IS Department Seminar

“Re-envisioning Software Help and the Post-Deployment User Experience”

Speaker: Parmit Chilana
Ph.D. Candidate
The Information School, University of Washington

DATE: Monday, February 4, 2013
COFFEE: 2:15-2:30
TIME: 2:30-3:30
LOCATION: GITC 1403

ABSTRACT
Millions of users seek help to troubleshoot software, learn new functionality, or find application-related information every day. Although many approaches for technical help have been developed over the last three decades, few users find them helpful. In this talk, I will describe how I designed and deployed a new selection-based crowdsourced contextual help retrieval system called LemonAid that allows users to find relevant help in an application by selecting a label, widget, image or other user interface element. The retrieved questions and answers are authored not only by support staff, but also by other users. I will also present the design and architecture of LemonAid and show how it works for web applications. Next, I will discuss LemonAid’s field deployment on 4 different web sites used by thousands of users and how I collected data over several weeks through usage logs, exit surveys, and interviews to assess LemonAid’s helpfulness, usability, and reuse value.
Lastly, I will highlight other studies that I have carried out in industry and biomedical research settings that reveal the social and organizational aspects of how modern software systems are designed, and how organizations can better support users after deployment. I will conclude by discussing the idea of “usability maintenance” within the field of human-computer interaction that focuses on learning from users’ intentions and actual interactions with software.

BIO
Parmit Chilana is a PhD Candidate in Information Science at the University of Washington (UW), specializing in human-computer interaction. Parmit draws upon a variety of methods in her research—from designing and building novel systems to using qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate user needs, assess tool adoption, and study organizational processes. For her dissertation, Parmit invented LemonAid, a new selection-based crowdsourced software help retrieval approach for web applications and carried out a multi-site deployment study to evaluate LemonAid in the field. Parmit has also collaborated with several researchers in the Biomedical and Health Informatics department at UW, Autodesk Research, and Facebook to look at the social and organizational aspects of how software systems are designed and how organizations can better achieve user-centered design. Parmit was a recipient of Canada’s SSHRC Doctoral Award in 2009 and Facebook’s inaugural PhD Fellowship in 2010. She received her MS from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and BSc from Simon Fraser University, and worked at Princeton University before starting her PhD.