

SEMINAR

Dr. Austin Henderson

Principal, Rivendel Consulting, La Honda, CA.

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2:30-3:30 pm

Goodwin Hall 524

**Design for the Unanticipated**

We deploy our applications for use in worlds that change, and in places not anticipated by their designers. As a result, our applications do not - and, in principle, cannot - anticipate all the circumstances in which they are used. Yet the user must cope with every single circumstance that they confront, and they must find some way to bring the application to bear on those situations. This talk is derived from a keynote given at ECCE2008 (the European Conference on Cognitive Ergonomics). It explores some thoughts and challenges concerning the resulting inevitable misalignment between the user's needs and the application's capabilities. It explores three kinds of solutions: fixes (changing the application), work-arounds (going "outside" the application), and appropriations (going to school on other cases). The resulting socio-technical systems (humans and applications working together) can address circumstances unanticipated by the applications. The implication for HCI designers and developers is that we must challenge ourselves to design applications that support, not only the circumstances that we anticipate, but also the systems that people adopt for dealing with circumstances that we have not anticipated.

Austin Henderson has been in the field of Human-Computer Interaction since 1964. He has a B.Sc. in Mathematics from Queen's University, Canada, an MS in Computer Science from the University of Illinois, and a Ph.D in Computer Science for MIT. He has built applications in areas including manufacturing, air traffic control, electronic mail (Hermes), user interface design tools (Trillium), workspace management (Rooms, Buttons). He has done research and user interface architecture for Xerox at both PARC and EuroPARC, and for Apple Computer, and industrial design with Fitch. Until March, 1997, he managed the Discourse Architecture Laboratory in the Apple Research Laboratories. In addition to being a principal in [Rivendel Consulting](#), Austin is a co-founder of [Pliant Research](#), a research consortium exploring the theory and practice of computing systems that move beyond the formal. Professionally, Austin has been active in [ACM/SIGCHI](#) since 1983, including as conference chair (1985), and organization chair (1989-1993).