

Guest Editorial Preface

Special Issue on Academia-Industry Partnerships in User Experience

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User experience (UX) is a rapidly developing community of practice. Its exciting evolution is driven by and will continue to drive the transformation of a service-oriented, digital economy. The discipline of user experience, in the academia, is still nascent. On one hand, we must embrace the diversity of our field as its practice flourishes in all directions. On the other hand, we must bring together these efforts to create a coherent discipline that meets the industry's increasing demand for talent. Developing the UX discipline calls for creative and compelling ways to collaborate with the industry. The challenges we face offer exciting opportunities. For instance, how do our curricula and programs keep pace with fast changes of UX concepts, methods, and tools? How can we effectively fulfill both the academy's goal of education and industry's goal of talent acquisition? What conceptual frameworks can we adopt to guide academia-industry collaboration? How can academia-industry partnerships create positive changes in UX pedagogy? What innovative approaches and models help us accomplish these goals?

This special issue seeks to foster the crucial conversation about academia-industry partnerships in UX. It demonstrates relevant theories, effective approaches, and best practices from concrete projects. In "Transitioning from technical communication to User Experience (UX): A case study of a collaborative curriculum redesign," Tammy Rice-Bailey and Nadya Shalamova apply the Stakeholder Theory in their collaboration with industry partners. They classified stakeholders internal and external to the Technical Communication program, and adopted the agile product development method in their iterative interaction with stakeholders. This collaboration led to their program's change from Technical Communication to UX and Communication Design. The models and lessons they present have considerable potential for the technical communication and UX community.

In "Establishing academic-industry partnerships: A transdisciplinary research model for distributed usability testing of software installation artifacts," Amber Lancaster and Dave Yeats use a transdisciplinary model in a collaborative usability study between a large research university and a software company. In criticizing the conventional approach to "usability testing" in Technical Communication, the authors consider usability researchers, user participants, and other key stakeholders as co-investigators. They systematically incorporate these co-investigators' participation and their diverse expertise. In particular, this approach allows user goals and needs to substantially shape usability research. The result is a win-win situation that fulfills the goals of both the academic and industry partners.

In "Industry innovation and classroom constraints: Infusing real-world UX into the university classroom via iFixit's Technical Writing Project," Brittany McCrigler and Martin Rippens offer industry insights on a service learning project, the Technical Writing Project (TWP) at iFixit. Widely

adopted by many universities, the TWP creates a student-centered, hands-on learning environment. The authors present best practices that help bridge the academia-industry divide in user experience.

The conversation on academia-industry partnerships in UX is exciting and necessary. As technology and business practice evolve dramatically, this conversation will diversify and deepen. It is my hope that the articles of this special issue greatly contribute to paving the path to a UX discipline where both academic and industry partners provide mutually beneficial insights and leadership.

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