Abstract

Almost all research output includes tables, diagrams, photographs and even sketches, and papers within HCI typically take advantage of including these figures in their files. However the space given to non-diagrammatical or tabular figures is often small, even in papers that primarily concern themselves with visual output. The reason for this might be the publishing models employed in most proceedings and journals: Despite moving to a digital format which is unhindered by page count or physical cost, there remains a somewhat arbitrary limitation on page count. Recent moves by ACM SIGCHI and others to remove references from the maximum page count suggest that there is movement on this, however images remain firmly within the limits of the text. We propose that images should be celebrated – not penalised – and call for not only the adoption of the Pictorials format in CHI, but for images to be removed from page counts in order to encourage greater transparency of process in HCI research.

Author Keywords
Sketching; Comics; Pictorials; Publishing;

ACM Classification Keywords
H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation: Misc.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE LAND OF HCI...

Ah, CHI References, looks like you are all up to date with your page taxes since 2016 [18]. You are free to go ...

Ah Sketch, unpaid Existence Taxes, you take up too much space. You are hereby fined 250 Words.

That's crazy! Why don't References have to pay?

Images are viable forms of research, and not just for documentary! In fact, they are indispensable to UCD [2], and HCI itself!

You aren't worth the paper you're drawn on. Pay up and leave!

Images are penalised out of hand! We can't live by the rules of Words [9]. Something has to change!

NEXT! Ah Mr Table...

NEXT!!!

JUDGE PERVERSIVE

That's crazy! Why don't References have to pay?
OI! STOP!
You're defacing Academic Property with an unsolicited submission!

N! MORE NASI!

STOP! In the name of Interdisciplinary practice...

There's a special place in hell for useless little sketches like you, think you have a valid contribution, do you?
SOME TIME LATER ...

Who... what? You saved me? But why the secrecy? Who are you?

We are the Pictorials [2]. My name is Eli, and these are my associates, Sabrina, Will and Nicolai. We work toward the recognition of imagery as a valid contribution in Serious Research. We are small in number at present, but our clan grows every year. HCI is an Interdisciplinary field [4,20], and must make allowances for a variety of submission types.

So why don’t they? Won’t the Town Hall listen? I... could have been CUT?!

We are the Pictorials [2]. My name is Eli, and these are my associates, Sabrina, Will and Nicolai. We work toward the recognition of imagery as a valid contribution in Serious Research. We are small in number at present, but our clan grows every year. HCI is an Interdisciplinary field [4,20], and must make allowances for a variety of submission types.

Who... what? You saved me? But why the secrecy? Who are you?

Come, little Sketch. Take a walk with me, I have something to show you...
...there were some victories, like with DIS conference [7]...

...we used sketches to analyse data, as pioneered by our allies, Lee et al. [11]...

We've been watching them for years... waiting... analysing... these are our paper archives [17]...

Papers analysed by percentage space given to each type of output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Images</th>
<th>Tables</th>
<th>Equations</th>
<th>Diagrams</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Conference, CHI, 1997
Conference, CSCW, 1994
Conference, CHI, 1995
Conference, CHI, 1992
Conference, CHI, 1986
Magazine, Interactions, 1999
Conference, CHI, 2004
Conference, CHI, 2008
Conference, CHI, 2008
Conference, CHI, 2008

SIGCHI 10 Most Cited
...we'll get there – but the Publishers... well, that's another story...

...which means researchers strive toward rigour and accessible work. We cannot lay the blame with them however! We hold workshops [12], courses [13], even release comics [1,8,15,19]...

...sure they like us when they need us, to fill a gap, or if there's a Design paper [6], but there are calls for HCI to be a type of science [4]...

...we'll get there – but the Publishers... well, that's another story...

There are some great powers at work, little one. The References are seen as adding great value to research culture...

But didn't the References win the right to exist tax free [18]? What's to stop us having the same?
I've even seen sketching papers that don't have pictures in them!

The change from print publishing to the digital model has not trickled down to longer paper length. This is unfair but what can we do?

We've tried subtle, maybe we should be more BOLD? Take some action?

The time has come to take a stand! We deserve RECOGNITION, and the SPACE TO EXIST!

I heard tell that Mayor CHI is under the influence of the Publishers, they drain its resources, make longer submissions unviable. If we destroy the Publisher King we can free CHI and put our case forward...

I'll call for Design Fiction backup [19]! They are open minded!

We should also ask some journals, they have longer page limits [5]...

I'll call for Design Fiction backup [19]! They are open minded!

TO CHI!!!

Down with arbitrary limits! Interdisciplinaries assemble!

We've tried subtle, maybe we should be more BOLD? Take some action?

Just maybe...

...may the Buxton be with us [3]

I heard tell that Mayor CHI is under the influence of the Publishers, they drain its resources, make longer submissions unviable. If we destroy the Publisher King we can free CHI and put our case forward...

I'll call for Design Fiction backup [19]! They are open minded!

We should also ask some journals, they have longer page limits [5]...
I hear people coming, should we go and see what they want? I can't eat any more grapes!

Hush now... Nothing you need to concern yourself with, let Publishing take care of it all... you just concentrate on making money... yessss... all the money... for usssss....

You fools! You think you can make a difference? If I go another will take my place and the cycle will continue!

We represent those who believe image inclusion in research is important. We have a proposition for you.

Mayor CHI? Are you ok? Did the Publisher hurt you?

UHHH
Acknowledgements

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References


This paper is cute, but not clever, for reasons I shall explain...

The authors make two proposals by the means of a cartoon/comic. The first is to add an extra page for images to each main tracking CHI paper. The second is to add a pictorial track to CHI.

There might be arguments for and against both proposals. However, the authors inadvertently demonstrate a major counter argument. Rather than presenting a balanced analysis of their proposals, the authors present a superficial argument, which is essentially no more than an assertion that something should be done because the authors say so, accompanied by some pretty pictures. If the authors had relied more on the written word, then they would have had an argument. Instead, the use of imagery has led them to put the cart before the horse. It is one thing to illustrate an argument, but quite another to allow illustrations to dictate the argument itself.

Turning to the main track, there are serious potential problems in encouraging more imagery. Pictures are less accessible for people with visual impairments, a problem that they community is trying to address. Not to mention that others with disabilities might also have difficulty in producing sketches. Given the authors claim that their approach should be accepted for reasons of ‘diversity’, this is rather ironic.

Even putting these problems aside, the reality is that promoting one type of work often comes at the expense of another. There is a finite budget for HCI research. Funds that go on exploratory design work, or ‘provocations’, and so forth are funds that are not being directly spent on what some might consider to be more prescient matters, such as the development of new assistive technologies, or systems aimed at addressing actual societal ills. The authors do not make any real argument as to why public funds should be spent in such a way, even though the main track has a substantial bearing on their distribution.

Where the authors are perhaps on stronger grounds is that page lengths are arbitrary and problematic. However, there are better reasons for removing page limits, including that they have been successfully removed elsewhere and they can amount to unfair discrimination (See Kirkham R, et al. Being reasonable: A manifesto for improving the inclusion of disabled people in SIGCHI conferences. In Alt.CHI 2015). In any event there is no reason why sketches cannot be attached as supplementary material.

The other proposal of the authors is to establish a pictorial track at CHI. This might be good, bad, or indifferent. Unlike the authors other proposal, there is some direct evidence that a Pictorials track can be sustained productively: DIS operates one. However, the authors do not explore or investigate the evidence to see if the same conclusion should be reached for CHI (which may have different needs and requirements to DIS). So, there is no real balanced argument: only an indication that the matter should be investigated. A decision can only be made by comparing the authors proposal with other potential options: adding a track takes resource and time which would be spent on something else.

The lesson of this story is perhaps this: changes to our peer review processes require a careful analysis. They should not be done on the basis that some (arbitrary) group of researchers would ‘prefer’ something, or it looks ‘cute’.

Commentary

For alt.chi paper
Sketch & The Lizard King: Supporting Image Inclusion in HCI Publishing

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alt15, Page11
Commentary

For alt.chi paper

Sketch & The Lizard King:
Supporting Image Inclusion in HCI Publishing

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The central argument is sound, the presentation is interesting and provocative. I say accept, we are visual beings and text is not the only way.

:D