include 2005

A community of purpose

As companies seek a better understanding of their customers, designers explore more user-centred methods and educators introduce social issues into the curriculum, the time is right for inclusive design.

That was the encouraging message to emerge from the third Include conference held at the Royal College of Art, 5-8 April 2005, which was attended by 170 delegates from 19 different countries (up from 14 in 2003).

In paper sessions, poster presentations, workshops, panel discussions and design stories, the mood was clear: business, the design profession and academia are all gearing up to create a more inclusive future in which empathy with users of all ages and abilities holds the key to commercial success and social equity.

The industry response in particular featured strongly at Include

2005 with a breakfast briefing by five Japanese corporations, members of the dynamic International Association of Universal Design, one of the highlights of the conference.

Another well-received innovation was the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge with the Design Business Association, which demonstrated the commitment of professional designers to the cause.

The presence of researchers from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, UK and USA revealed what a global phenomenon the inclusive design movement has become in recent years.

The task now is to build on the sense of energy and initiative generated by Include 2005 and continue to press for change in the way we design our world.

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Energy boost

Alastair Macdonald, Chairman of the Scientific Committee, reflects on a vibrant conference mood

In the four years since the first Include in 2001, a relatively intimate affair has grown into a substantial and mature international community with a real and measurable impact. Include has refused to adopt a stereotypical conference format and instead has striven to evolve itself and engage the communities with which it must ultimately work.

The pace and variety of events right from the start energised Include 2005. Through the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge, the delegate number was doubled for one evening, creating a forum of mutual interest. The Japanese industry breakfast briefing saw a refreshing openness in revealing, through case studies, both the business case and the processes and methods used to develop and take inclusive products to market.

The well-established inclusive design communities such as in the UK, Japan and US, have their distinctive cultural differences in approaching the same agenda, but we more seasoned campaigners need be mindful of those first-time delegates from other countries who have been enthused by Include and who need help in making their own contribution to this global challenge. A refreshing break in tradition was the chairing of sessions by the very capable younger members of the community, rejuvenating the discussion.

The quality of information and papers has improved greatly due to the twofold rise in abstract submissions in the past two years. Nearly

Overheard at Include 2005 ....

"Their return on investment was 11,000 percent"
Nina Warburton of Alloy explains why mainstream business is embracing the inclusive approach

"There is nobody in the design profession who wouldn't benefit from being a carer"
Keynote speaker Michael Wolff sums up the Challenge

"Normal methods aren't open to us - you can hardly assemble ten racists, for example, in a focus group to tell us why they're racist"
Pat Jordan in his Stop the Abuse workshop reflects on the lessons for countering prejudice against people with disabilities

200 abstracts were submitted to Include 2005. User involvement was both implicit and explicit throughout. So many different kinds of resources, techniques and toolkits have now been developed and are being used to improve the quality and efficacy of designs. In Britain, the RSA's inclusive design website has scored over 400,000 hits in little over six months, demonstrating the need for and value of this type of resource for education.

Understanding the relationships between academia, design practice, business and the users themselves are vital for all engaged and the conference showed that there is now a greater appreciation of each other's views and values. The maintaining of the quality, integrity and value of research is essential as a means to generate new tools and try new processes.

Academia often has the time and research funding to develop new models and data, complementing the rapid techniques required by design in the commercial setting. Industry is increasing engaged as a result of persistent advocacy. At Include 2005, the Faraday Packaging Partnership provided an exemplar of the research-design-consumer-industry partnership required.

The feeling now is one of involving all the key players, moving out of their respective bubbles, across and into new territories.

"In redesigning the game of draughts, we discovered our users wanted to be able to eat the game as well."

Dierdre Figuiredo, Craftspace Touring, is inspired by the lateral thinking involved in co-design with young disabled people

"If any of our clients are in the audience, we don't normally do things this quickly"

Adrian Berry of Factory Design panics at the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge

"It is gratifying to hear views and attitudes held by me for forty years being energetically promulgated by a new generation who are better equipped and able to promote them than I ever was or ever will be."

Bill Green, University of Canberra

Compiled by Graham Moore

Tough talking

In the 35 years I've been focused on creating universal solutions for the lifespan needs of all consumers as equals, there has been one constant barrier to progress. The culprit? Language. The words we use to describe the subject, the way we define the people we serve, and the pejorative labels that perpetuate the bias, the prejudice.

Our proceedings for Include 2005 speaks to this issue with numerous references to the disabled, the elderly and the handicapped. And while we are well-meaning in referencing these good people as such, I would argue that we are inadvertently adding to the confusion.

By setting aside a consumer on the variable of age or ability, we are essentially relegating individuals to a secondary status and a presence outside of the whole. True, when we assign 'Special Seating' for the 'Elderly and Handicapped' on a bus or tram, we are trying to be gracious and good. The shame of the thing is that diminished civility requires this service at all.

But, as designers, we best lead by example and so it is essential that we say what we mean. When designers insist on describing people as either 'young' or 'old' and 'able-bodied' or 'disabled', we create conflicting camps and reduce resources for all. We all have an age. We each have some level of ability. Regardless, we are all consumers in need of the choice and control that provides for our quality of life.

So, let us consider and perhaps agree, that the best business practice we can adopt is to refer to our efforts not as 'Design for the Elderly' or 'Design for Disability', but simply as 'Design'.

Patricia Moore
Moore Design Associates USA

4 Awards

The Include 2005 Scientific Committee made four special awards at the conference for personal contributions to the growth of inclusive design

Lifetime achievement

Maria Benktzon, partner of Ergonomidesign in Sweden, was given a special award for lifetime achievement in inclusive design.

Maria has worked on accessibility issues as an industrial designer for more than 30 years. Her general approach has been to incorporate features into products that will help people with disabilities, applying an inclusive design approach. Ergonomidesign is one of Scandinavia's largest and most renowned industrial design consultancies.

Maria was an early practitioner of user-friendly design based on ergonomics in the 1970s and blazed the way as a pioneer in this area. Before Include 2005, she was previously honoured with the first Ron Mace Memorial Designing for the 21st Century Award.

Professional design leader

Adrian Berry, Co-Founder and Creative Director of Factory Design in London, was given a special award for his leadership role in advancing an inclusive approach in professional design.

Adrian worked at design firms Pentagram and Seymour Powell before co-founding Factory Design in 1997, a consultancy with transport, product and packaging design at its core. Factory has designed for international companies including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Singapore Airlines, Remington, Ronson, Rexel, Yamaha and Ford.

Adrian Berry has won awards with D&AD and the Design Business Association (DBA). He sits on many industry judging panels and advises for the Design Council. Over the past five years, Adrian has actively promoted inclusive design to his fellow design industry practitioners through committed support for and participation in the DBA Design Challenge - a scheme that Factory has entered twice, once with an easy-to-open milk carton and once with a range of user-centred cookware.

International development

Keiji Kawahara, Executive Director of the International Association for Universal Design in Japan, was presented with a special award for his work in international development.

A Royal College of Art graduate in industrial design, Keiji is President of KIDStudio Corporation and Executive Director of the International Association for Universal Design (IAUD). He has devoted himself to study of design for people with disabilities for nearly 30 years, and as a professional industrial designer his aim has been to make all products human-centred. Some typical examples of his work include Clock for the Blind, House for Wheelchair Users, Barrier-free Kitchen, ATM for the Blind and Platform Safety System.

Keiji Kawahara organised the International Conference for Universal Design in Japan 2002. He has since achieved significant results within the world of business by building up the IAUD network of more than 130 Japanese companies, including major corporations such as Toyota, Toshiba and Panasonic. The IAUD network is now having an impact at an international level.

Work in design education

Alastair Macdonald, Head of Product Design Engineering at Glasgow School of Art, received a special award for his individual contribution in design education.

Product Design Engineering at Glasgow challenges the traditional approach to mechanical engineering education and has provided an exemplar for other programmes in the UK and around the world. It tackles issues from a human-centred point of view: human factors and aesthetics are as integral as engineering and science.

Alastair lectures and publishes widely, particularly in human factors, inclusive design and future technologies. He has spent time working in design education in Japan. He has voluntarily chaired the Scientific Committee for all three Include conferences – 2001, 2003 and 2005 – and has made a major input to their planning and growth, bringing design educators and academics together with designers, users and manufacturers within a single global forum.

INNOVATION – JAPAN

Concerted industry action

Japanese manufacturers gave their European and American counterparts an urgent wake-up call on the need to address demographic change with a coordinated show of strength at the conference's first Breakfast Briefing.

Representatives from five Japanese companies – Fujitsu, Matsushita Panasonic, Oki, Toshiba and Toyota – presented under the banner of the International Association for Universal Design (IAUD) Although the products they discussed varied greatly from bone induction mobile phones and accessible websites to tilted-drum washing machines and disability-friendly cars, their overall message was unanimous.

Ageing population trends that will see a quarter of Japanese people aged 65 or over by 2014 cannot be ignored by those seeking to lead tomorrow's consumer markets. The only way forward is to develop a more inclusive offer and Japanese companies are determined to make it happen at the practical level of product development.

What struck delegates was not only the range of impressive work now reaching the market but the relative youth of many of the Japanese presenters, indicating that a new generation of designers and managers are leading the charge in inclusive design and are willing to share their methodologies openly with the international academic community.

INNOVATION – PACKAGING
Wheel turns for change

Fed up with food packaging that is impossible to open? Things could be about to change as big brand owners wise up to the potential of inclusive pack design techniques to get closer to the consumer.

That was the message from the second Breakfast Briefing led by the Faraday Packaging Partnership, an R&D network which brings academic and commercial experts together to generate new tools, techniques and thinking in the area of consumer packaging. One such tool has been developed with Faraday by Katherine Gough (top) of the Helen Hamlyn Research Centre: a design wheel to be used in conjunction with video ethnography. This practical tool can be used by designers and marketers to measure the inclusiveness of different aspects of the pack's performance, from in-store display to decanting and disposal. Its scoring system graphically demonstrates exactly where the pack is failing or satisfying the user.

Nestlé and Coors Brewers are currently piloting the design wheel on new pack projects and representatives from those brand-leading companies spoke eloquently on the priority to understand and address the needs of the widest market.

Brand, packaging and product, we learned, are now so intertwined that the cost-driven packaging industry can no longer resist user-centred design strategies. Could it be that at last the wheels of change are turning for frustrated consumers?

INNOVATION – DISABILITY
Listening to people

Could the hearing aid emulate spectacles and make the leap from medical aid to fashion accessory? That is the aim of the Hear Wear project, initiated by Blueprint magazine and the RNID (Royal Institute for the Deaf) and involving 15 leading international designers in rethinking the future of hearing.

Hear Wear was showcased at the third Breakfast Briefing, which focused on how engagement with disabled users can be a catalyst for creativity and innovation. As Graham Pullin of IDEO, one of the Hear Wear participants, explained: "Disability is an inspiring territory for designers as new constraints lead to new thinking."

The potential market for new hearing products is massive - there are 67 million people with hearing problems in Europe and America - but investment in new ideas by industry has been puzzlingly low, as Henrietta Thompson of Blueprint and Neil Thomas of the RNID (see above right) explained. Hear Wear displays its prototypes at the Victoria & Albert Museum in July – let's hope the manufacturers are receptive.
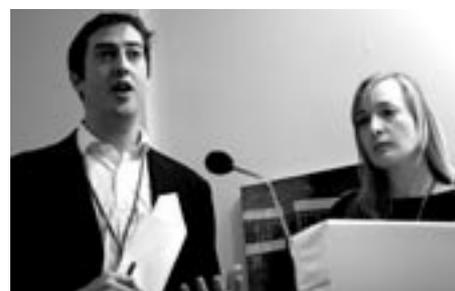
From navigation devices to modular luggage and rubber platform gap-fillers, five dedicated design teams worked all night to come up with the goods

Fast-track designing

The myth that user-led design is a long and tortuous process was comprehensively dispelled by the five dynamic projects that resulted from the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge.

In just a single night and day, with the help of lots of caffeine, chocolate, red wine and adrenalin, five volunteer design teams drawn form the ranks of Design Business Association members succeeded in developing and presenting inclusive design concepts related to improving the lives of older and disabled people who use public transport.

One Tuesday evening at the RCA, the design teams were given the brief and sent off to brainstorm with expert users. Just 24 hours later, exhausted but exhilarated, they were standing on stage at Imperial College to present the results and submit their design work to an audience vote.

According to British design guru Michael Wolff, the keynote speaker at the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge who toured the design studios as the projects took shape, the entire process was a revelation. "Today I've seen five groups of people behaving more like human beings than designers," he told the conference. "They've really gone outside the designer bubble and listened to other people's needs. "

Winner of the popular vote on the night was the team from Applied Information Group (AIG), led by Tim Fendley (above), worked closely with visually impaired user Matt Brown to develop a wearable navigation device called Babelfish. This gives sonic clues and feedback in large transport termini and forms part of a wider service accessed via internet and mobile phone. The AIG team expertly adapted existing technology to create independence for all and the strong branding and plausible business case for the service helped to sway the crowd.

Other entries also nailed the brief with flair and insight. A team from Factory Design developed The Footprint, a modular system that integrates the carrying and handling of bags within mass transit systems, thus taking the lug out of luggage. Fraserdesign gave us MyBuzz, a smart ticket holder that uses vibration to warn and inform when you've reached your stop on bus or rail.

A team from Sky Interactive bravely ditched all their broadcast technology and went back to basics to create a simple sketch presentation for Bridge-it, a gel-filled rubber device that plugs the gap between vehicle and platform or kerb. Bridge-it was conceived not simply as a functional element for inclusive transport but as a piece of public art.

Finally, Team a go-go produced the PET (Personal Excursion Ticket) which allows travellers to access plug-in services for independent travel.

Will these user-centred transport proposals, conceived and visualised in just 24 hours, ever fly? According to Jon Sparkes of cerebral palsy disability organisation Scope, which sponsored the Challenge, the key thing about the whole event was that the projects reflected "tangible business opportunity". Let's hope transport operators are as fast on the uptake as the designers.

How has Include 2005 moved the debate forward? Five conference participants reflects on the key themes and the opportunities that lie ahead

Advancing on all fronts

Bill Green, conference chairman, University of Canberra:
At Include 2001, we were aspirational. In 2003 we consolidated and identified a clear need to expand further into the business world. This conference has been quite different. The obvious differences in format – the elevation of the poster presentations, the 24 Hour Inclusive Design Challenge and so on – are symbolic of a more profound change and one that is overwhelmingly positive.

The emphasis on innovation and the presence of global players such as Toyota and Toshiba presenting their inclusive design credentials is an indication of the way design is developing, so that inclusivity and profitability are inextricably intertwined.

Roger Coleman, conference host, Royal College of Art:
We have seen some remarkable advances since Include 2003: inter-

nationally, with the establishment of IAUD, the achievements of Japanese companies; nationally, with a new British Standard in inclusive design management, and cerebral palsy Charity Scope's inclusive design initiative; in the sheer quality and diversity of research and design projects presented at the conference; and in the passion, commitment and enthusiasm of the delegates.

I believe we are at a tipping point, when we move from building a community and knowledge base to engaging in a rich and rapidly expanding collaboration with industry. This will bring new challenges, but I think we will only learn from these.

Tali Rosen-Shoham, first-time delegate, Technion- Israel Institute of Technology
Include 2005 has allowed me first and foremost to discover and meet professionals from around the globe who are passionate about the same approach to design as me. A wealth of ideas, methods and perspectives have fuelled both my knowledge and enthusiasm - I can't wait to take some of the ideas back home and examine their implementation in a different cultural context. To me, this is much more than a professional conference - it is a true experience, strengthened by a family-like atmosphere.

Patrick Jordan, Contemporary Trends Institute, UK:
 What has encouraged me most about Include 2005 has been the number of people I have spoken to who are using inclusive design techniques in their professional practice.

From the conversations I have had, what has also become apparent is that many of us are 'sneaking in' inclusive approaches without making it explicit to our employers or clients.

As someone who has been using this approach for years, I am very heartened to see so many big corporations openly extolling the virtues of an inclusive approach. Emboldened by the examples we have seen here, I feel it is time to 'come out of the closet' – to champion the virtues of inclusive design and win over sceptical clients.

Steve Wilcox, Design Science, Philadelphia, USA
The conference gets better every time, the quality of work has improved, there are more designers involved, and the level of professionalism just keeps rising. There are two areas that need addressing. The first is the bias by funding bodies and academia towards research at the expense of its practical application. This means the emphasis is always on doing more research rather than translating the results into usable tools or products.

The second area is that all the wonderful research carried out is not being made accessible to practitioners. We need more seamless interdisciplinary collaboration between the design and research community – and the Include conference helps.

Keep in touch for Include 2005 at the Royal College of Art, London, UK
www.hhrc.rca.ac.uk