

Jonathan Grudin



Biography

Jonathan Grudin started out as a Software developer at Wang Laboratories where he became disgruntled with the poor design of groupware. He felt like the “industry was not paying attention”, so he started keeping notes about his experiences. He began writing papers on his findings, and soon his theory caught on. He is now regarded as one of the most cited and prolific theorists in HCI.

His interests today revolve around the impact that instant messaging, weblogs, and social technologies are having on organizations. He is also researching the history of HCI.

Currently, Grudin is working in the Interaction Design group within Microsoft Research focusing on CSCW and K-12 education.

Academia

- Grudin has a PHD in Cognitive Psychology from UCSD where he studied under Donald Norman.
- Professor of Information and Computer Science, UC Irvine
- Visiting Professor: Aarhus University, Keio University, University of Oslo

Important Publications

CSCW

Analysis of why group dynamics and the current design process leads to the success and failure of groupware.

- *Why CSCW applications fail (1988)*
- *Wikis at Work: Success Factors and Challenges for Sustainability of Enterprise Wikis (2010)*

Interface Design

Urge designers to focus on the right behavior for the context, and not follow consistency for the sake of it.

- *The Case Against User Interface Consistency (1989)*

Personas

Why personas are an important tool in software development.

- *Personas: Practice and theory (2003)*

Why CSCW Applications Fail

Grudin highlights three main points as to why CSCW applications fail:

Benefit vs. Workload: Employees, who are required to perform extra work in order to maintain the CSCW application, are often not the same individuals who see the benefits.

Managers Design Systems for Managers: The individuals designing the system, typically managers, naturally design for people like themselves, not realizing the additional work overhead the system will impose on other group members

Learning from our Mistakes: Developers of CSCW systems have trouble learning from their failures. The complexities of these systems make it difficult for individuals to isolate issues for future insight.

What we Can Learn from This: In order to combat these issues, designers need to understand the organization they are designing for; study the way it operates, and recognize the different types of users and their roles. Then they can begin to create a solution that “adapts to the organization,” rather than trying to make the organization adapt to the system.

Six Degrees of Jonathan Grudin

Constance Perin: Recognized the different roles of individuals within systems.

Lucy A. Suchman: Emphasized the need to study users within their environment.

Joseph McGrath: Studied group theory.