Whether you’re an engineer seeking to understand how best to select and integrate brain sensors, a psychologist designing adaptive strategies to enhance human performance, or a professor seeking to provide an overview of field practices, Augmented Cognition: A Practitioner’s Guide offers you a comprehensive, up-to-date, practical introduction to the field of augmented cognition.

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Best of Human Factors:
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Edited by Nancy J. Cooke & Eduardo Salas

In this book are 30 of the best papers (selected from nearly 2,800) published in the 50-year history of Human Factors: The Journal of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society. Best of Human Factors serves as a historical resource for HF/E professionals, a compendium of readings for graduate-level education, and a means to introduce the field of human factors/ergonomics to anyone with an interest in improving the human-system interface.

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Executive Council

**Executive Council Midyear Meeting**

The 2009 Midyear Meeting of the HFES Executive Council will be held April 16–18 at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco. Members who are interested in attending as observers should contact HFES Executive Director Lynn Strother at 310/394-1811 or lynn@hfes.org.

**Short Courses**

- **University of Michigan**, Center for Occupational Health & Safety Engineering, Continuing Education Programs, 1225 Beal Ave., Ann Arbor, MI, 48109-2117, 734/936-0148. ce.programs@umich.edu, [http://ergonomics.osu.edu/](http://ergonomics.osu.edu/).
- **Ergonomic Principles for Workplace Assessment and Design**, May 5–6, 2009, Grand Rapids, MI.
- **Human Factors Engineering Training**, July 27–August 7, 2009, Ann Arbor, MI.
- **Putting Ergonomics Into Practice**, Spring: May 12–15, 2009, Columbus, OH. Autumn: September 29–October 2, 2009, Columbus, OH.

**Calendar**

Announcement deadlines: First day of the month prior to the desired issue; for events or deadlines within the first three weeks of a month, send information at least two months in advance. Items are published according to space availability. The full Event Calendar is available at [http://hfes.org](http://hfes.org).

Calendar, cont.


★ Indicates new listing

Tenure Track Positions in Human Factors Engineering

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering

invites applications for academic tenure track positions in the area of Human Factors Engineering. The School has 170 faculty members, and the Division of Systems and Engineering Management (an IE Department) has 25 faculty positions. Human Factors will have 6–7 faculty members. We are now recruiting for three positions.

The university operates as a US university. Assistant Professors are expected to teach 1-2 courses the first year, and focus on research. Tenured professors teach 2-3 courses per year, with a possibility to buy out from courses. Candidates will teach in both Undergraduate and Graduate Programs. We are particularly interested to recruit in the area of cognitive human factors, but other specialties will also be considered. Preferred applicants will be expected to develop a strong and independent research program in one area, such as Process Control, Healthcare Systems, Biomedical Engineering, Alternative Energy Systems, Handheld Devices or Smart Home Design.

Applicants must have a doctoral degree and an outstanding academic record including journal publications. NTU pays 12 months salary plus a bonus of 1–2 months. Income tax is about 10–15%. Salaries are comparable to those in the USA. Subsidized living is available on Campus. Positions will remain open until filled. NTU is committed to diversity within its community. All qualified candidates are encouraged to apply. NTU is currently rated 77 among universities, see: www.timeshighereducation.co.uk

Submit application on-line to: http://www.ntu.edu.sg/ohr/Career/Pages/default.aspx and mail a copy to Professor Martin Helander; martin@ntu.edu.sg. The website gives further instructions.
**HFES Europe Chapter**

The Annual Conference of the HFES Europe Chapter will be held October 14–16, 2009, in Linköping, Sweden. The theme of this year’s conference is “Human Factors: A System View of Humans, Technology and Organisation.”

Abstracts are invited on topics such as adaptive technology, computer-based training, virtual prototyping, safety culture, usability and acceptance, surface transportation, aviation, and psychophysiology in ergonomics.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **June 15, 2009**. Further information is available at http://conference.hfes-europe.org/ or by contacting Dick de Waard, d.de.waard@hfes-europe.org.

**International Driver Distraction Conference**

The First International Conference on Driver Distraction and Inattention will be held September 28–29, 2009, at the Lindholmren Conference Centre in Gothenburg, Sweden. The conference aims to bring participants up to date on recent developments in the field of driver distraction and inattention, to highlight developments in research from neighboring disciplines, and to showcase new and emerging technologies, products, and other countermeasures that have significant potential to prevent or mitigate distraction and inattention.

Abstracts of up to 500 words for papers and presentations are invited. Topics may cover any mode of transport (land, air, sea) and may come from any relevant discipline. Submissions from industry are especially welcome.

The deadline for submission of abstracts is **April 15, 2009**.

For more information, visit http://www.chalmers.se/safer/driverdistraction-en or contact Michael Regan, michael.regan@inrets.fr.

**Ergonomics Society 2010 Annual Conference**

Submissions of abstracts are invited for the 2010 Annual Conference of the Ergonomics Society. The conference will be held April 13–15, 2010, at Keele University in Staffordshire, United Kingdom. The deadline for submissions is **June 30, 2009**.

For additional information, contact Sue Hull at s.hull@ergonomics.org.uk, or visit http://www.ergonomics.org.uk/.
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Use the code HFES09 at www.psychologicalscience.org/join to take advantage of this offer today.
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The HFES annual series Reviews of Human Factors and Ergonomics condenses HF/E knowledge in specific subject areas into a form that provides readers with a comprehensive understanding of each topic — its current state, important new research findings and technology, and current issues and research needs. Chapters note ways in which research results inform theory or methodology for future research and also emphasize the practical implications of the research that is reviewed. Chapter authors are among the most prominent HF/E professionals in their respective subject areas.

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