

Editorial

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For this third issue in the 22nd year of i-com we have selected a current topic in the field of HCI: **(the) Metaverse**.

The term is not completely new – coined by the author Neal Stephenson in his 1992 novel “Snow Crash” – but was hyped by Mark Zuckerberg in 2021 when he renamed his company from Facebook, Inc. to Meta Platforms, Inc.

The vision of a Metaverse is that screens vanish from everyday life and virtual content will be where it is needed – either in the physical reality or in virtual worlds. So, a Metaverse is a combination of virtual worlds and augmentations of the real world. Compared to isolated VR and AR applications, a Metaverse goes further and links the virtual and augmented worlds with each other and with reality. Additionally, a Metaverse is a social medium in which people are represented as digital avatars and can interact, communicate and collaborate. Finally, a Metaverse has its own economy, where real people can buy virtual goods and services with real money or perform work for real pay.

In the article “There’s more than one Metaverse” Florian Buchholz, Leif Oppermann, and Wolfgang Prinz try to contextualise the term and thereby offer an orientation for readers from different industries. Based on a review of past and present activities, the authors provide a definition of the term Metaverse and apply this definition to analyse different application scenarios.

A more practical view of what can be done in a Metaverse is provided in the short case study report “Industry goes Metaverse – The fusion of real and virtual industrial worlds exemplified by the wastewater industry”. Tomas Cerniauskas and Dirk Werth present a recent project in an industrial setting.

From the scientific field of AR and VR Sebastian Kepler and his co-authors present in “Self-touch: An Immersive Interaction-Technique to Enhance Body Awareness” a new interaction technique in XR that allows the self-touch

of the own body in immersive environment to support therapy procedures. In addition to an expert evaluation to analyze the potential impact of the application the authors also discuss technical challenges such as stable and accurate body tracking.

For providing more information and for enabling discussion on the topic of Metaverses, we are planning to utilize the new web site of the journal. At <https://i-com-journal.org/metaverses/> you have the possibility to add information and links that might be of interest for the HCI community. You might also comment on the articles published in this issue – particularly on the view presented by Buchholz et al. in their overview article. Together with articles published in future issues of the journal this might evolve in a living knowledge base on the topic.

In addition to the contributions around the topic of “Metaverse”, we have collected some interesting articles on other topics in the field of HCI for this issue of i-com:

In “Time Related Changes of Affective Dimensions and Distinct Emotions in an Interaction with a tablet PC” Stefan Brandenburg and Robert Spang report on an experiment that tried to discover how long positive or negative affective states influence interaction with a table PC over time. The findings suggest that only few emotions may be causal for peoples’ ratings of general affect. Results also indicate that negative emotions may help people executing standard tasks, in contrast to positive emotions.

And finally, in “Design and Implement a Mobile-Based System to Teach Traffic Signs to Illiterate People” Zainab Alfayez presents the design of a mobile application targeting illiterate users. This research of the author aimed to reduce the digital gap between illiterate and literate people in Iraq through developing a mobile application for learning traffic signs. The article presents a requirement elicitation study, derives several design principles for the type of application, presents the design of an application and a small evaluation of the developed application.

Thank you for picking up this third issue of Volume 21 of i-com – Journal of Interactive Media. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Michael Koch (Editor-in-Chief).

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