

Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2025

VOICES

of

SIGCHI



The quarterly newsletter
of ACM SIGCHI



Association for
Computing Machinery

Advancing Computing as a Science & Profession

Voices of SIGCHI is published quarterly (January, April, July, October) by ACM, 1601 Broadway, 10th Floor New York, NY 10019-7434.

The ACM Special Interest Group on Computer-Human Interaction (SIGCHI) is the world's largest association of professionals who contribute towards the research and practice of human-computer interaction (HCI). We are an interdisciplinary group of computer scientists, software engineers, psychologists, interaction designers, graphic designers, sociologists, multimedia designers, information scientists, and anthropologists, just to name some of the domains whose special expertise come to bear in this area. What brings us together is a shared understanding that designing useful and usable technology is an interdisciplinary process, and when done properly it has the power to transform lives. This newsletter, curated and edited by the SIGCHI Executive Committee, is a forum for updates and reflections on activities within the SIGCHI community, intended to foster knowledge-sharing and connectedness among membership.

Contributions To contribute to Voices of SIGCHI, please reach out to the Vice-President for Communications Naveena Karusala at sigchi-vp-communications@acm.org with your proposed topic. To be included in a given issue, copy must be complete and submitted six weeks ahead of the issue month (e.g., Feb 15 for the April issue).

Notice to Contributing Authors to SIG Newsletters As a contributing author, you retain copyright to your article. ACM will refer all requests for republication directly to you. By submitting your article for distribution in any newsletter of the ACM Special Interest Groups, you hereby grant to ACM the following non-exclusive, perpetual, worldwide rights:

- to publish your work online or in print on condition of acceptance by the editor
- to include the article in the ACM Digital Library and in any Digital Library-related services
- to allow users to make a personal copy of the article for noncommercial, educational, or research purposes
- to upload your video and other supplemental material to the ACM Digital Library, the ACM YouTube channel, and the SIG newsletter site

Furthermore, you affirm that:

- if third-party materials were used in your published work, supplemental material, or video, that you have the necessary permissions to use those third-party materials in your work

Acknowledgements We thank Julia Chatain on the SIGCHI Communications Committee for designing the newsletter front matter!

VOICES *of* SIGCHI

Volume 1, Issue 1, April 2025

TABLE *of* CONTENTS



Something old, something new...	1
<i>Neha Kumar</i>	
The SIGCHI Bulletin: A Retrospective	2
<i>Steven Pemberton</i>	
Updates from the Conferences Team: Growing and Supporting Our Portfolio of Conferences	5
<i>Ignacio Avellino, Jerry Fails, Matt Jones</i>	
“We’re here for you”: What You Should Know About SIGCHI CARES	7
<i>Naveena Karusala</i>	
Ask an HCI Research Ethicist: A Recurring Column on Research Ethics Challenges	10
<i>Casey Fiesler, Jessica Vitak, and Michael Zimmer</i>	
New Initiatives at ICMI: Mentorship in Focus	12
<i>Catharine Oertel, Laura Cabrera-Quirós, Hayley Hung, Mohammad Soleymani, Sean Andrist, Dimosthenis Kontogiorgos, Chirag Raman</i>	
Sustainability at HRI	14
<i>Ilaria Torre</i>	
Reflections from Gary Marsden Travel Award Recipients	16

Something old, something new...

Neha Kumar

Greetings, SIGCHI members!

It brings me immense joy to welcome you to the inaugural issue of our SIGCHI newsletter! This beginning commences a new chapter in how we connect, share, and grow together as a global HCI community. As ACM's largest Special Interest Group, now with more than 5,500 members, SIGCHI is more global and diverse than ever. We love to see the rich cultural and regional diversity, just as we love to see our conferences grow in strength and scope, broadening and deepening our intellectual undertakings. At CHI 2025, we are excited to welcome our largest audience of new and old SIG members in Yokohama, to celebrate the people who make our conferences happen, people who sustain our SIG, people who care. And as SIGCHI continues to grow in numerous new directions, our goal remains to support each other in becoming the best possible researcher, practitioner, volunteer, leader, educator, mentor, contributor... and this newsletter is a step towards achieving this goal.

Nurturing a Special Interest Group (SIG) is as much about embracing the past as it is about looking to the future. Ensuring SIG wellbeing and growth while adapting to changing times is easier when we are able to learn from lessons others have encountered before us, and when we can make the time to pass on our own lessons learned. Our newsletter is aimed at exactly such learning, so that when SIGCHI turns 50 in a few years—or even 150(!), our future leaders will be equipped to quickly and easily turn back the pages of time.

This newsletter will serve as a bridge between members—bringing you important updates, thought-provoking discussions, and highlights from our vibrant community. Whether you are a long-time member or joining us for the first time, we hope this platform helps you stay informed and engaged. In this first issue, you'll find insights from SIGCHI leaders, updates on our conferences and initiatives, and reflections on the ever-changing landscape of HCI. We invite you to be an active part of this endeavor—share your thoughts, contribute articles, and let us know what you'd like to see in future editions.

Neha Kumar

President, SIGCHI (2021—present)

The SIGCHI Bulletin: A Retrospective

Steven Pemberton

I first got involved with SIGCHI in 1991, when I went to CHI '91 in New Orleans, since I had had a demo accepted. It was a great conference, and I got to hang out with some quite well-known HCI people in jazz bars in the evening as well. It was my first ever visit to the USA, which added to the excitement: only a few months earlier I had been for the first time to the (then still) USSR for the very first East-West HCI conference, as relations thawed under Gorbachev, and consequently I was on the streets of Moscow during the coup against Gorbachev. It was an exciting year for me in many ways.

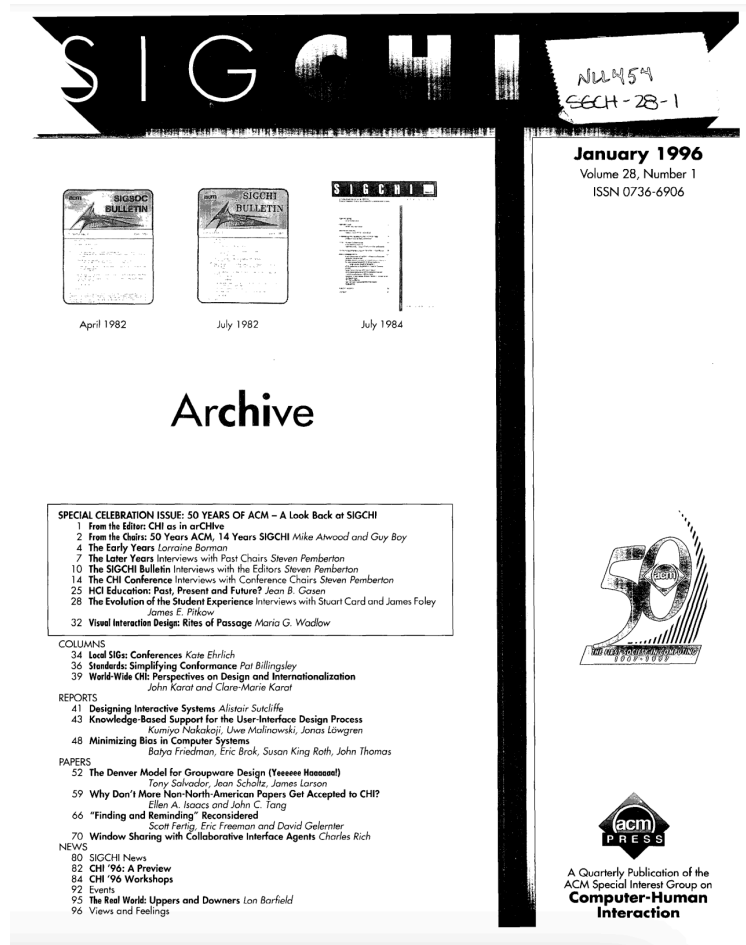
It is weird to think back and realise that SIGCHI in 1991 wasn't yet nine years old! The first pre-CHI conference that founded SIGCHI and the whole HCI discipline had been in 1982 in Washington, DC; the first conference actually called CHI was in 1983. It was really early days, but to a young researcher like me, that wasn't obvious.

That first pre-CHI conference in 1982 had been organised because the Washington, DC Chapter of the ACM had too much money in their bank account and as a non-profit were looking for ways to reduce their \$10,000 surplus for the benefit of the discipline. With a grant of \$2,000 dollars to get started, a group of people decided to organise a conference on Human Factors, expecting around 250 to turn up. In the end more than 900 went, returning somewhere close to \$100,000 back to the Washington, DC chapter, causing them an enormous headache, but really kicking off our discipline.

Having gone to CHI '91, I hadn't planned to go to CHI '92 in Monterey, California, but since CHI was coming to Europe for the first time in 1993, to Amsterdam no less (where I live), I anticipated I'd get to go again then.

But then something happened: the co-chairs of that coming Amsterdam conference needed a local arrangements chair, someone who knew the conference, but also the city. They decided that that was me. As a result, I had to go to the planning meetings that happened after CHI '92, and so got to go to CHI '92 after all (still one of my favourite CHIs)!

I really enjoyed the meetings and got on well with the people involved, and so I decided I'd like to get more involved. As it happened, *Interactions* magazine was just coming up to speed at that time, and the editor of the SIGCHI member publication, [SIGCHI Bulletin](#), was leaving to be editor of *Interactions*, and so they were looking for a new Bulletin editor. The advert fitted me perfectly! I had experience editing a newsletter, I had edited large publications, and my employers would support me. The decision process took longer than anyone expected I think, and when the invitation arrived to come to a meeting in Los Angeles (the following day!), I was in a cabin in the middle of a forest in Sweden, halfway on an overland trip to the third East-West HCI conference.



COVER OF THE JAN 1996 SIGCHI BULLETIN

I was the fourth editor of the Bulletin, and I edited it for more than five years in the end (longer than intended: my resignation letter somehow fell through the cracks, and for a time I was editing both the Bulletin and *Interactions*. I still remember the look on the face of the then-chair of SIGCHI when he came up to me to tell me that ACM were complaining that I wasn't delivering the Bulletin in a timely manner, and I had to remind him that I had resigned). It was hard work, but a lot of fun, and I got to know a lot of great people.

The Bulletin came out quarterly in issues of about 100 pages. It was principally directed at members, and was intended to contain timely information. If I look at a typical issue, I see half a dozen columns, one from the SIGCHI chairs, and then ones on Local SIGs, Education, Standards, Design, and Students. Then there are reports from conferences and workshops, a couple of technical papers, and finally news: new publications, dissertations, calls for papers, events, minutes from SIGCHI Executive Committee meetings, and all ending with a light-hearted opinion piece.

Occasionally, I would run a special issue. Notable ones that spring to mind include one on [Interaction Design Education](#) in July 1994, an issue marking the [ACM's 50th year with a retrospective on SIGCHI](#) in January 1996, and the issue bidding [farewell to the Apple Advanced Technology Group](#) in April 1998.

Another thing we did during my tenure was experiment with publishing both on paper and electronically. In 1994 we planned, in 1995 we experimented, and in 1996 officially published the Bulletin electronically, one of the first publications to be published on the web (you can still see what we did at [my website](#)).

According to the ACM Digital Library, it has been more than 25 years since the last issue of the SIGCHI Bulletin appeared, so I'm really glad that SIGCHI is restarting a membership publication. The old SIGCHI Bulletins contain an immense amount of history about us and how our field has developed, and a similar publication is an excellent way for SIGCHI to keep members in touch with what is happening, and the decisions being made.

Updates from the Conferences Team: Growing and Supporting Our Portfolio of Conferences

Ignacio Avellino, Jerry Fails, Matt Jones

Ensuring that SIGCHI's conferences—the largest portfolio amongst any ACM special interest group—are all flourishing requires care. We, the Executive Committee's Conferences Team, have been hard at work since the start of the new term in July 2024 to strengthen support for and knowledge-exchange across all SIGCHI conferences. Below, we share a few updates.

A Growing Portfolio of Conferences

We've discussed and endorsed two new exciting proposals for conference series, and look forward to supporting organizers as they plan their inaugural events.

The Interactive Health conference will bring together academic and industry researchers and practitioners from HCI, medical and health informatics, and digital health, with the goal of advancing people's health and well-being. Interactive Health will nurture existing interests created by spaces such as the Health subcommittee at ACM CHI, the Workshop on Interactive Systems in Healthcare (WISH), the Annual Symposium of the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA), and PervasiveHealth. There will also be a workshop at CHI '25 dedicated to envisioning the future of the Interactive Health conference. The conference will serve as a dedicated venue for sharing and exploring new findings, methodologies, and strategies for developing interactive health and well-being systems, advancing research agendas on topics of growing interest in healthcare HCI, and disseminating research related to implementing interactive systems in healthcare.

The Critical Computing conference is dedicated to critically grounded theories, methods, analyses, and pedagogies of computing and digital technologies. The conference will be building on the growing interest in critical perspectives on computing, as evidenced by the thriving critical computing subcommittees at ACM CHI, FAccT, and DIS, and other venues such as the Decennial Aarhus Conference. The conference will offer support for early career researchers seeking to conduct research and receive mentorship in this growing space, while also unifying currently disparate conversations around critical making/design, critical theory, and critical technical practice.

Supporting Planning and Knowledge-exchange

As our portfolio of conferences grows, we have been creating streamlined processes and support structures to enable conferences to plan efficiently and responsibly. We held a conferences town hall in October 2024 to share our efforts along these lines. One significant improvement we've made is expedited processing of Preliminary Approval Forms (PAFs) and Technical Meeting Request Forms

(TMRFs). Our turnaround times are typically a week, if not less, allowing conferences to start planning and signing contracts as soon as possible.

As part of our efforts to support conferences with as much knowledge as possible when it is most needed, we have increased communication channels with conference steering committees and organizers. When a conference submits a PAF, we have an onboarding process to set organizers up for success, where we walk them through best practices around the many facets of conference planning. We have also been regularly debriefing with conference organizers when closings are received. This helps us understand best practices for a healthy budget, or diagnose what factors may have led to any losses. In either case, these conversations enable us to understand the opportunities and challenges affecting our conferences so we can offer better support.

As we learn from one conference's experiences, we also share general takeaways with other conference steering committees, and have set up new forums to facilitate this. We started sending out a monthly newsletter to the Council of Steering Committee Chairs. Our goal here is to stay in touch, communicate what the Conferences Team is up to, highlight key information for conference organizers, and share experiences and knowledge across conferences. For example, our very first newsletter in January covered our progress on PAFs, TMRFs, and closings for transparency, and shared reminders about planning policies. We also solicited and shared conferences' experiences with topics ranging from ACM OPEN, to copyright questions, to accessibility chairing.

This is all for now, and we are thinking about more ways to strengthen conference support and knowledge exchange. If you have ideas to this end, please don't hesitate to reach out to the Conferences Team at sigchi-confs-team@acm.org!



PHOTO BY [GLENN CARSTENS-PETERS](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

“We’re here for you”: What You Should Know About SIGCHI CARES

Naveena Karusala

“We’re here for you. If you think something bad has been done, you can come to us. We can talk about it. You will never lose control of your confidential statements. We will never take action on the basis of what you say. We will protect your confidence. Full stop.”

“We’re here. Not everyone knows that we’re here. There’s still a lot of people that don’t know.”

This is what Michael Muller and Karrie Karahalios, current co-chairs of SIGCHI CARES, tell me is their biggest message to the SIGCHI community. CARES is a committee of SIGCHI that supports those who experience discrimination and/or harassment within the SIGCHI community. Anyone can come to CARES volunteers for a confidential conversation, whether they want a listening ear, a sounding board, or help navigating the ACM’s reporting mechanisms. It has been five years since the formation of CARES in January of 2020. CARES has supported many people in this time. However, in a large and growing global community like SIGCHI, there are likely still many who are not aware of this valuable resource.

Multiple ACM special interest groups have formed a CARES committee in the past few years. The first was [SIGARCH’s](#), set up in 2018 in response to multiple flashpoints within the community that foregrounded concerns about harassment and discrimination. That was the same year that ACM Council adopted the [ACM policy against harassment and discrimination](#). Since then, several other SIGs have followed suit with their own CARES committees. During her term as SIGCHI President from 2018 to 2021, Helena Mentis sought to make inclusion a top priority, and charged Vice President at Large Shaowen Bardzell with convening a CARES committee. CARES officially began serving the SIGCHI community in early 2020.

Discrimination and harassment can be traumatic experiences, whether they are big or small, subtle or obvious. They can take many shapes, from verbal remarks, to physical harms, to the unfolding of exclusion, coercion, or retaliation over time. CARES is premised on the idea that it is important for those who have gone through any such experiences to be able to have a dedicated, easily identifiable safe space where they can talk to a set of approachable people. While there are many conscientious leaders within the community, from conference organizers to committee chairs, CARES makes explicit its commitment to confidentiality, experience with navigating difficult situations, and knowledge of ACM’s formal reporting mechanisms. The hope then is that CARES enables more people than otherwise to feel comfortable talking about their experiences, and that its existence acts as a deterrent for discrimination and harassment.

SIGCHI brings people together across institutions and countries in a range of spaces and processes, and safety is important in all of them. Some are for official SIG activities, such as sponsored conferences, peer review, or other volunteer work. Other spaces simply have significant representation from many SIGCHI members, such as workshops, summer schools, and workplaces. Community members may choose to go to CARES regarding situations in any of these contexts. As Ding Wang, a CARES volunteer, shared, *“The things that happen to us may or may not fall into the jurisdiction of an institution or an organization. It’s really important how CARES is not bounded by any particular institution or conference. It sort of transcends all those borders.”*

Given that conferences are the biggest events organized within the SIG and require significant volunteer effort, CARES aims to have at least one committee member available at all SIGCHI-sponsored conferences and program committee meetings (as invited). CARES representatives for each conference are listed on [CARES’ webpage](#). Representatives may be present in person or virtually. CARES encourages conference organizers to share about CARES during opening remarks and explain how to contact the applicable CARES representative throughout the event. [SIGCHI’s Code of Conduct](#) also refers people to CARES. At any time, even beyond conferences, one can reach out to the CARES chairs at sigchi-cares@acm.org, or to [individual CARES volunteers](#), listed on the SIGCHI website. Those who come to CARES have agency to decide who on the committee they would like to talk to.

So who are the people behind CARES? CARES is run by a group of volunteers who are deeply committed to the safety and well-being of the SIGCHI community, with a strong track record of working to address equity issues. Often, volunteers join CARES after they themselves have tried to support people going through difficult situations and realized the importance of spaces like CARES. *“Volunteering for CARES gives me an opportunity to act upon my principles,”* shared Ding. CARES is also diverse in many dimensions, including gender identity, race, culture, and type of institution. This is deliberate, in order to ensure CARES is approachable and can serve the range of needs within the SIGCHI community.

One will quickly see that volunteering for CARES, while impactful, is hard work. *“I think there’s some things I wish I didn’t know to be honest,”* said Karrie. The work requires a deep capacity for listening, creating a safe space, and maintaining presence of mind, regardless of what community members share. This is why CARES not only recruits volunteers who have demonstrated maturity and experience with difficult situations, they also provide training on key skills such as bystander intervention, so that volunteers are supported in the work that they do. Still, as Michael noted, *“The work can also be heartbreaking.”* So CARES volunteers also lean on one another, helping each other come up with advice (while maintaining anonymity), and checking in often on each other’s well-being.

Volunteers also draw strength from the courage of those who come to CARES. Karrie emphasized, *“I really want to give credit to the people that come to us, because at the end of the day, they’re the ones that*

are surviving this. They're the ones that are taking action." This gets at the core of what CARES is about, and the value it brings to the community. It is not that CARES "comes to the rescue". Rather, conversations with volunteers offer an opportunity to process and determine how one wants to respond to the situation they are in. Volunteers may listen, make suggestions, or try to help translate across perspectives, but they take care to recognize that agency ultimately lies with those who come to CARES.

Over time, CARES has become an important window into the broad concerns affecting the community, and their root causes. Michael and Karrie reflected on how many issues they see arise due to the "*bean-counting mentality*" that pressures people to produce and achieve, whether it is publications, grants, or recognitions. Michael noted that he hopes people feel comfortable approaching CARES if they think this is affecting them or how they treat others, to find ways out of these situations. Insights from CARES also allow the SIG to prioritize addressing such issues on a structural level, in tandem with ACM. For example, ACM task forces are focusing on reshaping research and publishing practices to incentivize quality over quantity. The SIG Governing Board has also started a working group on peer review, and is aiming to garner broad support for more sustainable publishing practices from institutions that produce computing research. Through this bubbling up of key priorities, CARES not only supports coping with the current system, but also enables transformation.

Whether you are someone who would like to have a conversation with CARES, or someone who would like to volunteer for CARES, CARES is here. You can reach out at sigchi-cares@acm.org or express interest in volunteering through [SIGCHI's open call](#).



PHOTO BY [JOHN CAMERON](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

Ask an HCI Research Ethicist: A Recurring Column on Research Ethics Challenges

Casey Fiesler, Jessica Vitak, and Michael Zimmer, on behalf of the SIGCHI Research Ethics Committee

Created in 2016, the SIGCHI Research Ethics Committee advises SIGCHI conferences and communities on ethical issues that arise in the course of conducting research. The committee also provides guidance and feedback on research ethics issues that arise during the peer review process; as a result, we have a broad sense of novel and persisting open questions within our community. Through this recurring column, we will continue this work by raising awareness and increasing discussion of ethics in the context of conducting HCI research.

The Research Ethics Committee is one of multiple SIGCHI committees that addresses issues of ethics and conduct, though our purview is specifically around ethics in the conduct of research rather than, for example, authorship issues or plagiarism. Though this committee does not play an approval role for research, it constitutes a group of community members who have expertise in research ethics and can provide informed opinions during research design or the peer review process.

The committee provides guidance, not decisions, by helping authors and reviewers assess ethical challenges and navigate complex issues at all stages of the research cycle. Rather than enforcing rules, the committee offers resources and discussions to support ethical reasoning and responsible research practices within the SIGCHI community. Many SIGCHI conferences have created explicit processes for looping in this committee when appropriate.

Common research ethics issues that arise in the conduct of HCI research include concerns around privacy and anonymity, deception, challenges with social media and public data research, informed consent for vulnerable populations, best practices for data sharing, and special considerations for research with children. Through our participation in numerous special interest groups at conferences and engagements in conference reviews, various emerging topics have increasingly been raised with the committee. These include the following questions:

- What special precautions should we take when researching vulnerable populations or stigmatized or minoritized groups or issues?
- Are there risks in reporting direct quotes from public data or in creating an archive of content outside of its original context? Are there ethical issues with researchers violating terms of service?
- How should consent be obtained from members of groups, communities, or nations that, for historical reasons, now distrust researchers from dominant groups?

- Should there be consent practices for online experiments conducted on or by platforms where people are not informed about their participation? What are the proper ethical considerations for conducting and then debriefing from studies that involve deception?
- In light of increasing calls for greater transparency, data sharing, and open science within HCI, how do we balance these important values with privacy and research ethics for the people/communities represented in our data? How does this balance shift with different degrees of power between “researchers” and “researched”?
- What are our ethical obligations to fellow researchers and best practices for maintaining researcher wellness and safety?

In future editions of this column, we will explore these and similar research ethics questions and challenges relevant to the SIGCHI research community. If you have suggestions for a topic, a question we should cover, or a general inquiry, we encourage you to reach out to the committee chairs at sigchi-ethics-chair@acm.org.



PHOTO BY [JORDAN MADRID](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

New Initiatives at ICMI: Mentorship in Focus

Catharine Oertel, Laura Cabrera-Quirós, Hayley Hung, Mohammad Soleymani, Sean Andrist, Dimosthenis Kontogiorgos, Chirag Raman

In its 2024 iteration, the general chairs of SIGCHI's International Conference on Multimodal Interaction (ICMI) decided to launch a New Initiatives programme at the conference. The goal was to give new ideas a place to form within the ICMI community, so that not only seasoned members had a say, but also, newcomers could voice their needs and find an academic home they would like to return to and contribute to for many years. Ultimately, the question motivating this programme was: How can we make ICMI an even more welcoming place for newcomers, early career researchers, and people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives?

To initiate this process, prior to the conference, the new initiative chairs sent a survey out to all ICMI 2024 participants to gather their interest. One topic emerged strongly from this survey: mentoring.

Other conferences have explored various forms of mentorship, with specific focus on supporting PhD students, women, newcomers to the community, etc. We did not want to pre-define any specific form but wanted to allow the participants to determine which format they would like mentoring to take.



MENTORSHIP KICK-OFF EVENT AT ICMI 2024 [PHOTO: LAURA CABRERA-QUIRÓS]

A kick-off event took place on the last day of the conference, showing great attendance from both mentors and mentees. Some people in their tenure-track and early career also identified as both mentor and mentee, and were pleased to find a place in the kick-off event to benefit and contribute under both roles. The event utilized general and group discussions to define feasible mentorship options for the different needs and realities of the attendees.

After the kick-off event, the first mentorship pairs were formed. Some mentors and mentees decided that they would like to create a longer relationship, and others were happy with just a one-off talk. Particularly noteworthy is also that undergraduate students joined the discussion and found mentors as well, showing the appeal of this initiative across different career stages.

The New Initiatives track and mentoring programme will be brought forward into the next iteration of ICMI in 2025, hoping to sustain this inclusive and welcoming mindset to help shape the future of ICMI. We would like to thank the SIGCHI Development Fund for making this programme possible with the mentorship kick-off event of ICMI 2024.

Sustainability at HRI

Ilaria Torre

The [Human-Robot Interaction \(HRI\) 2025 conference](#) took place in Melbourne, Australia, from March 3–6, 2025. Since its inception in 2006, the conference has grown steadily, from 135 submissions in its first edition to 400 full papers submitted this year. As the HRI community continues to expand, so does the need for greater awareness of sustainable research practices and the environmental impact of academic events. To address this, for the first time, the organizing committee included two [sustainability co-chairs](#), who worked alongside other organizers to introduce new sustainability initiatives. These initiatives aimed to reduce the environmental impact of the conference and to promote research on sustainability and sustainable research practices within the technical program.



ILARIA HOLDING A T-SHIRT WITH ARTWORK
BY OCHRE DRAWN [PHOTO: MARTI DE CET]

One such initiative, made possible through funding from the SIGCHI Development Fund, was a partnership with [Ochre Dawn](#), an Aboriginal-owned design company. We commissioned a custom artwork that incorporated Aboriginal symbols for people and gatherings, elements of Australian flora and fauna, and robotic motifs alongside the conference logo. This design symbolized the intersection of technology, local environment, and Indigenous knowledge, a reflection of how HRI can engage with diverse perspectives to create more inclusive and sustainable futures. Rather than distributing free conference swag, which is often low-quality and non-durable, we printed the artwork on

limited-edition t-shirts. These were distributed at the conference in exchange for a monetary donation, allowing attendees to contribute directly to a meaningful cause. Through this initiative, we raised approximately \$1,700, which was donated to [Deadly Science](#), an Australian charity dedicated to providing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education to children in Aboriginal communities.

The response from attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Many appreciated the opportunity to support a local Indigenous business while also contributing to educational outreach. By integrating sustainability into both the logistics and the values of the conference, we demonstrated how academic events can move beyond performative gestures and create tangible social and environmental impact.



HRI ATTENDEES AT THE T-SHIRT BOOTH [PHOTO: AUDREY BALASKA]

This initiative was just one step toward making HRI conferences more sustainable and socially responsible (the [full list of initiatives](#) can be found on the HRI website). Looking ahead, we hope to build on this success by embedding sustainability into future editions of our conference, exploring further ways to minimize waste, support ethical partnerships, and promote sustainable research practices within the HRI community. We also hope that other existing or emerging SIGCHI events introduce similar initiatives, finding meaningful ways to incorporate sustainability both in their conference logistics and in their technical programs, ensuring that sustainability becomes a core value across the broader HCI community.

Reflections from Gary Marsden Travel Award Recipients

Below are post-conference reflections from recipients of the Gary Marsden Travel Awards who attended GROUP, HRI, and TEI—SIGCHI-sponsored conferences in 2025 that took place in time for this newsletter issue. We share these, and future ones, in order to highlight the impact of SIGCHI's travel awards program, and the rich experiences that our conferences offer. Not all recipients are able to use their award or submit a reflection, but as always, the [full list of recipients](#) for each awards cycle is listed on the SIGCHI website.

Adrian Lozada Menendez | University Of South Florida, USA, HRI '25

My name is Adrian Lozada Menendez, and I'm a senior studying computer engineering. In March, I had the exciting opportunity to present two research papers at the ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI 2025), a leading event where researchers and professionals gather to share innovative ideas and projects in robotics and AI.

My first presentation was at a workshop, where I introduced an open-source project designed to autonomously control fog machines using robots with the Robot Operating System (ROS). This project aims to simplify robotic visual communications by creating accessible tools for other researchers and developers. My second talk involved presenting a full research paper focused on integrating a fog-based projection screen device with a projector, robot, and high-capacity battery. The main goal of this research was to enable robots to visually communicate messages or instructions in various environments, particularly where traditional screens or displays are impractical.

Initially, presenting my work to a professional audience felt intimidating. However, after considerable preparation and practicing extensively with my supervising professor, I overcame my anxiety and delivered both presentations confidently. The audience's positive reactions and engaging questions further boosted my confidence. One memorable moment was when a representative from a mining company approached me afterward, expressing serious interest in potentially funding our project. This interaction highlighted the real-world applications and potential impact our research could have.

Beyond presenting, the conference was an excellent place for networking and gaining insight from fellow researchers. Discussions about career paths, personal goals, and research methods were invaluable. Visiting the Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) labs at the University of Melbourne was especially inspiring, exposing me to new perspectives and reinforcing my passion for robotics and artificial intelligence research.

Meeting the team from PAL Robotics was another conference highlight. They encouraged me to apply for a summer internship, which I've already done. This internship would significantly enrich my practical experience, preparing me for graduate school and helping solidify my future career goals.

Overall, attending HRI 2025 expanded my academic and professional network, deepened my understanding of research dissemination, and fueled my ambition to continue developing innovative robotic solutions.

Alaa Abboud | École Polytechnique Fédérale De Lausanne, Switzerland, HRI '25

I was jetlagged for all three days of the HRI conference, yet the sheer creativity within the community kept me wide awake. More than anything, I appreciated the humility of its members—being able to chat with even the most tenured professors as if they were old friends quickly put me at ease and erased any first-conference jitters.

Presenting my work felt like more than just sharing research—it was a process of creation and refinement. It gave me a new perspective, where research wasn't just about curiosity but also about taking ownership of an idea and seeing it through. Developing the idea, iterating on it, and adding the finishing touches reminded me of other forms of craftsmanship; research suddenly felt more personal and fulfilling.

The conference itself had no singular identity. It was a mix of roboticists, psychologists, neuroscientists, and futurists, all exchanging ideas with the common goal of, at the risk of sounding naïve, building a kinder future. People's personal quirks were woven into their work, making every presentation genuine and authentic. Even as an independent researcher with no current academic affiliation, I felt an immediate sense of belonging. My industry experience was as valued as my academic work, reinforcing the idea that research careers don't have to follow a linear path.

I leave with an itching desire to return—to contribute more. This experience helped me refine my vision of the kind of academic I would like to be and the unique perspective I can bring to the community. It also gave me a deeper understanding of how to shape ideas into contributions that matter. While a future in academia now feels like a real possibility, I will continue to embrace independent research until that moment comes. For now, I've got a bunch of new ideas, and I can't wait to start building them.

Carlos Alberto Granados Ybarra | Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, Peru, TEI '25

Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the TEI25 conference in Bordeaux, France. It was a challenging and exciting experience. From the moment I arrived, I was able to engage with a new culture and different ways of thinking. This was my first time attending an international conference in person, which made the experience even more special and enriching.

During the conference, I met researchers and students from various laboratories and nationalities. Interacting with them allowed me to learn about their work and build friendships. I found it fascinating to discuss cutting-edge research topics and explore potential future collaborations.

Additionally, I had the chance to receive advice and hear experiences about pursuing a master's or a PhD, which is a step I aspire to take in my life. Attending in person allowed me, over the three days of the conference, to learn about the technologies being developed and used today, as well as methodologies and application scenarios that I was previously unaware of and that I now carry with me to develop future projects.

Moreover, I had the opportunity to present my work and speak in front of an audience. It was both nerve-wracking and exhilarating, but seeing the audience's engagement and receiving their feedback was incredibly rewarding. I find it amazing to see and listen to people who share the same interests or have different perspectives but the same passion for developing technologies that help others. This experience has further strengthened my motivation to continue contributing to this field and pursue new academic and professional challenges.

Guanyu Huang | University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, HRI '25

HRI 2025 in Melbourne is my first in-person international conference outside the UK. The event was an energising immersion into the world of human-robot interaction, and being surrounded by researchers who share the same passion for this field was truly invigorating.

One of the most valuable takeaways was the sense of clarity it provided me regarding my place in this field. As a researcher with a non-traditional background in computer science, I have sometimes questioned where my work fits within HRI. However, through engaging discussions and thought-provoking presentations, I was reassured that the intersection of ideas, design, and human-centred perspectives is not only valid but essential to shaping meaningful human-robot interactions. This realisation has solidified my confidence in continuing my work and contributing to this evolving field.

Throughout the conference, I had the privilege of engaging in enriching conversations during coffee breaks, panel discussions, and informal networking sessions. These discussions helped refine my research focus and reaffirm my commitment to user-centred design and interaction design. Specifically, I have identified three key research directions I aim to explore further: co-creation with robots, categorisation of use cases, and the establishment of user profiles. My goal is to ensure that HRI designs are not only functional and user-centred but also sustainable and enduring.

A particularly proud moment was having my paper recognised under the Sustainability Theme, and receiving a nomination for Best Paper in the User Studies Track. This acknowledgment from the HRI community has been incredibly motivating and has reinforced the impact and relevance of my research.

Beyond the academic insights, the warmth and openness of the researchers I met—friendly as kangaroos and as laid-back as koalas—created a welcoming environment that made networking feel natural and enjoyable.

This conference experience has not only expanded my academic perspective but has also reinforced my passion for shaping the future of human-robot interaction through meaningful, user-driven design. I am grateful to the HRI community for this transformative experience and look forward to staying actively engaged in this dynamic and inspiring field.

Meng Wang | Beijing Institute for General Artificial Intelligence, China, TEI '25

Attending TEI 2025 was an incredibly enriching experience, providing valuable opportunities to engage with the global HCI community. Presenting my paper on multimodal large language models for tangible storytelling allowed me to share my research with experts and receive insightful feedback that will help refine my work moving forward.

One of the aspects that makes TEI unique compared to larger conferences like CHI is its intimate scale and strong focus on hands-on interaction. The smaller, close-knit community fosters deeper discussions and meaningful connections, allowing participants to engage more closely with researchers across disciplines. The demos at TEI stand out because of their emphasis on tangible, embodied experiences, reinforcing the importance of physicality in computing. I was particularly intrigued by more and more AI-assisted tangible systems, which align with my current research interests and have inspired new ideas for future projects.

Beyond the academic program, TEI's attention to participant experience is commendable. The thoughtful selection of venues each year—often in vibrant cultural or research hubs—enhances the conference atmosphere. The logistical support, such as free public transportation passes, ensures that attendees can navigate the host city conveniently while enjoying the local environment. These thoughtful arrangements make TEI not just a conference but a memorable experience that blends academic exchange with a welcoming and immersive setting.

TEI 2025 has strengthened my commitment to exploring embodied interaction as a means of fostering creativity and accessibility. The conference reaffirmed the relevance of my research in human-computer interaction and has encouraged me to continue bridging AI, design, and tangible interfaces. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate and look forward to contributing further to this field.

Md Nazmus Sakib | University Of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA, GROUP '25

Attending the ACM GROUP 2025 conference at Hilton Head Island, SC, was an incredible and enriching experience, especially as it was my first time at this prestigious event. This opportunity was made possible by receiving the SIGCHI Gary Marsden Travel Award, which supported my

participation and allowed me to present my work. The conference location was stunning, and Hilton Head Island truly lived up to its reputation. Visiting Coligny Beach and Burkes Beach during my stay added a sense of tranquility, making the trip even more memorable.

At the conference, I presented my paper, "Understanding the Impact of YouTube Videos on Parents of Children with Developmental Delay and Disabilities". This was my first paper in my PhD journey, making the experience even more special. Sharing my research sparked thoughtful discussions and insightful feedback from the audience. It was also my first time experiencing a single-track conference, which created an inclusive and focused environment, bringing participants together and encouraging meaningful discussions.

Two sessions that left a strong impression on me were AI and Design Space and Social Media and Online Communities. The first session sparked my curiosity with its exploration of how AI can be a powerful tool for solving real-world challenges through creative and inclusive design. The second session stood out for its insights into how social media brings people together, offering support and knowledge-sharing while tackling issues like misinformation and accessibility. Both sessions inspired me to think more deeply about incorporating these ideas into my research to make a meaningful impact.

Overall, the GROUP 2025 Conference was an invaluable experience. It provided the opportunity to connect with like-minded researchers, explore new ideas, and learn from some of the best in the field, all against the backdrop of the beautiful Hilton Head Island. Presenting my first PhD paper, made possible by the travel award, was truly memorable. This experience has inspired me to integrate these insights into my work and continue growing as a researcher in this vibrant community.