Introduction to International Association for Universal Design

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In Japan, many products incorporating Universal Design (UD) have recently been marketed and successes with such products have been increasing. In December 2002, the International Conference for Universal Design in Japan 2002 was held in Japan, this being the first conference on UD to be held in our country. Based on ideas proposed at this conference and the conclusions drawn, the International Association for Universal Design (IAUD) was inaugurated in November 2003. Membership of the IAUD is not limited to manufacturing industries. Its many members span all representative Japanese industries, from the distribution industry to the service industry. The IAUD will not just concern itself with educational programs related to UD and the promotion of UD, it is hoped that it will be an influential proactive organization that addresses complex UD problems that could not be solved by individual companies or industries, through cooperation between industry, government, and academia. This paper describes the history of the establishment of the IAUD, outlines its activities and reports on Designing for the 21st Century III, a recently held international conference on UD. Also, this paper looks at Fujitsu's involvement in the IAUD, the impact of the IAUD on business and its role in the creation of new business opportunities and gives an outlook for future activities.

1. Introduction

There had been tremendous activity in industry with many attempts being made to apply UD in products. Then, on 28 November 2003, the International Association for Universal Design (IAUD) was inaugurated with the objectives of reviving the Japanese economy from its protracted slump and contributing to the development of an enduring social framework by achieving the further penetration of UD. Since its inauguration, the IAUD has been engaged in activities to raise UD to a higher level through the sharing of information among industry, government and academia on the basis of ideas proposed and conclusions reached at the International Conference for Universal Design in Japan 2002. In order to realize a world that is really comfortable to live in for everyone, the IAUD is pursuing lateral projects that cross industry and business boundaries with the aim of creating attractive products and services. It has been roughly a year since member companies formerly began working on the IAUD projects. At the beginning, 109 companies were members of the IAUD and this had grown to 135 companies as of October 2004. In April 2004, the IAUD's seven committees started operating on a full scale, their responsibilities including theme studies, business development and dissemination of results.

Fujitsu has not been an ordinary member of the IAUD by any means. We played a major role in its inauguration and have been actively participating in its operation. Mr. Yamamoto, Chairman Emeritus of Fujitsu, serves as its chairperson, and Fujitsu staff are members of the IAUD's Council, Board of Directors and other committees.

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The author also participated in the establishment of the IAUD and is currently a member of its Information Accessibility Committee. In this paper, we will review the activities of the IAUD since it was established and its current activities and report on the international UD conference "Designing for the 21st Century III." In the final section, we will consider the role of the IAUD in industry and Fujitsu's involvement in it.[1)-4)]

2. International Conference for Universal Design in Japan 2002 set stage for IAUD

We would first like to describe the International Conference for Universal Design in Japan 2002 and what it resulted in since this conference set the stage for the inauguration of the IAUD.

The conference was Japan's first international meeting on the theme of UD and was held at Pacifico Yokohama from November 30 to December 4, 2002. It followed the international conferences on UD held in the United States in 1998 and 2000. It was held at the instigation of five designers who had taken part in the conferences in the US as well as through the good offices of His Imperial Highness Prince Tomohito. Participants were private sector companies and design-related organizations, and receiving the support of central and regional governments, public design and UD-related organizations, universities and other educational institutions, the conference achieved its goal of collaboration among industry, government and academia.

A total of 693 persons from 20 countries registered for the conference, among them 87 from outside Japan, and 750 people attended the public symposiums. The exhibition area had 3200 visitors. The conference had 29 major corporate sponsors and was supported by another 4 companies, which contributed greatly to its success. It achieved a common perception of universal design among its participants, and it was this that provided the impetus for the establishment of the IAUD.

3. Inauguration of IAUD

The IAUD's inauguration ceremony was held on 28 November 2003.

A total of 325 people attended, including 57 members of the press. There was first a speech by His Imperial Highness Prince Tomohito, Patron of the IAUD. Several examples of the use of the UD concept in products over the years were given, one of them equipment developed by a ski manufacturer enabling anyone to ski like a normal person. This provided an opportunity to think about the direction that the IAUD should go in the future and made everyone enthusiastic about its future activities. After the inauguration ceremony, there was a party at which Mr. Nakagawa, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry and Mr. Nishimuro, Vice Chairman of Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations, made congratulatory speeches in which they spoke about the expectations on UD to be driving force in Japanese industry and the role of the public and private sectors in its promotion. Many attendees expressed their confidence in the future direction of IAUD activities. Executives of member companies had a prominent presence at the party, and many of them showed a strong desire to promote UD. Speeches by an advisor to the IAUD on creating overseas networks and representatives of educational institutions and UD organizations also expressed high expectations for the IAUD. In the exhibition area set up at the party venue were panels showing how 34 companies were responding to the challenge of UD, and 17 companies had exhibited products based on UD. This also let one feel the enthusiasm of the participants for UD.

4. Concept of IAUD activities

In the following, we will explain the concept of the IAUD's activities for realizing the further expansion of UD. Looking at the membership list of the IAUD, one can see that its members come

from a wide range of representative Japanese industries, encompassing not only the electrical equipment, automobile, housing and IT equipment manufacturing industries but also the distribution and service industries. The basis of its activities is the promotion of UD from a broad and integrated perspective under which all of these industries share information and participate in the achievement of UD and its evaluation through theme research, business development activities and dissemination of information. The concept of UD will be stressed in all of this and major emphasis placed on dialogues with the consumers, a key element in developing UD, in order to enhance the activities towards its expansion and make them highly effective.

5. Organizational structure of IAUD

The organizational structure of the IAUD is shown in **Figure 1**. It consists of the Board of Directors, which conducts IAUD business under the direction of the Patron and President, the Council which approves business plans and budgets proposed by the Board of Directors and the seven committees, two of them the Theme Study Committee and the Project Development Committee, which promote IAUD projects under the direction of the Board of Directors.

6. Overview of IAUD activities

In the following, we will look at the activities of the seven committees which promote the business of the IAUD. Brief descriptions of the committees and their activities are given below.

1) Theme Study Committee

The Theme Study Committee consists of the Seminar Planning Working Group, Concept Study Working Group and Standardization Study Working Group. Their major activity is holding study meetings whose aim is the realization of "dialogues with consumers," the foundation of the
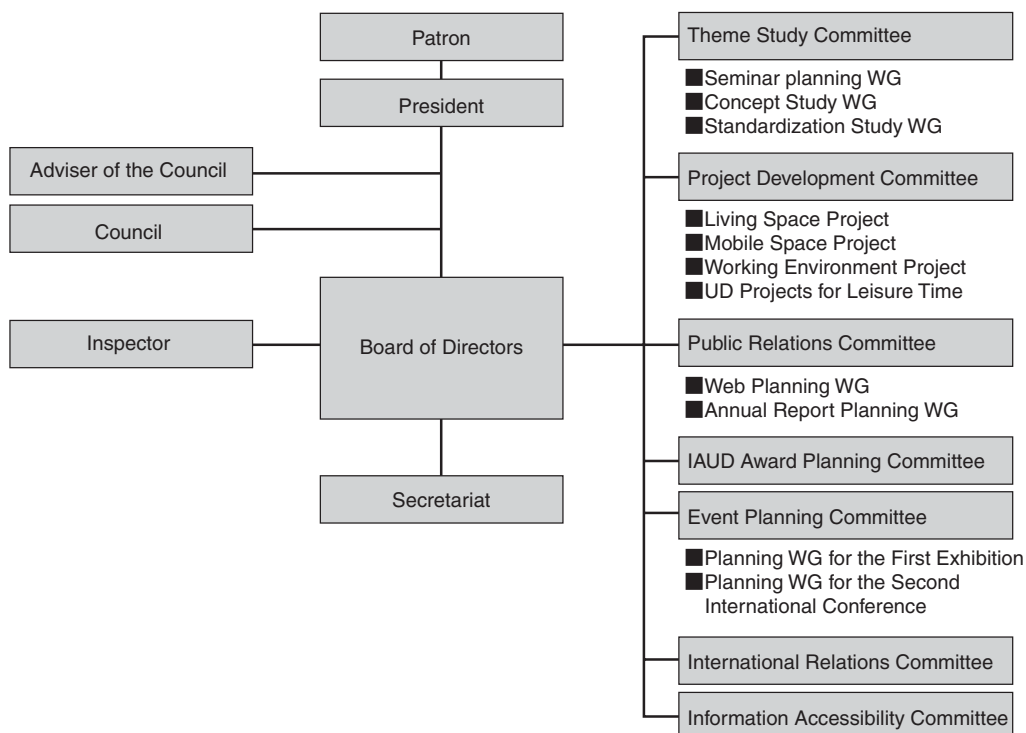

Figure 1
Organization of International Association for Universal Design.

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IAUD's activities.

2)   Project Development Committee

Taking full advantage of the multifarious industries and businesses IAUD members come from, the committee promotes joint development projects and business model research among IAUD members in order to provide a strong foundation for the creation of new business opportunities. The committee is currently engaged in four projects — UD for Living Spaces, UD for Mobile Spaces, UD for the Working Environment and UD for Leisure — under the concept of "A Convenient and Carefree Life."

3)   Public Relations Committee

The Public Relations Committee is responsible for making announcements concerning the results of IAUD activities and making people aware of the IAUD's value to society. Some of the tools used for this purpose are pamphlets introducing the IAUD, Websites, annual reports and IAUD bulletins.

4)   IAUD Award Planning Committee

With a view to establishing an awards system for UD, the committee is currently drawing up basic evaluation standards and conducting surveys for the purpose of establishing an evaluation and certification system.

5)   Event Planning Committee

The Event Planning Committee organizes events with the objective of furthering understanding of UD and its applications, which consists mainly of meetings to present the results of IAUD activities. Currently, principal activities are those of the 1st Exhibition Working Group and the 2nd International UD Conference Working Group, which is organizing the 2nd International Conference to be held in Japan in 2006.

6)   International Relations Committee

The activities of this committee consist of building international networks for the worldwide dissemination of information on Japanese UD, focusing on the development of opportunities and human contacts for this purpose. It also provides support for the overseas activities of IAUD members through the use of overseas consulting services and aiding their participation in international congresses.

7)   Information Accessibility Committee

The major activity of the Information Accessibility Committee is the provision of information on IAUD related events to all IAUD members on an equal basis.

The committee is currently evaluating candidate venues in this respect for the International UD Conference to be held in 2006 and is drawing up guidelines for information accessibility at events.

7. IAUD's external activities and events

In addition to its committee and other activities that are limited to members, the IAUD also organizes activities for the dissemination of information to the general public through public seminars and so forth. The following gives details of a past external activity of the IAUD and activities planned for the future:

1)   Public seminar to mark the inauguration of the IAUD

To celebrate the inauguration of the IAUD, a public seminar was held at Nissan Motor Co., Ltd on December 6, 2003 according to the following program.

• Commemorative address: Roger Coleman (Co-director of Helen Hamlyn Research Center, Royal College of Art, UK)
• Panel discussion
• Exhibition: member company panels and product exhibits

2)   Events planned for the future

The following events are planned for the future:

• Meetings to present results of IAUD activities

Annual meetings to present the results of IAUD activities will be held at the end of each fiscal year (March).

• International Conference for Universal

Design in Japan 2006 (tentative name)

The first International Conference for Universal Design held in Japan in 2002 provided the impetus for the establishment of the IAUD. The second International Conference for Universal Design will be held in Kyoto, Japan in October 2006.

8. Recent UD international conference — "Designing for the 21st Century III"

The following describes "Designing for the 21st Century III," an international UD conference recently held with the objective of enhancing understanding of UD as a means of achieving social equality on an international level.

Sponsored by Adaptive Environments Center (AE), a US organization promoting UD, the congress was held in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil from 7 to 11 December 2004. This was the third such congress sponsored by AE, the other two having been held in 1998 and 2000, and attendance was 425.

1) Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was held on 9 December following the Pre-conference, which took place on 7 and 8 December. At the ceremony, Mr. Toda, Chairman of the IAUD Council, delivered a message from Prince Tomohito, Patron of the IAUD, and it was simultaneously interpreted into English, Portuguese and Spanish. It was also conveyed in sign language in English, Portuguese and Spanish.

2) IAUD Session

The IAUD session took place on the afternoon of 10 December. Mr. Toda delivered the keynote speech, and there were presentations by seven persons from six IAUD member companies. In the keynote speech, Mr. Toda said that concepts for the development of products in Japan in olden times had much in common with UD and went on to explain the significance of the process by which the IAUD was established and present IAUD activities. The seven people presenting on behalf of Japanese corporate members described how they had tackled UD from the three aspects of people, development process and product. Fujitsu made a presentation on its activities in the area of Web accessibility. At the end of the session, details of the international conference to be held in Kyoto in 2006 were announced.

3) Exhibition Corner

An exhibition corner was set up within the conference venue. In it were the IAUD booth, which described the IAUD's activities, and the booths of nine member companies, which displayed UD products and displays featuring their activities towards UD. The Web accessibility tools mentioned in Fujitsu's presentation in the IAUD session were also on display. Other UD organizations also had booths, among them AE, but few gave concrete details of products applying UD. Reflecting the content of the presentations in the IAUD session, the displays of the IAUD booth described trends in the development of UD in Japan and were very distinctive (**Figure 2**).

4) Ron Mace Award

During the congress, Ron Mace "Designing for the 21st Century" awards, which recognize special achievement in UD, were given for the second time. The first time was at the UD conference in 2000. At the conference in Rio de Janeiro, 20 awards were made for UD-related projects from 9 countries, some of them going to IAUD projects. This attested to the appeal of the products and

Figure 2
Exhibition corner at Designing for the 21st Century III.

services resulting from UD projects in Japan, which were described during the IAUD session and by the exhibits. However, it also showed that the role of the IAUD as a major driving force behind such activities was highly evaluated in the international arena.

9. Role of IAUD and Fujitsu's involvement

In this section, we will consider the role that the IAUD can play in the further expansion of UD and the contribution that this can make to society. We will also look at Fujitsu's involvement. In addition to providing education on UD and promoting its use, the IAUD is also expected to be a driving force for concrete UD-related project development and joint research projects. There are particularly great possibilities for the IAUD to help create new business through lateral development projects that are not limited to particular industries or businesses. The development of products incorporating UD necessitates structures under which standards are uniform among unrelated business areas and a wide range of users are targeted. In most cases, therefore, the many issues that arise cannot be resolved by a single company or industry, or even by the private sector alone. In this regard, the IAUD is actively liaising with specialist advisors as well as UD-related government agencies, local governments and UD-related organizations. Such cooperation among industry, government and academia is expected to help solve difficult problems that have been faced in UD up till now, and their solution should serve to revive Japanese industry from a long period of hollowing out. This will provide the impetus for the creation of a new paradigm, which will not only make great contributions to society but also unlock possibilities for making people's lives richer and more enjoyable.

As mentioned at the beginning, Fujitsu has made a tremendous contribution to the IAUD from the time of the International Conference for UD in 2002, both in its establishment and

operations since then. As examples, we can give the appointment of Mr. Yamamoto, Fujitsu's Chairman Emeritus, as the IAUD Chairman, that of Mr. Nagano, our Corporate Vice President, as the IAUD Council member and that of Mr. Kato, General Manager of Fujitsu's Design Center, as an Executive. Also, Fujitsu staff are currently members of three of its committees.

Fujitsu has been responding to the challenge of UD in various ways. This is illustrated by the examples given in this paper as well as the "Fujitsu Web Accessibility Guidelines" and other activities for the dissemination of information, promotion of education and training programs on UD in Fujitsu group companies and improvement of working environments. We will continue contributing to the management of the IAUD and the activities of its committees and will actively reflect the results of the IAUD activities in Fujitsu products and services with the aim of enriching the lives of as many people as possible.

10. Conclusion

In this paper, we have touched on the inauguration of the IAUD, the concept of its activities, its current activities and those planned for the future, as well as Fujitsu's involvement in all of this. It is just over a year since the IAUD was inaugurated but its organization and the structure for its activities are still incomplete. Great efforts will be needed in the times to come if we are to see them manifest their true worth, and in this respect many of its corporate, organizational and individual members are contributing to the development of the IAUD in earnest.

As a leading company in the IT industry, Fujitsu will strongly support IAUD activities, and through the development of products and services, the company will pursue the further expansion of UD. However, Fujitsu does not see UD just as a resource that will greatly benefit its business, we also think of it as something that will help us to achieve our goal of being a "sustainable company."

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