

Artful Integrators Award 2008

ACTION for Health
(Applied Communication Technology, Information, Networks for Health)
Vancouver, B.C.

The Artful Integrators Award is intended to recognize outstanding achievement in the area of participatory design of information and communications technologies. Where traditional design awards have gone to individual designers and/or singular objects, the Artful Integrators Award emphasizes the importance of collaborative participation in design, and a view of good design as the effective alignment of diverse collections of people, practices and artifacts. The Award is given to a group of people who together have worked out, in an exceptionally creative way, a new and useful configuration of artifacts and practices. While no single element of the design may be particularly extraordinary in itself, the combination of design process and outcome is.

The 2008 Artful Integrators Award goes to the *ACTION for Health* initiative, based in Vancouver, B.C. (see <http://www.sfu.ca/act4hlth/>) A series of projects running since 2004, ACTION for Health is distinguished by the continuity of its commitments and the range of its participants and partnerships. The projects have combined in-depth field research with design interventions, drawing from resources in Participatory Design, Social informatics, Computer-Supported Cooperative Work, Science and Technology Studies, and Health Research. International collaborators come from North America (Canada), Europe (Austria), and Scandinavia (Denmark). Collaborating agencies include Simon Fraser University, B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority, B.C. Children's Hospital, the Canadian Health Network, the Centre for Healthcare Management at University of British Columbia, the Mid-Main Community Health Centre, Vancouver Coastal Health, Vancouver General Hospital, and the Vancouver Public Library.

The initiative comprises a series of projects including:

- The Tower Move project aimed at demonstrating how research embedded in a healthcare agency, Vancouver Coastal Health, could contribute to concrete change related to technology. Beginning from a series of pragmatic problems related to the introduction of new technologies in the context of a major Vancouver hospital redevelopment, the collaboration evolved a practice making use of spreadsheet technologies for logging problems, tracking them, and assigning responsibility for resolving them. The process has subsequently been rolled out elsewhere in the hospital organization. The technologies investigated ranged from ceiling lifts to wireless call systems.
- A study of the B.C. Healthguide Web site that contributed to a significant site re-design, followed by collaborations with the Vancouver Public Library and Canadian Health Network, aimed at understanding how on-line health information resources are used and what issues arise for people as they search for health information both on and off line.

- A collaboration with the Mid-Main Community Health Centre prior to the introduction of an electronic patient record system, including preparation of background materials for the clinic to help them in planning for the implementation, and interviews with patients about their views of electronic patient record systems. This project led to a follow up that brought together the clinic, the software manufacturer, and the health authority's physicians' information technology office as partners.
- A pilot project with Mid-Main Community Health Centre placing an internet terminal in the waiting room of the clinic so that clinic patrons could search for on-line health information prior to and after their appointments. Fieldwork for the project included interviewing patients about their views of such a terminal's value prior to its introduction, designing the implementation in consultation with clinic staff, implementing the system, and observing clinic patrons as they sought online health information.
- 3 projects at British Columbia Children's Hospital. The first project was concerned with identifying issues in telephone triage practices, which had led to the removal of an electronic triage system prior to the commencement of the project. Project members then assisted the hospital in learning about alternative systems and provided substantial design support during the customization phase once a decision was made about which system would be acquired. A current project is investigating duplicate medical charts, to inform development of an electronic patient record system. A briefing note on the use of charts was referenced during a recent hospital accreditation issue, and was specifically commended by the accreditation board during their de-briefing session with staff following the evaluation of the hospital.

Taken together, these projects demonstrate how participatory research and design can illuminate, and directly influence, the effects of policy initiatives related to the computerization of the health sector for front-line workers and patients. The ACTION for Health initiative is outstanding in its commitment to the integration of research with health system design and development, through an extensive and continuous network of research partnerships, engaged in projects aimed at influencing a wide range of decisions and practices related to the acquisition, configuration and implementation of information systems in health care environments.