

SIGACCESS FY'06 Annual Report
July 2005 - June 2006
Submitted by: Vicki L. Hanson, SIGACCESS Chair

This has been an important year of growth for SIGACCESS. The ASSETS conference attracted the largest number of attendees in the conference history and membership in SIGACCESS has been growing. We have worked to get a Special Issue of an ACM journal devoted to Web Accessibility and have expanded dissemination of research and events in the field through our newsletter and website, as well and through partnerships in key activities.

2005 Business Meeting

A SIGACCESS Business Meeting was held at the ASSETS conference in October, 2005. The meeting was well attended. Attendees were updated on SIG activities and discussed activities that the SIG should consider. There was a general consensus that a focus on training young researchers in the area was important. To meet that goal, student activities at ASSETS were encouraged. In particular, it was agreed that it would be of interest to have an ACM Research Competition event at the 2006 conference. In addition, there was considerable interest in having an ACM quality journal on the topic of accessibility.

ASSETS Conference Updates

The highlight of our year was the ASSETS conference. ASSETS'05, held in Baltimore, Maryland, was the first time the conference had been held on an annual basis. Surpassing expectations, not only were there sufficient submissions to provide excellent technical sessions, but conference attendance was the highest in ASSETS history. We were encouraged with this success and look forward to ASSETS'06 in Portland, Oregon, October 23 – 25.

Two ACM Best Paper Awards were presented:

SIGACCESS Best Paper Award: Matt Huenerfauth, University of Pennsylvania, "Representing Coordination and Non-Coordination in an American Sign Language Animation"

SIGACCESS Best Student Paper Award: Stephen E. Krufka and Kenneth E. Barner, University of Delaware, "Automatic Production of Tactile Graphics from Scalable Vector Graphics"

For the second year, the conference featured an NSF sponsored Doctoral Consortium (see http://www.acm.org/sigaccess/newsletter/jan06/Jan06_03.php). This consortium allowed advanced doctoral students to present their dissertation topics and receive feedback. It was a pleasure to notice that some of the Doctoral Consortium students from ASSETS'04 returned to the conference and that Matt Huenerfauth, who received the award for Best Doctoral Consortium paper in 2004, received the SIGACCESS Best Paper Award this year. The Best Doctoral Consortium paper for ASSETS'05 was awarded to Andrea Tartaro from Northwestern University for her work on "Storytelling with a Virtual Peer as an Intervention for Children With Autism". She presented her work at the closing session of the conference.

Publications

Under the editorship of Simeon Keates, our newsletter continues to be up to date and is available on the SIGACCESS website: <http://www.acm.org/sigaccess/newsletter/>. An interesting feature that we hope to continue is the highlighting of research and interests of current SIGACCESS members. The first installment featuring information about members is available in the June, 2006 newsletter.

Also available on the website is the monthly 'left field' column by Simon Harper (see <http://www.acm.org/sigaccess/leftfield/>). This column brings up topics and issues in accessibility that arise from ACM publications that might be out of the mainstream of what SIGACCESS members typically read.

Responding to member interest for an ACM journal devoted on research on accessibility topics, SIGACCESS has been working to establish such a journal. The first step was a Special Issue of the ACM Transactions on Computer-Human Interaction (TOCHI) on the topic of Web Accessibility. There was an overwhelming number of submissions for this Special Issue, for which only a few papers could be selected. Given the demonstrated need for an outlet for high-quality research in this area, the SIGACCESS officers are continuing to work with ACM to establish a journal that would serve the needs of this community.

Other Activities

Recently, SIGACCESS partnered with National Alliance for Access to Computing Careers (AccessComputing) for the purpose of increasing the representation of people with disabilities in a wide range of computing careers, including those in computer science, information systems, software development, computer engineering, systems management and maintenance, and teaching. More information about AccessComputing can be found at http://www.acm.org/sigaccess/newsletter/june06/june06_01.php

SIGACCESS provided financial support for the International Cross Disciplinary Workshop on Web Accessibility 2006 (W4A) at the WWW Conference in Edinburgh this past May (see <http://www.w4a.info/2006/>). The workshop was cross-disciplinary, focusing on the topic of 'Building the Mobile Web: Rediscovering Accessibility'.

