

How to Ensure Diversity and Inclusion at Conferences

A Workshop for General Chairs, Program Committee Members, Reviewers and Authors

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ABSTRACT

Being the premier forum for automotive user interface research and other vehicular technologies, AutomotiveUI concerns professionals, academics, researchers, and industry representatives from all around the world interested in innovation, research, and application of automotive user interface topics, embodying diversity at its core. This diversity is however not always reflected in the conference's main program. In order to expand the topic foci of the conference in the future, this workshop aims to identify the key factors that influence the main program creation, and create strategies that can help increase its diversity and accessibility, culturally and geographically. We aim to exchange ideas, experiences and start conversations that raise awareness about this topic, in order to inspire longer-term follow-up activities which will eventually result in increased diversity and accessibility not only at AutomotiveUI, but at international conferences in general.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Social and professional topics** → **Cultural characteristics; Geographic characteristics; Race and ethnicity; Age; Gender.**

KEYWORDS

Inclusion; Diversity; International conferences

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Oxford dictionary defines diversity¹ as a “range of many people or things that are very different from each other”, and inclusion² as “the fact or policy of providing equal opportunities and resources for people who might otherwise not get them, for example, people who are disabled or belong to minority groups [4].

Being the premier forum for automotive user interface research and other vehicular technologies, AutomotiveUI concerns professionals, academics, researchers, and industry representatives from all around the world interested in innovation, research, and application of automotive user interface topics, embodying diversity at its core. However, when looking at the conference's main program from the past five years, over 87% of all full papers come from only five countries³ (please see Figure 1), which has risen from over 80% in the years from 2016 – 2018 [3].

There are multiple potential reasons for these statistics. Initially, the conference was envisioned as an annual event, which would take place at locations interchanging between Europe and the

¹<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/diversity>, last accessed June 7, 2023

²<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/inclusion>, last accessed June 7, 2023

³Based on the affiliation of the first author

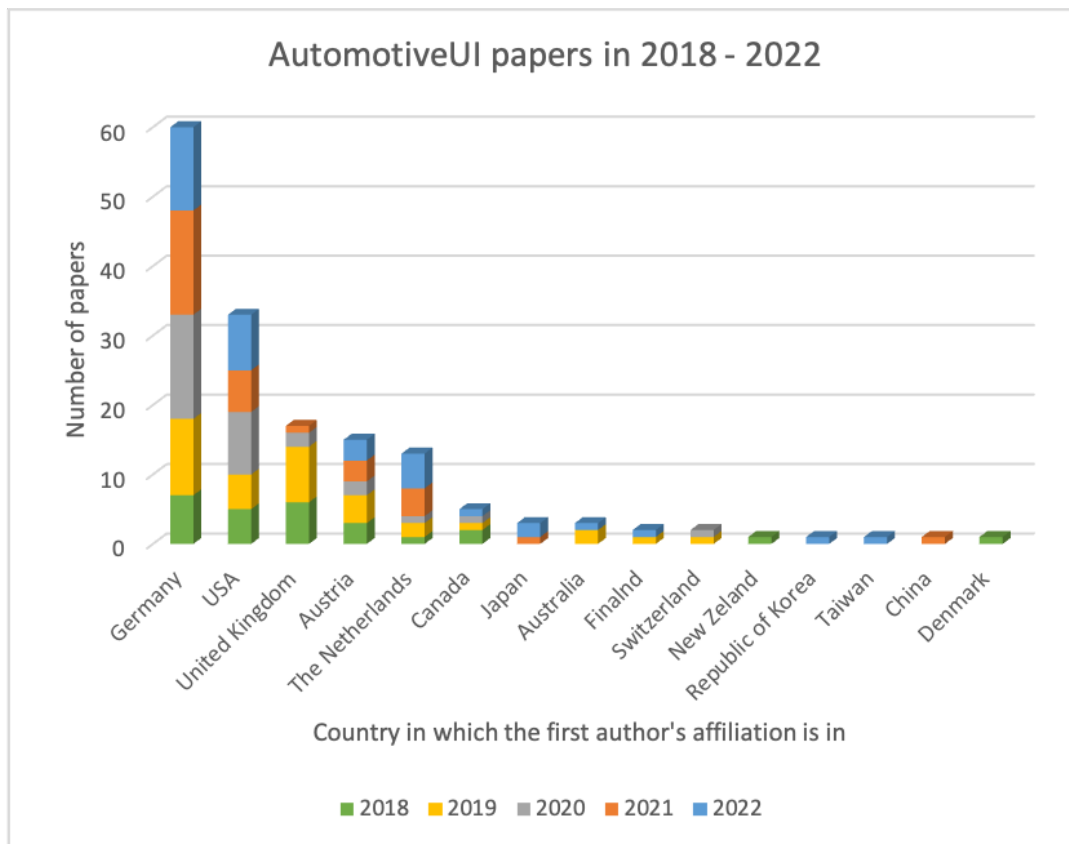


Figure 1: Number of papers featured in the main proceedings of AutomotiveUI by country from 2018 until 2022, based on the affiliation of the first author

United States of America. This could have contributed to obtaining a higher number of submissions from countries from Europe and North America. Furthermore, Germany and the USA have a very strong automotive industry, and are one of the leading developers and producers of vehicles in the world. In addition to academia, this could have attracted a higher number of submissions also from the industry from these two countries. Lastly, the highest number of accepted submissions come from countries where AutomotiveUI has actually taken place in, suggesting the interest in the conference could have been influenced through the years and also by the location of the event.

As it moved to position itself as the leading conference for automotive user interfaces and other related vehicular applications, AutomotiveUI has become a point of interest far beyond Europe and the USA, attracting paper submissions and attendees from Africa, Asia, Australia and South America. Unsurprisingly, as countries such as China, Japan, Republic of Korea and India also have strong vehicular industries, which could benefit from learning about the latest scientific and research breakthroughs in the automotive world, and also contribute to the diverse discussion. However, as presented in Figure 1, this interest increase was not reflected in the conference’s main program, which features only full papers. Instead, the presence of authors from these regions is only notable in the

conference’s adjunct proceedings (Work-in-progress, Workshops, etc.). This discrepancy between the **increase in the number of attendees and submissions** on one hand, and still extremely **low number of accepted papers** featured in the main program on the other hand, has stimulated conversations that have motivated the proposal for this workshop. Although an important topic, at this point, we would like to note that this workshop does not, at least not primarily, focus on addressing economic factors influencing accessibility. Instead, we focus our discussion around the low number of papers coming from countries outside Europe and the United States – the number of representative papers from these countries did not increase despite the increase in the attendees coming from all over the world. In addition, no change was evident in the paper ratio during the online editions of AutomotiveUI during the COVID-19 pandemic, which was available at relatively low registration costs compared to regular fees and further eliminated travel costs usually associated with attendance.

2 MOTIVATION AND WORKSHOP GOALS

Since 2015, AutomotiveUI is an ACM SIGCHI conference, and as such follows a reviewing policy [2], which is built upon the SIGCHI submission and review policy [1] striving to follow a process that

enables obtaining high quality paper reviews. As the program creation begins with the review process, we took a look at the paper submissions coming outside of (the top contributing) EU countries and the USA that have been rejected in recent years, to try to understand why they were not deemed appropriate for presentation at the conference.

Within the reviews, in addition to the standard validity, originality, significance comments – which argue the final acceptance rejection recommendation – we noticed that several of them also featured comments in the lines of:

- study conducted with simulator with “low” simulation fidelity,
- comments about the appropriateness of the applied methodology, when it was different from the considered “standard” ones,
- the clarity of the paper is low due to poor use of English grammar or style of writing,
- the study does not provide enough cultural background to understand specific variables being measured,
- the study was conducted with low number of participants,
- only qualitative variables and data were observed and collected,
- etc.

When looking at the authors of paper submissions that have received these types of comments, we found that they were usually from lower-income EU countries, Asia, South America or from authors/work groups with cultural backgrounds not commonly represented at AutomotiveUI or submitting to the conference for the first time.

Because of this, the conference’s main program seems to feature similar topical foci and work groups throughout the years. Although this does not necessarily lower the quality of the program or its relevance to the automotive domain, it does contribute to missing out on ideas stemming from other cultures. It further lowers the conference’s main program diversity and reduces the possibilities for presentation of new ideas and novel methodological, design and development approaches. It also limits the possibility for the presentation of culturally specific research and contributions to science on a geographically smaller or even local level. The goal of this workshop is to address these issues, in order to ensure AutomotiveUI is valid and relevant beyond the Central Europe and USA umbrellas.

2.1 Goals and Foreseen Outcome

The goal of this workshop is to identify the key factors that influence the main program creation, and create strategies that can help increase its diversity and accessibility, culturally and geographically. We aim to exchange ideas, experiences and start conversations that raise awareness about this topic, in order to inspire longer-term follow-up activities which will eventually result in increased diversity and accessibility not only at AutomotiveUI, but at international conferences in general.

2.2 Participation

To achieve the workshop goals, we invite participants from different cultures and backgrounds, and from low- or unrepresented

countries in the past editions of the main proceedings at AutomotiveUI. As decision makers, who actually create the main program, we also invite past and future conference’s organizing committee members, especially general and program chairs, program committee members and reviewers. Lastly, we invite authors to share their experiences but also learn more about the process, which can increase their chance for getting their full paper accepted. To achieve the desired outcomes, we aim to attract at least 35 participants representing, ideally in similar ratios, each of the identified groups of interest.

3 WORKSHOP ORGANIZATION

The workshop is envisioned as an organized four-hour collaborative discussion. It will begin by welcoming participants and introducing the workshop goals (15 min). In the first part of the workshop, we will present the obtained insights from past years and invite participants to share their experiences from AutomotiveUI and other related international conferences to obtain a better understanding about the issues concerning lack of diversity and accessibility in conferences’ main programs (60 min). After a short coffee break (15 min), the next part of the workshop will ask participants to join in a brainstorming session to come up with ideas for potential solutions on how to overcome the identified issues and suggest strategies on how to improve the diversity and accessibility of international conferences (60 min). If needed, we will group the participants into smaller groups to foster discussion on:

- (1) How to create a conference program? Define directions and directives that ensure diversity and inclusion, such as dedicating a session for:
 - qualitative assessment
 - papers with local/national impact or significance
 - papers that specifically address the inclusion of underrepresented groups of perspectives, methods, cultural backgrounds, etc.
 - new/young authors
 - exploratory studies
 - etc.
- (2) How to enhance the reviewing instruction on the protocol for reviewing a paper, such as:
 - try to assign reviewers from different countries/continents per paper,
 - focus on the positive aspects and what the paper brings to the general, or a specific, community,
 - go beyond the language and style of writing, and any similar things that can be improved with proof-reading or other technical help,
 - try to understand the rationale behind a new method, and ask for additional explanations that could make it understandable on a global level,
 - focus less solely on the number of participants featured in a user-study. Avoid tendency of accepting/rejecting papers based on the number of participants rather than acknowledging the kind of people in a study,
 - pay equal attention to how well the statistical analysis was done and how much results help to answer the research question, as the latter can be of the same (if not

higher) importance when assessing papers that focus on qualitative methods/results,

- etc.

After the brainstorming session, each group will be asked to prepare a summary of tips and instructions they would like to see in practice in the future (30 min), and invited to present their findings at the workshop (30 min). The workshop will be finished with a closing session in which we will focus on the identification of steps and initiatives, which should be/will be undertaken, to promote the implementation of the findings from this workshop into the organization process of future AutomotiveUI editions and international conferences in general (30 min).

4 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The foreseen outcome of the workshop is a list of ideas, approaches and strategies for increasing diversity and ensure inclusion. A short summary of the outcome will be presented during the conference's planned "Stepping Stone Panel for Global AutomotiveUI" event to foster a discussion among panelists and the audience. All of the obtained results will be used for the preparation of a white paper to be presented to the AutomotiveUI steering committee and other decision-making bodies (e.g., ACM SIGCHI CSCC) that can influence the creation of the main program of future editions of this and other related conferences. Followed by further explorations and discussions among interested parties, the authors aim to present the outcomes also in an open access journal publication, to raise awareness beyond this conference.

5 BIOGRAPHIES

Kristina Stojmenova Pečečnik is an Associate Researcher at University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Electrical Engineering, focusing on in-vehicle human computer interaction. She has been involved in AutomotiveUI in different capacities since 2015.

Seul Chan Lee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering at Gyeongsang National University. His research goal is to explore users' needs and requirements, evaluate system artifacts, and improve systems and devices better based on HF, Ergonomics and HCI theories and methodologies.

Sara Hong received her M.Sc. degree in automobile and IT convergence from Kookmin University, Republic of Korea in 2021. She is a Ph.D. student at Kookmin University.

Martina Schuß is a research fellow and PhD student at Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt. Her approach incorporates a feminist standpoint, focusing on inclusion and utilizing participatory design methods.

Hatice Şahin Ippoliti is a PhD candidate at the University of Oldenburg.

Ankit R. Patel is currently a doctoral student associated with the University of Minho, Portugal. He has been involved in the IEEE ITEC, AFRICON, e-Science and ACM IMX, AutomotiveUI. His research interest includes travel behavior and policy, human factors and interactions, socially inclusive transportation, and transport psychology.

Andreas Löcken is a postdoctoral researcher in the HCI group at the Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt (THI). His research focuses on ambient displays for human-computer interaction in general and specifically on the interaction between automated vehicles and their passengers as well as unprotected road users outside them. He has been involved in the organization of AutomotiveUI in various capacities since 2014.

Debargha Dey is a postdoctoral researcher at Cornell Tech, and has been involved in the CHI, MobileHCI, and AutomotiveUI communities for 8+ years.

Andreas Riener Andreas Riener is professor for Human-Machine Interaction and Virtual Reality at Technische Hochschule Ingolstadt (THI) with co-appointment at the CARISSMA Institute of Automated Driving. He served as steering committee co-chair of AutomotiveUI until 2022, is general co-chair of AutomotiveUI 2023, and is chairman of the German ACM SIGCHI chapter.

Alexander Mirnig is a Scientist at the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology, Center for Technology Experience. He has extensive experience in researching the interaction between humans and automated vehicles, with a specific focus on transitions between manual and automated driving modes, trust in technology, and machine ethics. He has served in the organizing committees for AutomotiveUI since 2019 and CHI since 2022.

Myoungcheon Jeon is an Associate Professor of the Department of Industrial and Systems Engineering and the Department of Computer Science at Virginia Tech. He has been involved in AutomotiveUI since its beginnings in multiple roles, and has served as the diversity and inclusion co-chair in 2019 and 2020, and as a General Co-chair in 2022.

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