

# Cynthia Putnam

College of Computing and Digital Media  
DePaul University  
235 Wabash Street  
Chicago, IL , 60604

206.310.6273  
cputnam@cdm.depaul.edu  
<http://www.cyputnam.com>  
Citizenship: United States Citizen

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## Education

### **PhD Human Centered Design & Engineering, 2010**

University of Washington | Seattle, Washington  
Human Centered Design & Engineering

Thesis title: Bridging the gap between user experience research and design in industry.

An analysis of two common communication tools: personas and scenarios

Advisors: Dr. Beth Kolko and Dr. Jennifer Turns (co-chairs)

### **M.S. Technical Communication, 2006**

University of Washington | Seattle, Washington

### **B.S. Industrial Design, 1984**

University of Washington | Bellingham, Washington

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## Research Interests

I am interested in human-centered approaches to design. My framework for this field is informed by over ten years of working as an information architect and interaction designer prior working towards the PhD. Specifically, my research has been concentrated in two areas:

- (1) Adaption and use of human-centered design (HCD) methods in design for diverse communities.

I have directly investigated: (a) children with autism and their families/support structures; (b) technology use and diffusion in Central Asia; (c) attitudes and behaviors regarding water usage in the Andhra Pradesh region of India.

- (2) Bridging the design/research dialogue gap which entails improving how designers access, utilize and integrate user research in their work; this is the central theme of my dissertation.
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## Publications

### **Articles Appearing in Refereed Archival Journals**

Putnam, C., Johnson, E. Rose, E.& Kolko, B. (2010). Design for Inclusion: Lessons learned in Central Asia. Special Issue of Personal and Ubiquitous Computing. (This paper was accepted. We are currently re-writing per reviewer comments).

Putnam, C., Johnson, E. Rose, E.& Kolko, B. (2009). Adapting User-Centered Design Methods to Design for Diverse Populations. *Special HCI4D Issue of Information Technologies and International Development(ITID)*, 5(4), 51-73.

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Walton, R., Putnam, C., Johnson, E. & Kolko, B. (2009). Skills Are Not Binary: Nuances in the Relationship Between ICT Skills and Employability. *Special ICT Skills and Employability Issue of Information Technologies and International Development (ITID)*, 5,(2), 1-18.

## **Fully Refereed Conference Proceedings**

Putnam, C. and Kolko B. (2010). The Social Meaning of ICTs: Patterns of Technology Adoption and Usage in Context. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*, ICTD 2010, London, UK, December 13-16.

Anderson, R.E., Brunette, W., Johnson, E., Lustig, C., Poon, A., Putnam, C., Salihbaeva, O., Kolko, B.E., & Borriello, G. (2010). Experiences with a Transportation Information System that Uses Only GPS and SMS. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*, ICTD 2010, London, UK, December 13-16.

Putnam, C and Kolko B. (2009). Getting Online but still living offline: the complex relationship of technology adoption and in-person social networks. In *Proceedings of Advances in Social Networks and Mining*, ASONAM '09, Athens, Greece, July 20-22, 33-40.

Putnam, C., Rose, E., Walton, R. & Kolko, B. (2009). Mobile phone users in Kyrgyzstan: A case study of identifying user requirements for diverse users In *Proceedings of IPCC 2009*, Honolulu, Hawaii, July 20-23, 2009.

Kolko, B. & Putnam, C. (2009). Computer Games in the Developing World: The Value of Non-Instrumental Engagement with ICTs, or Taking Play Seriously. In *Proceedings of International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development*, ICTD '09, Doha, Qatar, April 17-19, 2009, 46-55.

Putnam, C. and Chong, L. (2008). Software and technologies designed for people with autism. In *Proceedings of the 10th Annual ACM Conference on Conference on Computers and Accessibility*, ASSETS '08, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, October 13 - 15, 2008, ACM Press, New York, NY.

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## **Presentations**

### **Invited talks and lectures**

"Bridging the gap between user experience research and design: An analysis of personas." Puget Sound SIGCGI, Seattle, Washington (scheduled) March 25, 2010.

"Using the data you have for persona creation." Presentation and workshop designed for a graduate class in Computer-Assisted Communication, University of Washington, January 2010.

"Design for Inclusion: Using Familiar Methods for Unfamiliar Contexts." Presented with Emma Rose and Beth Kolko as part of the seminar series: "Current Issues in Human Centered Design & Engineering", University of Washington, January 2010.

### **Conference Presentations**

"The Social Meaning of ICTs: Patterns of Technology Adoption and Usage in Context." ICTD 2010, London, UK, expected December 13-16, 2010.

"Getting Online but still living offline: the complex relationship of technology adoption and in-person social networks." *Advances in Social Networks and Mining, ASONAM '09*, Athens, Greece, July 20-22, 2009.

"Software and technologies designed for people with autism." *Conference on Computers and Accessibility, ASSETS '08*, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, October 13 - 15, 2008.

## Posters

Birge, C., Putnam C., Kolko, B. 2010. Online Privacy Perception in Central Asia. In *Proceedings of the 6th Symposium on Usable Privacy and Security*, Redmond, WA, USA, July 14-16.

Kolko, B. and Putnam, C. "Computer games in the Developing World". Change conference, University of Washington (October, 2009).

Putnam, C. and Kolko, B. "Modifying methods for persona creation". Change conference, University of Washington, (October, 2009).

Rose, E. J., Putnam, C. and Birand, G. "Designing for Digital Inclusion: Investigating social networks within resource constrained environments." *Society for Technical Communication: University of Washington Research and Design Showcase* (May 2007).

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## Academic Experience

**Assistant Professor:** Fall 2010 to present  
College of Computing and Digital Media  
DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois

### Teaching DePaul University

**Design for Inclusion (HCI 511):** Autumn 2010.

HCI 511 is a graduate level course concerned with technologies that (a) are designed to include a diverse range of end users and (b) are specifically designed for people with alternate skills. As human-centered designers and researchers, we need to consider diverse technology users; i.e. as technology expands beyond applications rooted in the western work office, the user base for technologies will include greater number of diverse users. Specifically, in this class we will (a) examine how technology currently addresses the needs of users with physical or cognitive limitations, children, and the elderly, and (b) consider new technologies or modifications to existing technologies that might better address these users' needs.

### University of Washington

**Introduction to Communication Design (HCDE 311):** HCDE 311 is a junior level class which guides students through many commonly used software packages in the field of technical communication. The students were expected to create artifacts in each software package from a user-centered perspective culminating in a web-based professional portfolio they wireframed, designed, and coded.

**Technical Writing and Oral Presentation (HCDE 333):** Instructor of record: 2007  
HCDE is a junior and senior level engineering class in which students learn about the design and production of professional documents and presentations they might be expected to create in the workplace.

**User-centered web design (HCDE 525):** Teaching assistant: 2008  
HCDE 525 is a graduate level course that teaches students how to create user-centered standards-compliant web sites using CSS and XHTML.

## Research

**University of Washington:** Research Assistant

Central Asia + Information & Communication Technologies: 2007-2010

I project managed and participated in this research group which was focused on investigating internet, mobile phones, and related technology developments in the region:

- Collaborated in coding ethnography data from study participants.
- Conducted extensive quantitative statistical analysis of a data-set created by a yearly survey of 1000 participants in four Central Asian Countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan).
- Created prototypes for products/services ideated from research.
- Performed usability testing for research-based products.
- Created personas, high level scenarios and user requirements for mobile-based service.

College of Engineering: 2007

Created the Information architecture for the college's current web presence:

- Led several focus groups and created multiple online surveys for the college's diverse user groups to determine their website needs.
- Created a web-based prototype for usability.
- Designed and managed and performed usability testing.

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## Industry Experience: Research

**User Experience Researcher:** Microsoft/Xbox games group (contract): 2010

Research support for the Xbox/games group:

- Experimental design and data analysis to attain requirements and answer product team research questions.
- User requirements in the form of wireframes and written reports.
- Designed, conducted usability studies and analyzed the resulting data.

**Research Consultant:** PATH - Safe Water Project / Gates Foundation grant: 2008-2009  
Statistical analysis of survey data. Respondents from the Andhra Pradesh region of India were questioned about behaviors and attitudes regarding safe/clean water including collection and storage.

- Analysis resulted in several synopses in the form of visualizations and persona-like summarizations.
- Consulted on methods for an additional user research to assess usability issues of current water systems by placing existing products in people's homes.

**Data Analyst:** Valid Concept: November 2008  
Statistical analysis of usability survey data collected by Nokia.

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## Industry Experience: Design

**Sr. Art Director:** True North Consultants Inc. (Hasbro Corporation): 2004-2007

Flash games and web sites supporting Hasbro's toy brands including My Little Pony, Furby and G.I. Joe. Responsibilities included both the visual and interaction design of Flash games, web sites, illustrations and animations in 2D and 3D. Managed outside vendors and internal designers through multiple projects.

**Designer/3D Animator:** Microsoft Corporation : eHome Group (contract): 2004

Collaborated on the 3D user interfaces for the multiple devices available in Microsoft's "Home of the Future". Responsibilities included working with internal developers and outside vendors, managing and creating assets in 3D Studio Max for use in the live presentation engine, and creating videos in After Effects for the linear portions of the demonstration.

**Product Designer:** Microsoft Corporation : Works Group (contract): 2002- 2003

User interface/ product design of the task launcher for Works Suite 2004. Created all final art and icons. Working closely with the usability engineer, I created several DHTML and Flash prototypes for usability studies. Developed a design documentation specification site. Created Flash Created Flash Product Tours, including all Interaction design and managed all localization through use of XML driven text content.

**Senior Product Designer:** Pacific Edge Software: 2001 - 2002

User interface and interaction design for the company's web-based project and portfolio management software products. Created HTML and Flash prototypes for internal usability testing and sales. Responsible for all design, art, icon illustration, and style guide documentation.

**Designer/Creative Director:** Cendant Corporation: 1997-2000

**Co-owner/Creative Director/Manager:** enVision Design, Inc.: 1994 - 1997

**Senior Design Manager:** Color & Design Exhibits (now Exhibit Group): 1987-1994

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## Awards

Outstanding Female Graduate Student Award:

University of Washington Society of Woman Engineers, Department of Human Centered Design & Engineering, 2007 and 2010

Excellence Award: Puget Sound chapter of the Society for Technical Communications.

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## Service and Community

### Memberships

- Professional memberships
  - Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
  - Puget Sound SIGCHI
- University memberships (University of Washington)
  - DUB: (Design, Use, and Build) is an interdepartmental HCI association at the University of Washington.
  - Change: Change explores how technology can improve the lives of underserved populations in the developing world

## Department and University

### University of Washington

- BRIDGE program co-organizer (2009).
- Provided housing for visiting potential PhD students (2009).
- Demonstrated the department's usability lab and eye tracking system for high school students considering the College of Engineering (2005 & 2006).
- Created the logo, identity, and multiple web-based and print materials for the department to support the department's name change from Technical Communication to Human Centered Design & Engineering (2009).
- Created all posters and printed materials for the SIGCHI conference identity of DUB (2008 & 2009). Dub (Design, Use, and Build) is an interdepartmental HCI association at the University of Washington.

## Community

- University of Washington's Experimental Education Unit (EEU) where I worked with children with autism (2006-2007).
- Bellevue Youth Theatre, where I designed and created sets/props with theatre participants. The theatre has an inclusive philosophy and is committed to working with both typically developing children and children and adults with disabilities (1997-2002)

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## Software

SPSS, ATLAS ti., Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, After Effects, Flash, Director & Dreamweaver, Newtek Lightwave 3D, Discreet 3D Studio Max, Alias Wavefront Maya.