



RusCHI

RusCHI: Past and Present

The Russian HCI movement has a rather eccentric history. Having a long prehistory and deep roots in both academy and industry of the Soviet era, the Russian HCI and usability movement became internationally visible only in 1991 with the fall of the "iron curtain" and the First International Workshop on Human-Computer Interaction held in Moscow. Following the success of this workshop, a series of annual East-West Conferences on Human-Computer Interaction (EWHCI) took place in Moscow and St.-Petersburg in 1992-96. The EWHCI conferences were attended by many brilliant researchers from the West, and the overall quality of presentations was very high. Selected papers from EWHCI '93, '94 and '95 were published by Springer-Verlag in their *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* series. Very positive conference reports for EWHCI '92, '93 and '94 were published in the old *SIGCHI Bulletin*. No doubt, in 1992-95, EWHCI was a world-level forum in the HCI field. And in 1993, Russian local SIG of the ACM SIGCHI (MosCHI, later renamed Russia SIGCHI) was launched and Juri Gornostaev became its first Chair.

However, by the mid-90s, the situation got worse. Forced by destructive "economical reforms", drastic reduction of manufacturing industries, large-scale deindustrialization, and the grave crisis in higher education and science, many Russian researchers and practitioners gave up their HCI-related careers for new sales- and business-related jobs (not

concerned with HCI) that offered higher salaries. The "brain drain" among the Russian HCI community was considerable. 1996 became the last year of EWHCI. Somewhere after that date, Russian SIG turned into period of complete inactivity and the organized HCI movement in Russia collapsed.

This was not the end of the story, however. The new usability community has been formed gradually by February 2001, when the First Russian Workshop on Usability was held in Moscow. It became a regular event, and now the community is preparing to organize the 18th meeting in this series.

As a result of this progress, in September 2004, the ACM officially chartered the RusCHI - the Russian ACM SIGCHI local chapter.

Today, RusCHI consists of 30+ full members and several student members. The group continues conducting the regular series of usability workshops, now under RusCHI's flag. There is an idea to transform these meetings into a conference form, which would allow involving participants from Urals, Siberia and Far East. A more ambitious plan is to resurrect East-West Conferences on Human-Computer Interaction (EWHCI) that would serve as a forum for communication and collaboration of professionals from Eastern and Central Europe with their colleagues from the West.



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In the following sections of this booklet, we present a series of examples of HCI and usability work in Russian academy and business.

Moscow State University, Laboratory of Work Psychology

The Laboratory of Work Psychology (LWP) at the Moscow State University pioneered HCI research in Russia since late-80s. The activities of the laboratory cover a broad range of HCI topics. The focus of the work is research into and development of software systems with a long-term aim of producing commercially exploitable systems. An important feature of LWP is the close relationship that exists between laboratory's research and software industry. Many LWP staff members have industrial assignments in addition to the research tasks within the university.

Examples of laboratory's industry-oriented work include the organization of the usability department at the RTS Stock Exchange; the prototyping of decision support and error prevention system for operators of process industries; and the development of user interface recommendations for frequently interrupted computerized work.

Main directions of the laboratory's work are:

- applied stress research
- human error prevention
- interruptions in human-computer interaction
- eye-tracking analysis

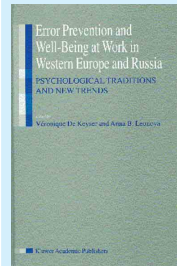
The laboratory maintains a state-of-the-art facilities for HCI/usability research, including all the necessary hardware and software for video-based and eye-tracking research and analysis.



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Laboratory

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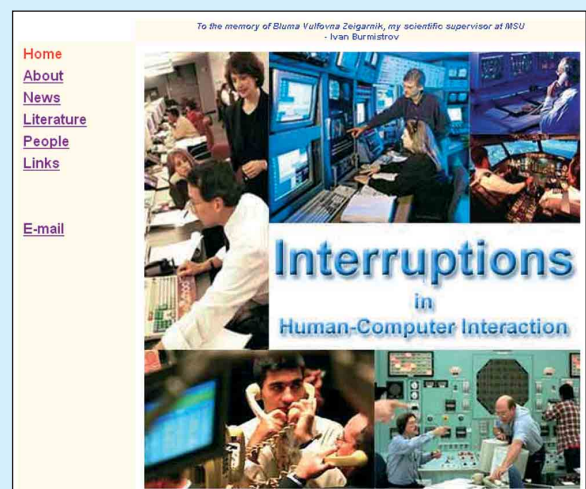
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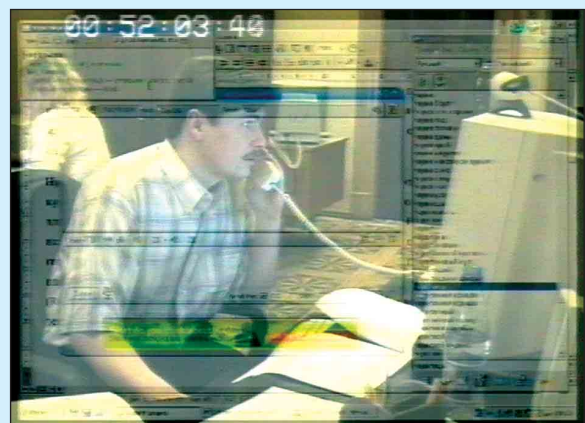
Main publication of the laboratory

V. De Keyser and A. B. Leonova (Eds.)
Error Prevention and Well-Being at Work in Western Europe and Russia: Psychological Traditions and New Trends, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001

The book involves a number of HCI-related materials



www.interruptions.net - the primary web resource on interruption in HCI, a resource maintained by LWP



Phone interruption: a frame from experimental video-protocol



usethics

Established in 2001, Usethics became the first Russian company completely specializing in usability engineering and user interface design. At that time, there were doubts about the possibility of selling "pure" usability services on the Russian market. But three years of Usethics' successful work proved that it is not only possible but also profitable.

The company was founded by Alexander Belyshkin, a researcher at the Department of Psychology, Moscow State University, and Vlad Golovach, one of the leading Russian designers and technical writers. By that time, they had many years of experience in interface design, and had completed a range of major projects, including localization of software for Microsoft, Corel, Siemens, Hewlett-Packard, and Stanford University. Vlad had created and authored the first Russian professional designers' website where many articles on the interface design had been published.

Usethics has earned a solid reputation on the Russian usability services market. Since its foundation, the company has completed over 50 projects for 30+ Russian and foreign companies. Their clients include a number of largest Russian and international companies:

- Rostelecom - the Russian landline and IP telephony giant (NYSE: ROS)
- Vimpelcom - one of the leading three Russian telecommunications service providers (NYSE: VIP)
- Surgutneftegas - one of the largest oil companies in Russia (NASDAQ: SGTPY)
- ITE Group Plc - exhibitions and conferences organizer (LSE: ITE)



Alexander
Belyshkin



Vlad
Golovach

Usethics has completed projects in a range of domains, including:

- CRM and ERP systems
- Internet banking and online payment
- GIS
- Online warehousing
- Web content management systems
- Security systems
- Stock trading
- Billing systems
- Online shopping
- Corporate websites
- WAP sites
- Courses on usability engineering

In addition to projects for the Russian market, Usethics was involved in a number of offshore projects for companies on both sides of the Atlantic.

Usethics: Clients

- Rostelecom
- Vimpelcom
- Surgutneftegas
- DeltaLeasing
- ITE LLC Moscow
- WildBit
- Dealine, IBS Group
- Race Communications
- Playfon
- Yandexn

Usethics: Services

- Usability Testing and Evaluation
- Usability Testing support services
- Screen Design
- Interaction Design
- Information Architecture and Design
- Software Localization
- Guidelines and Specifications Preparation

