

CHIFOO 2004 Speaker Series

Human Development and Technology
in the Information Age

Wednesday, October 6, 2004

Whose Line is It Anyway: Innovation, Ethnography, and Improv

Series Overview

The adoption of all things Internet has raised America's love affair with technology to a fevered pitch. No area of our daily lives is untouched by the rapid changes in technologies, but few are as important to our long term financial and developmental health as education. In this 10-month series, CHIFOO invites psychologists, educators, researchers and technologists to provide insight into the rapidly changing landscape of technology and learning. This wide-ranging series examines technology in the classroom, in brain development, and in adult and community education.

Each talk showcases a technology in the context of the learning objectives for a defined audience. Speakers also present the methods they used to evaluate the effectiveness of the technology.

This series is a must for students, educators and professionals interested in specific technologies, and the role technology can play in creating effective and appropriate learning experiences.

Leo Frishberg, CHIFOO Program Chair

Steve Portigal

Customer researcher Portigal looks at two not-usually-combined-or-even-discussed-together approaches to direct experience: the theatrical activity of "improv" and participant-observer user research. As the "learner", he shares some of his process and technologies for "learning."

Improv is not "stand up comedy." It's a series of games-with-rules that offer freedom within a set of constraints. In these games we bring out a lot of basic, quickly understood and communicated rules of culture that are implicit, not explicit. We see people's relationships to products, to each other, and to current events. Improv is also a process for exploring collaboration at its most fundamental level - the co-creation of ideas.

Participant-observation has interesting similarities to improv. Both are in-the-moment processes where you learn upon reflection; there's enormous unspoken collaboration; and they involve a great deal of advanced "listening." What our respondents say contrasts with how they say it and what they are doing, and what we see in the environment. This kind of listening is an advanced skill that takes some developing. Improv can be a useful training activity to play out some of these research scenarios indirectly, to enhance and hone our listening skills, and to develop a core technology of participation-observation research. The improv is approach draws from literature in anthropology, as well as communication studies.

Finally, with improv, there is often an "aha" moment. As performers without a script, we learn to "look for the ending" and know when to conclude. We do participant-observation research to create and achieve new insights and see new patterns, a different kind of "aha."

In this talk, the you will learn more about improv, about participant- observation, about listening, about context, and, of course, how these things all fit together and can be used and experienced.

Time and Location

- 5:30 PM CHIFOOD
No-host dinner & informal networking
Old Chicago Pizza (Tanasbourne)
17960 NW Evergreen Pkwy, Beaverton
- 7:00 PM PreFOO: Networking and social time
- 7:30 PM CHIFOO Program
PCC Capital Center Auditorium
Room 1508
18524 NW Walker Rd at 185th Ave,
Beaverton

Admission \$5

- Members free
Membership \$20

Check the CHIFOO web site - www.chifoo.org -
for updates and further information.

Steve Portigal is a customer research consultant based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He started out as a computer scientist but was soon drawn to the interactions between people and technology. Eventually, he widened his focus to the relationships between people and "stuff" - the products, companies, consumers, media, and advertising that flow through our culture. It is Portigal's belief that companies must understand these relationships in order to succeed. Portigal carries an impressive portfolio of clients including: Hewlett-Packard, Palm, Sony, NestlÉ, and Rubbermaid, to name just a few.



CHIFOO (ky-foo')

Computer-Human Interaction Forum Of Oregon

The Oregon and Southwest Washington chapter of ACM SIGCHI facilitating the exchange of practical and theoretical ideas about human-computer interaction.

