

# **SIGACCESS Report to SGB**

**Submitted by: Vicki L. Hanson, Chair**

**September 19, 2004**

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This past year has been one of renewed activity for the SIG. First, there was a change in the composition of the SIG's officers. John Goldthwaite resigned as Chair of the SIG. As a result of this resignation, the ACM SGB appointed Vicki Hanson, Vice Chair, to assume the position of Chair. Jen Mankoff was appointed Vice Chair to fill that newly vacated position. Andrew Sears remained in the position of Secretary / Treasurer. Since their assembly, these officers have a conference call during the first week of each month to discuss the SIG's business and activities.

The most dramatic change this year has been renaming of the organization to more accurately reflect the interests of the current membership. Member communication with the SIG leadership indicated that the interests of SIGCAPH members had evolved over the years to include research and applications not initially envisioned by the SIG founders. To address this issue, a note was sent to members via the SIG's listserv asking for input from the entire membership about their views on the SIG goals and suggestions for a new name. A large percentage of the membership responded. After considering all the input, the name SIGACCESS best reflected the wishes of the membership.

- This change effected the following two changes in the SIG's Bylaws:
  - a. This organization will be called the Special Interest Group on Accessible Computing (SIGACCESS) of the Association for Computing Machinery, Inc. (the ACM); it will be referred to herein as "the Group."
  - b. The scope of the Group's specialty is the application of computer technology to aid persons with disabilities and the promotion of the education, employment, and professional development of computer professionals who have disabilities.
- To coincide with the name change, our new webmaster, Klen Harkness, gave the SIG's website a complete overhaul. The new url for the SIG is <http://www.acm.org/sigaccess/>
- The ASSETS description has changed to *the ACM SIGACCESS Conference on Computers and Accessibility*.
- The name of the newsletter changed to *Accessibility and Computing*.

## **Transition status**

By the time of the March 2005 SGB meeting, we hope that SIGACCESS will have completed the activities needed to move SIGACCESS out of this transition status, qualifying it to hold elections in 2005. The primary activity needed to move the SIG out of

transition is to remove the newsletter backlog. During the past year, progress has been made in this direction. Under the editorship of Alan Creak, three issues of the newsletter have appeared this year and a fourth has been completed and is currently at ACM waiting for distribution. This brings the newsletter current through June'03. Three additional issues of the newsletter are expected by the end of 2004, which would bring the newsletter current through June'04. These three issues include one regular issue (for which the editor has nearly a complete set of papers ready) and the *Proceedings of the ASSETS'04 Conference* which will serve as two issues.

### **Volunteers**

We are finding that there is a ready volunteer pool for SIG activities. This past Spring, Klen Harkness volunteered to serve as Information Director for the SIG and, as mentioned, completely overhauled the SIGACCESS website. Alan Creak will be stepping down as newsletter editor after one more issue so that he can enjoy his retirement. Simeon Keates has enthusiastically offered to take over the newsletter.

### **SIGACCESS activities**

SIGACCESS has been ramping up professional activities this year related to interests of the SIG's members.

- The SIG has applied to ACM to have two awards:

#### **SIGACCESS Best Paper Award**

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Presented to the individual(s) judged by an awards committee to have written the best paper appearing in the ASSETS conference proceedings.

Selection process and administration: Each paper submitted to the ASSETS conference receives at least three reviews by members of the conference Program Committee. The reviewers rate each paper for the significance of its contribution to the field. The paper receiving the highest score receives the award.

Award: The award recipient is presented with a certificate from ACM.

#### **SIGACCESS Best Student Paper Award**

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Presented to the individual(s) judged by an awards committee to have written the best paper appearing in the ASSETS conference proceedings. To be considered for the Best Student Paper Award, the student must be the first author.

Selection process and administration: Each paper submitted to the ASSETS conference receives at least three reviews by members of the conference Program Committee. The reviewers rate each paper for the significance of its contribution to the field. The student paper receiving the highest score receives the award.

Award: The award recipient is presented with a certificate from ACM.

- In November 2003, the SIG was a sponsor of the *2nd ACM Conference on Universal Usability*. The two-day conference was held in Vancouver, Canada and covered a number of topics of interest to members, including aging, universal design, and applications for persons with disabilities. The conference gave two Best Paper Awards:

T. Parikh, K. Ghosh, A. Chavan, P. Syal, and S. Arora "Design Studies for a Financial Management System for Micro-credit Groups in Rural India"

K. Kottapally, C. Ngo, R. Reddy, E. Pontelli, T.C. Son, and D. Gillan "Towards the Creation of Accessibility Agents for Non-visual Navigation of the Web (A Progress Report)"

- This past May, SIGACCESS sponsored the *International Cross Disciplinary Workshop on Web Accessibility 2004 (W4A)* at ACM's WWW Conference. The workshop was cross-disciplinary and brought together users, accessibility experts, graphic designers, and technologists from academia and industry to discuss how accessibility can be supported. The workshop theme was 'Accessible Layout - The Tension Between Accessibility and Visual Design'.
- SIGCHI recently asked SIGACCESS to serve as a partner for the CHI'05 conference. Many SIGACCESS members are also members of SIGCHI and we are looking forward to strengthening ties with this SIG.

### **ASSETS conference**

Probably the most visible activity of the SIG is its biannual conference, ASSETS. This conference, although relatively small in size (averaging about 80 attendees), retains a committed core of attendees and volunteers. Assets 2002 was a successful conference, with high quality papers on a wide range of topics. ASSETS 2004 will be held in October, in Atlanta. The organization of the conference has gone smoothly, papers have been reviewed and selected by the Program Committee, and conference registration is now open. We are looking forward to another exciting conference. Building on the ASSETS'02 initial Doctoral Consortium, ASSETS'04 has received funding from NSF for an expanded Consortium.

A recent e-mail survey of the SIGACCESS members solicited information about their preferences for future ASSETS conferences. There was a very large response to this survey and the SIG officers are currently studying these responses as we plan for future ASSETS meetings.

Finally, the regular SIGACCESS Business Meeting will take place at the ASSETS conference next month.