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# Mobile UX – The Next Ten Years?

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**Overview**

Mobile phones are the ubiquitous platform used by billions of people globally, every day. However, two concerns signal a pause for reflection and change. First, while mobiles have rapidly become indispensable, the effect that constant device use has on our lives, our experiences, and the interactions we have with others, has caused growing discomfort [4, 7]. At the same time, there is a broad sense that mainstream mobile devices have fallen into a period of innovation limbo, with recent releases seemingly being distinguished only by ever narrowing feature gaps. As a recent Economist article bleakly reports, “*More black rectangles made their debut*” [2].

This course will challenge attendees to play a part in reinvigorating mobile interaction design. We celebrate the success that is apps, services, and the hugely popular ecology of mobile devices, but want to promote a return to radical innovation.

We have been fortunate enough to have collaborated with a broad range of industrial and academic researchers and practitioners over many years. More importantly, however, we have worked with a wide range of people who are not considered to be typical “future makers,” and are also not usually considered

when designing mobile user experiences. Typically these people—who have been called “emergent” users [1]—are often drawn from developing regions, with lower literacy, lower socioeconomic conditions, and other constraints. Our experience in working with these people has demonstrated how their unique and contrasting outlooks on both technology and the world and ways of seeing it are invaluable in generating radically new and exciting digital innovations.

### **Learning outcomes**

Attendees who take this course will have their perspectives and methodological palette transformed in a number of ways, as it:

- Provides new and innovative ways to think about mobile design.
- Includes critique and analysis of potential future mobile interfaces and interactions, complete with real-world examples of how today’s mobile devices and services can be improved.
- Assesses existing mobile devices and apps to show clear paths of development, allowing attendees to design devices for the future.
- Explains methods and practises to support ideation and future-focused design work.

### **Intended audience**

The course will appeal to a broad audience:

**Students** who want to get a motivating and comprehensive overview of state-of-the-art research ideas and practises for mobile user experience.

**Industrial and academic researchers**, who will gain a new perspective on mobile interaction, and

be provoked to rethink the attitudes they currently have toward mobile user experience.

**Designers and developers**, who will expand knowledge of potential end-user contexts, and learn how to prepare for user experiences of the future.

There are no course prerequisites except a desire to expand mobile UX design to engage with everyone. We will give a thorough introduction, describing our methods, and those of others, across a range of disciplines. The breadth of examples and hands-on activities will demonstrate the rich and exciting outputs that can be generated from such approaches.

### **Schedule and activities**

**Introduction:** Scene setting, celebrating how far mobile user experience has come, but questioning the wisdom of the current design, interaction and contextual focus that has become the norm.

**Activity:** Based on what we have now, what do participants think the world of mobile UX holds ten ahead? How would they do things differently?

**New perspectives:** There will be two strands to this session: the first will address a range of technologically-driven questions to stimulate thinking about mobile UX, while the second will seek provocations and inspirations from non-digital contexts.

**Technological questions:** A range of questions will stimulate this session. For example: How will conversational speech system change the mobile user experience? What is the role of wearable and on-body interaction? What would happen if no screens were available? What would happen if

we could much more easily and fluidly share each others' devices? What would happen if the mobile device could morph or change its shape or form?

**Provocations and inspirations beyond digital:**

What can worlds such as the following tell us about the experience of life, and how can that enhance future mobile thinking? The world of food; The world of fitness; The world of fashion.

**Activity:** Imagining the future, based on the provocations that have been presented so far, what can participants now imagine? How would they change or refine their current approaches to open up their user experiences more widely?

**Methods and techniques to extend future-making:**

In this part of the course we turn from provocations to methods, techniques and contexts that can drive new forms of interaction. In particular, we will be studying our own experiences of intensive cross-continent ideation and development. We will further demonstrate how these processes have driven new forms of mobile experience which can benefit users globally.

**Conclusions:** Drawing the material together, summing up, and any further questions from attendees.

**Instructors**

**Simon Robinson** is a researcher in the Future Interaction Technology Lab at Swansea University, UK. His work so far has focused on mobile technologies that allow people to immerse themselves in the places, people and events around them, rather than just in their mobile devices. In the past few years his emphasis has turned toward developing similarly face-on user experiences with and for people living in

resource-constrained communities in regions such as India and South Africa. More at [simon.robinson.ac](http://simon.robinson.ac).

**Jennifer Pearson** is a researcher at Swansea University, UK. Her early work involved utilising light-weight HCI techniques to create improved interactions for digital reading devices and apps. More recently, she has focused on creating appropriate interactions and services for emergent users, exploring how best to support those with lower-literacy, poor technology exposure and sparse access to power, data-connections or other vital services. More at [cs.swan.ac.uk/~csjen](http://cs.swan.ac.uk/~csjen).

**Matt Jones** is a Professor of Computer Science and Head of the College of Science, Swansea University, UK. His research focuses on human-centred computing, with a particular emphasis on mobile and ubiquitous computing, and resource-constrained communities. His work in these contexts has been recognised by an IBM Faculty Award and a Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Award. More at [undofuture.com](http://undofuture.com).

**Additional resources**

The course draws on material from the instructors' books, *"There's Not an App for That: Mobile User Experience Design for Life"* [6], *"Mobile Interaction Design"* [3] (both co-authored with the late Gary Marsden) and *"Designing for Digital Reading"* [5].

See also the course website for further information and resources: [www.mobileux-next.com](http://www.mobileux-next.com).

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