Practice-based Design: Some Syntheses

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Talk to be followed by opportunity for an "unconference-style" discussion until 12:00 noon. Refreshments will be available.

Co-sponsored by the School of Informatics, co-located with the Participatory Design Conference.

ABSTRACT

This talk will draw from interdisciplinary research at Xerox PARC beginning in the 1980s, in a series of projects that joined ethnographies of work and technologies-in-use with design interventions. Our ethnographic approach is exemplified in an early research project within a particular workplace which led, among other things, to a reconceptualization of what makes up an ‘information system’ that informed all of our subsequent efforts. The latter turned increasingly to interventions aimed at developing what I characterize here as a program of practice-based design, combining elements of workplace ethnography and cooperative prototyping in an expanding repertoire of generative iterations across system design and use.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lucy Suchman is Professor of Anthropology of Science and Technology in the Department of Sociology at Lancaster University and Co-Director of Lancaster’s Centre for Science Studies. Before taking up her present position she spent twenty years as a researcher at Xerox’s Palo Alto Research Center, where she was a founding member and Manager of the Work Practice and Technology area. Her research includes ethnographic studies of everyday practices of technology design and use, as well as interdisciplinary and participatory interventions in new technology design. Her recently published book Human-Machine Reconfigurations (Cambridge University Press 2007) includes an annotated version of her earlier Plans and Situated Actions. The sequel adds six new chapters, examining relevant developments since the mid-1980s both in computing and in social studies of technology. She served as Program Chair for the Second Conference on Computer-Supported Cooperative Work in 1988, and for the first Conference on Participatory Design of Computer Systems in 1990. More information about Dr. Suchman is available from her website at http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/sociology/profiles/31/.