

9. Interaction Design

Synopsis

This module provides an introduction to interactive media and interaction design.

Lectures

- 9.1 Interactive Media
- 9.2 Principles of Interaction Design
- 9.3 Some New Directions

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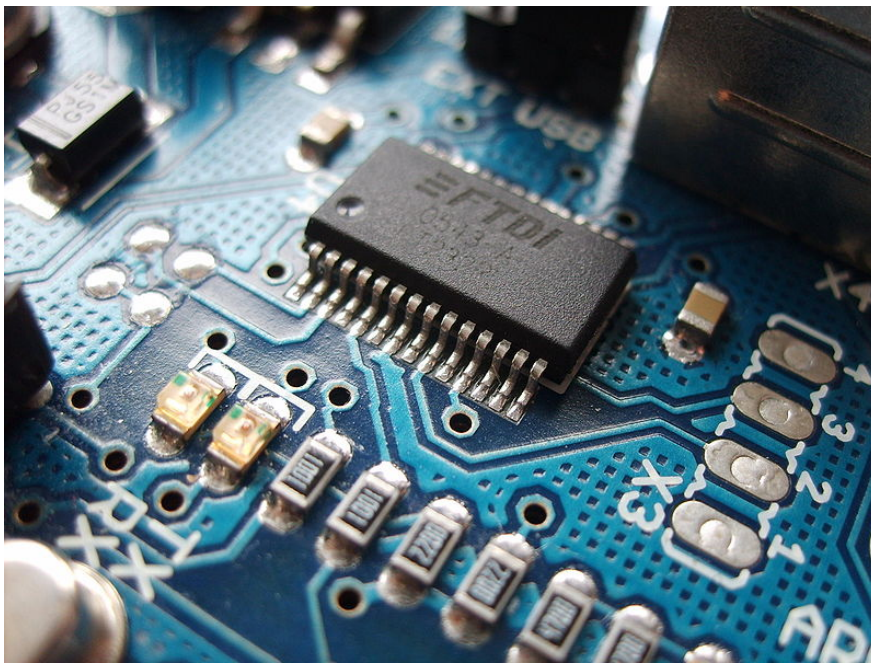


Fig.9.3.01

Nano-sciences are expected to enable the tweaking of parameters at very subtle levels. New and powerful chips are likely to improve drug delivery systems, help in regenerative stem cell research, improve efficiency of solar cells, create new lightweight materials that have the same strength as metals. All of this is likely to fuel new devices and products.

Interaction design can be viewed as an emergent field relevant to the needs of post-industrial societies. Traditional societies such as in India, came into contact with the industrialization process and imbibed it to a certain extent, exhibit characteristics of both industrial, pre-industrial societies. Only a very small segment that benefitted the most may be regarded as post-industrial in the Indian context. The objective of shifting from the design of products to the design of interaction emerges from the understanding that the traditional approach to industrial design has now limited in its usefulness.



Fig.9.3.02

Cell-phone technology is nothing short of a miracle. From the days when a phone call was a luxury and a privilege we have witnessed unforeseen changes in the manner in which people interact with and use cell-phone technology. Not all of it is productive or desirable, but scientific and technological curiosity is likely to push forward in its quest for understanding nature and matter. Till there are collective benefits perceived from such a thrust, outlays and expenditures shall continue to push human enterprise along these lines.



Fig.9.3.03

The one discordant note that appears to have halted the unrestrained march of science is the state of the environment. There continues to be a belief amongst the scientific community that technological innovation holds all the keys. A growing dissent suggests that the fragmented worldview of science needs to recognize more integrally that science is enabled in the context of overall social well-being. Several indicators, both qualitative and quantitative point to the limits of growth and unsustainability of consuming too much too rapidly,

An era of a new science

While interaction design emphasizes user-studies and the sensing of latent needs in societies and communities, it is possibly limited by virtue of restricting itself to technology enable solutions. To understand this shortcoming, it would be in order to respond to the following lines from a letter written to the Prime Minister of India, by a member of the parliament.

"Having worked over the years in the area of river conservation specially river Narmada and having closely monitored the health condition of some of the other major rivers, I earnestly feel that the situation calls for our urgent attention as well as innovative approach.

The river along with its catchment area must be considered a single living entity, and its entire surrounding land, forest, pond, ground water condition, human settlement, different animal species, river bed, river bank, aquatic life, etc. are parameters indicative of its health that must be constantly and annually monitored.

Therefore, I request you that, keeping the magnitude of the issue in mind the government of India should constitute an Indian Institute of River Health and Science, a flagship autonomous institution dedicated towards monitoring the health of all major rivers across India and developing the field of river science as a major thrust area of our efforts towards national growth and well being,"

The concerns expressed here suggest a sensitive appraisal of an existing scenario and a response to a felt need.

If we look at some stated goals of an interaction design programme, we may observe that

"The discipline of interaction design borrows from the theory and the techniques of traditional design, which it merges with theoretical and practical approaches from other disciplines. The result is a gestalt-like synthesis of unique procedures and methods, and of a project-based approach to develop objects, environments and systems."

Clearly, the issue of the health of rivers and a response that helps monitors this should be an area of interest to interaction design. In its current interpretation, it often restricts itself to technological devices and would benefit greatly, if in the future it could look at interaction as something that emerges from the meeting ground between people, policies and philosophies. The earth is in itself an organism and unless we care for the health of the earth, it is evident that the earth can no longer support us.



Fig.9.3.04

An installation by a student of sculpture at M.S.University Baroda. Seen in the context of this module, one may interpret the conference of crows in more ways than one.



Fig.9.3.05

Children in a school situated on the banks of a river. Whatever may be the shortcomings of such a school, one thing is evident. Our disharmony with nature and with our own selves does not in any way alleviate some of the pressing challenges of our times,

References

Norman, Donald A. *The Design of Everyday Things*. New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1998.

Preece, Jennifer et al. *Interaction Design: beyond human-computer interaction*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2002.

Raskin, Jef, *The Humane Interface*. Boston: Addison-Wesley, 2000.

Krishnamurti Jiddu, *Commentaries on living*, KFI, 2003

Exercises

If you equate interaction design with devices, take a walk in a forest and write a 1000 word essay on the sounds of the forest.

