

EXECUTIVE EDITOR'S NOTE

Nurturing a Living Sculpture BY CHARLES B. KREITZBERG

On the coast of California you can find the extraordinary twisted trees known as the Monterey Cypress.

When the seeds sprout in the coastal soil, no one can guess how the trees will grow. Braving relentless winds and salt spray, the saplings twist into fantastic shapes, growing into unique and beautiful living sculptures.

Like the cypress, this first issue of *User Experience* is emerging into the chaotic and often hostile environment of technology product development. How it will mature we do not know. But the care we give it, feeding it with good ideas and nurturing it with constructive feedback, will determine its ultimate shape.

The roots of *User Experience* were set down last year when the Board of Directors of the Usability Professionals' Association (UPA) decided to retire *Common Ground* newsletter in favor of a new publication. Several events motivated the decision. One was JoAnn Hackos' decision to leave the post of *Common Ground* editor after a decade of service to UPA, so she could pursue other interests. Another was the Board's recognition that UPA was growing and there was a need to offer our members more than a newsletter could provide. Yet another motivation was the availability of our online newsletter, *The UPA Voice*, which allows us to communicate—at far lower cost—many of the organizational and membership issues that *Common Ground* presented. And finally, but perhaps most important, was our desire to reach out to others in the technology community who share our interests but are not usability professionals.

As usability professionals, we work with programmers, engineers, business analysts, executives and product managers. It is important to our professional success that we be able to communicate our value,



techniques and concerns to these partners, so we can all work effectively together. For two decades, much of the dialogue among usability professionals and HCI academics has been among ourselves. Now, as we become increasingly mainstream,

we need to include others in the conversation. Talking with those outside our profession requires a different approach from the somewhat academic tone we take with one another. I hope that *User Experience* will become a vehicle to enrich this outreach as well as a useful tool for professional communication.

Starting a new magazine takes a lot of work. The UPA Publications Committee has debated concepts, solicited input, written articles and reviewed a lot of designs. UPA President Elizabeth Rosenzweig has kept us moving forward and Russ Branaghan, who performed yeoman's duty as editor of the *Common Ground* retrospective book, has undertaken the job of managing editor. We also have a group of dedicated area editors. Each is responsible for soliciting (and occasionally writing) articles in their area of expertise.

We plan to begin as a semiannual publication. As we gain experience in the intricacies of magazine publishing, we plan to increase the publication to quarterly.

We think we've started out in the right direction, but like the cypress, we expect to be shaped by the environment in which we hope to flourish. That's where

you, the members of UPA, come in. With your constructive feedback, creative ideas and quality submissions, we will be able to shape *User Experience* into a truly exciting publication. I hope you enjoy it.



Charles B. Kreitzberg, Executive Editor