Assistance, Assistants and Assistive Media.

Barriers and Interfaces of Digital Cultures

01 - 03 JULY 2021

Assistance, Assistants and Assistive Media.

As digital devices and automated systems are becoming more and more ubiquitous, human-machine interactions are mediated through a growing number and variety of interfaces.

This constellation of machines 'helping' humans is sometimes referred to as an act of (technological) assistance. While the term "assistive technology" is usually reserved for (high and low tech) devices devised for people with sensory, cognitive or motor disabilities, the terminology of technological engineering seems to have a broader meaning: here an "assistive system" (Assistenzsystem) is any computer based device or programme that supports any user in successfully completing a specific task. Consequently, from an engineering point of view, the need for assistance is relational as well as temporary, since it only emerges from a specific (media) environment.

This view resonates with statements from scholars within disability studies who point out that most technology – especially the "smart" kind – is assistive in principle, so it seems unnecessary to qualify certain devices as assistive but others not (see for example Katherine Ott).

Taking this perspective as a point of departure, this conference focuses on the investigation of software, hardware, interfaces and devices as mediators of barriers. It aims at an understanding of technological assistants in general and assistive technologies in particular as 'assistive media' – media that intervene in an already existing technological environment and add an additional level of mediation to the human-machine interaction.

THURSDAY 01 JULY 2021

02:00-03:00pm **Welcome Note & Introductory remarks**
03:30-05:30pm **Panel 1 Assistance and Control** [Chair: Karin Harrasser]
        Martin Siegler: Assisted Attention. Exploring the Dead Man's Switch
        Beate Ochsner & Markus Spöhrer: "When everybody plays, we all win":
        The Microsoft Adaptive Controller as a socio-technical 'Node' for ‚Normalization'
07:00-08:00pm **Keynote** by Mara Mills: Switchboard Automation and the Disability History of 0s and 1s

FRIDAY 02 JULY 2021

02:00-04:00pm **Panel 2 Assisting environments** [Chair: Anna–Lena Wiechern]
        Athanasios Karafillidis: Creating Environments for Support.
        Interfacing Exoskeletons with Physical Bodies in Technology Development
        Felix Hüttemann & Monique Miggelbrink: Living-environments as assistive environments?
05:00-07:00pm **Panel 3 Assisted standardization** [Chair: Wolfgang Hagen]
        Dylan Mulvin: Living Proxies: The Standardized Patient Program
        Philipp Hauss: The machine that meditates for you

SATURDAY 03 JULY 2021

02:00-04:00pm **Panel 4 Assistance in visualization** & planning [Chair: Jan Müggenburg]
        Paula Muhr: Interactive Anatomical Brain Visualisations as Assistive Interfaces in fMRI
        Yana Boeva & Ann-Kathrin Wortmeier: Un/Intended Notions of Assistance in Architecture
        and Construction: Amplifying Power Disparities
05:00-07:00pm **Panel 5 Assisted conversation** [Chair: Philipp Sander]
        Robert Stock: Assisted Writing and Writing Assistants
        Renée Ridgway: What is the Art in Artificial Intelligence
07:00-07:30pm **Closing discussion**

For more **information and registration** please contact: AssistiveMedia@leuphana.de