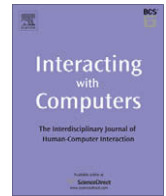




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# Interacting with Computers

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## Editorial

### In Memoriam Brian Shackel 1927–2007

It's hard to say why and even how commemorative issues of established publications such as *Interacting with Computers* happen. Certainly, the larger-than-life stature of especially early, founding agents in a discipline inspires what has been phrased recently (in a far different context) as “shock and awe”.

It's so very easy in hindsight to understand the understandings – the mental models – that progenitors contribute to this current world. All of the pieces seem to fit, intuitively, as if there was no chance for them to have turned out differently.

The fact is that regardless of the field, the early shapers of disciplines are by definition geniuses who, in another very different context, went where no one had gone before. In important ways, this was Brian Shackel – or is, given his continuing influence on Human–Computer Interaction (HCI). It was not at all obvious in his early days that things would turn out as they have.

To some extent, the will to build commemorative issues stems from a sincere appreciation of the contributions that individuals make to an enterprise that so many now find rewarding – and essential. Rather like the respect paid to anyone who has passed, by those who have felt value to being in their lives. But, there's more.

The ability to take a fresh look at the world around us, to integrate insights from a variety of disciplines, and further to act as a catalyst for aggregation of those disciplines, is a rare gift. It is not even the personal effort or intuition that makes this remarkable, but the inspiration.

In a this rather long-winded sort of way, that is the basis for a special issue of *Interacting with Computers* devoted to Brian Shackel, the man and the icon in our field. No doubt with his own human frailties, Professor Shackel is one of a handful who staked out the early years of a discipline that many now believe is central to the technological and social advancement of the human race.

My. Professor Shackel probably would be embarrassed at such accolades. But who among us does not feel that about HCI, at some level? Regardless of the extent that each of us buys into this view, it is undeniable that Brian Shackel was more than a founding father. He was someone who played the role of midwife to the formation of a discipline that is highly relevant to human work, play and well-being in the 21st Century.

## This issue

This special issue of *Interacting with Computers* honors Professor Shackel's contributions by republishing three of his papers, selected from among the scores that appeared during his lifetime. In addition, we are honored to include specially commissioned commentaries on each of these papers by scholars who knew him in one way or another – in some cases, quite well. The intent is not only to honor his work, but also to provide long unavailable histories of our discipline, a context for those going forward and building on the foundations that Brian Shackel had such a large hand in shaping.

Many reading this issue will recognize the names of major contributors to HCI. E-mail addresses for each contributor are included at the ends of their essays. Readers are encouraged to contact any of them, to start an exchange of views about Professor Shackel's contributions.

This is a highly unusual issue of an academic journal. Journals typically provide a venue for publicizing and distributing new research in a field. Instead, this issue consolidates contributions – hopefully in a way that triggers further work to carry on the legacy of Professor Shackel.

Please note that each of Professor Shackel's papers, reproduced here, was published originally elsewhere. Each retains its original copyright and is available here by permission. This issue would not have been possible without the considerable help of Emeritus Professor Ken Eason, Loughborough University of Technology, and Judy Hammond, University of Technology Sydney. They secured the rights to reprint the papers that appear here.

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