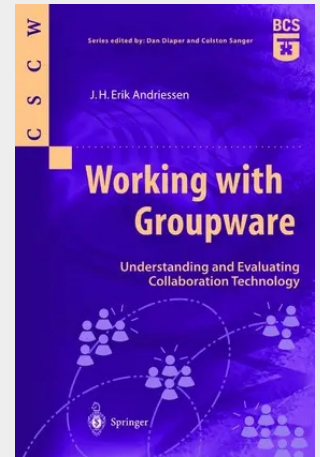


Working with Groupware

Understanding and Evaluating Collaboration Technology

This publication has grown out of two frustrations. One is the experience that so many applications in the area of information and communication technology (ICT) are built without an eye to what the users can handle or need for their work, systematic user oriented evaluation of new tools is therefore limited. The video recorder provides a good general example of this phenomenon, but more worryingly so do many software tools designed for use in organisations. The other frustration arises from the fact that the people and the theories that can be used to provide this much needed user orientation are scattered over many disciplines and communities. There is considerable knowledge available about task performance, human communication and group interaction and the way in which new ICT -tools can be used to support these processes, but scientists do not know each other, the studies, theories, journals and conferences are produced by different communities in isolation and little cross fertilisation takes place. In this book I have tried to bring together knowledge from various disciplines, as the basis for constructing a design oriented evaluation approach that hopefully contributes to providing a user orientation for new (technical) systems.

Groupware is a technology designed to help people working in groups to communicate their ideas more easily. While traditional technologies such as the telephone qualify as groupware, the term is usually used to refer to a specific class of technologies that rely on modern computer networks, such as email, newsgroups and videophones. In order to design groupware technologies it is important to understand how people behave within groups, their requirements, and their knowledge of the systems being created for them. This book provides an introduction to groupware, reviews the current applications and analyses their potential.



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