



## Chapter 15

### User Support and On-Line Information

## Active Learning with Minimalist Manuals

- Minimalist instruction
  - Removing many of the obstacles that make learning difficult
- The Training Wheels Word Processor
  - Limits the learner to simple functions
- The Scenario Machine
  - Provides additional information

## User Assistance and On-line Help

- Two tasks are involved when you use any tool to help you accomplish something
  - Primary task: what led you to use the tool
  - Secondary task: mastering enough of the tool to accomplish the primary task
- Design flaws can be present

## On-line Information

- Help messages
- Context-sensitive help
- Generic help text
- Extended help screens
- On-line written documentation

## Effectiveness of Help Systems

- Difficult to study
- Empirical study of IBM's CMS system
  - 15% of the help messages were never accessed
  - 10% of the messages accounted for 90% of the usage
  - (1984) Printed manuals work better than on-line help

## Typical Users' Questions

- Goal exploration: What can I do with this program?
- Definition and description: What is this? What is it for?
- Task achievement: How do I do this?
- Diagnostic: How did that happen?
- State identification: Where am I?

## Current Status of On-line Assistance

- Well-written, generally accessible on-line help works effectively to meet requests for operational and definitional information
- Not as effective for tactical information

## Five Different Patterns

- Immediate correction
- Automatic causal analysis
- Conscious causal analysis
- Explorative causal analysis
- Conceptual mismatch

## SuperBook

- A presentation system for on-line books, designed and built by researchers at AT&T
- Presents existing documentation in a multi-windowed display
- Users had significantly shorter search times and more correct responses than those using printed text

## Hypertext and Hypermedia

- **Hypertext**: a collection of nonlinear, text-based nodes that are linked together
- **Hypermedia**: when different media are included as well as text in a branching structure

## Designing Hypermedia for Training in HCI

- The development of the HalCion system
- The designer must:
  - Help users to build accurate mental models of the information structure
  - Provide appropriate tools to allow the users to navigate the conceptual space in the way they wish