

Preface: Workshop on Responsible Use of AI Personas in Human-Centered Design and Research

A. Baki Kocaballi¹, Mirjana Prpa², Joni Salminen³, Danial Amin³, Bernard J Jansen⁴

¹ *University of Technology Sydney, Sydney, Australia*

² *Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (Guangzhou), Guangzhou, China*

³ *University of Vaasa, Vaasa, Finland*

⁴ *Qatar Computing Research Institute, HBKU, Doha, Qatar*

Abstract

The workshop on Responsible Use of AI Personas in Human-Centered Design and Research was conducted on 13 April 2026, co-located with the ACM CHI Conference 2026 in Barcelona, Spain. The workshop was a half-day workshop with the participants who submitted position papers. We received 17 submissions. Each submission was reviewed by two program committee members, and all 17 papers were accepted for presentation. This volume includes the 8 papers whose authors submitted final camera-ready versions meeting the CEUR-WS publication requirements. The workshop website is accessible at: <https://sites.google.com/view/ai-personas>

Keywords

AI Personas, Generative AI, Personas, User Simulation, Synthetic Users

1. Introduction

Generative AI (GenAI) is increasingly transforming human-centered design (HCD) by enabling the generation and simulation of AI-driven personas that can role-play different stakeholders, ideate solutions, and perform usability tests. With their increased efficiency and accessibility, these AI personas offer advantages such as scalability, rapid ideation, coverage of diverse and edge cases, and reduced reliance on costly human subject studies at early stages of design. However, they also pose ethical, representational, and methodological challenges. Although evidence on the use, benefits, and limitations of AI personas is growing, the field still lacks shared validity standards and reporting norms to guide the use of AI personas and their synthetic feedback, and decisions about when to involve actual human participants. This half-day workshop will examine the roles, opportunities, and responsibilities associated with integrating GenAI simulated personas into HCI design practice. Through the presentation of emerging evidence, collaborative discussions, and hands-on activities, we aim to explore responsible methods and develop practical guidelines for the responsible use of AI personas in human-centered design and research.

2. Organisers and Program Committee

A. Baki Kocaballi is an Associate Professor at the University of Technology Sydney and an internationally recognized researcher on conversational agents. His work is situated at the intersection of generative AI, technology design, digital health, and education, focusing on collaborative human-AI interaction models that reduce fixation and uncritical adoption, support co-creativity, and preserve human agency. His work has received several academic awards and recognitions, and his research has been published in the top-ranking venues.

Mirjana Prpa is an Assistant Teaching Professor at Northeastern University. Her research interests include leveraging micro-phenomenology in HCI for understanding the complexity of user experiences and extending it to unfold experiences arising from human-AI persona interactions, spanning from LLM use for persona creation to LLM-based agents in social VR.

Joni Salminen is an Associate Professor at the University of Vaasa and an Adjunct Professor at the Turku School of Economics in Finland. His research is concentrated on human-computer interaction (HCI), digital marketing, and AI, with a particular focus on the automatic generation and application of user personas from data sources like social media and web analytics. A former Scientist at the Qatar Computing Research Institute, Dr. Salminen has extensively published on topics including data-driven persona biases, the societal impacts of machine decision-making, and online platforms.

Danial Amin is a doctoral candidate at the University of Vaasa, focusing on ethical AI and persona development for social good, with extensive experience in data science and AI development. His research leverages GenAI technologies to develop ethical and inclusive AI-generated personas that benefit marginalized communities in the Global South.

Dr. Jim Jansen is a Principal Scientist at the Qatar Computing Research Institute working on automatically visualizing user data. He is a West Point graduate with a Ph.D. in computer science from Texas A&M University. Professor Jansen is editor-in-chief of Information Processing & Management, former interim editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Information Management, and former editor-in-chief of Internet Research. He has received several awards and honors, including an ACM Research Award, six application development awards, a product innovation award, and a university-level teaching award, along with other writing, publishing, research, teaching, and leadership honors. Dr. Jansen has authored or co-authored nearly 400 research publications, with articles appearing in a multi-disciplinary range of journals and conferences. He is a co-author of the books *Data-Driven Personas* (Springer Nature) and *Understanding Audiences, Customers, and Users via Analytics* (Springer Nature). For more information, see <https://www.bernardjjansen.com>

3. Workshop Topics

Studies and Cases

- **Use of AI personas across HCD stages in practice and education:** ideation, scenario generation, counter-scenario creation, early usability “walkthroughs,” and lightweight formative evaluation.
- **Team experiences with AI persona workflows:** building persona libraries, curating/retiring personas, orchestrating multi-agent “populated prototypes,” and integrating outputs into design sprints.

- **Comparative validity studies:** how AI personas align with or diverge from findings with real participants (means vs. variance, behavioral plausibility, edge cases), and how teams calibrate trust.
- **Sensitive and high-stakes domains:** representing marginalized groups, ability-based use cases, and non-Western contexts; when simulations help, when they may cause harm, and what safeguards are necessary.
- **Designer perceptions and mental models:** empowerment vs. deskilling, over-reliance risks, appropriate reliance, disclosure to stakeholders, and communicating uncertainty.
- **Case reports of failure modes:** stereotype leakage, mode collapse, drift across model versions, hallucinated constraints, and mismatches between simulated and real user behaviors.

Design, Development, and Evaluation

- **Emerging methods for AI persona construction:** data-grounded and synthetic-only personas; retrieval-augmented grounding; memory policies; controllable traits and goals; multi-agent coordination for task flows.
- **Novel UX evaluation techniques:** scripted runs, heuristic + simulated walkthroughs, and mixed pipelines that combine AI personas with human checks; metrics for central tendency, variance/coverage, and ecological plausibility.
- **Context-specific design guidelines:** when to use AI personas (and when not); scoping intended use; counter-persona generation; prompts and constraints that reduce bias; accessibility-aware persona authoring.
- **Standardized measurement and reporting:** practical Persona/Synthetic-User Cards covering provenance, grounding sources, prompts/parameters, model/versioning, known biases, and evaluation plans; logging templates for reproducibility. Design factors in simulated interactions including feedback, feedforward, affordances, and explainability in persona-system exchanges; documenting assumptions embedded in prompts and toolchains.
- **Ethical and regulatory dimensions:** bias and harm audits; records for accountability; guardrails against inappropriate substitution for real participants.
- **Design factors in simulated interactions:** feedback, feedforward, affordances, and explainability in persona-system exchanges; documenting assumptions embedded in prompts and toolchains.
- **Domain-specific practices:** safety-critical and fairness-critical settings (e.g., health, finance, public services); accessibility and personalization. Evolving roles and practices including how designers, researchers, and domain experts collaborate with AI personas; team norms for curation, review, and retirement of persona sets; implications for pedagogy and research training.

4. Workshop Dates

18 February 2026 - Submissions close

25 February 2026 - Notification of acceptance

13 April 2026 – Workshop day (Session 1: 14:15 - 15:45 - Session 2: 16:30 - 18:00)