Navigating Intersections of Religion/Spirituality and Human-Computer Interaction

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ABSTRACT

Religion and spirituality (R/S) are an important part of many people's lives, and while HCI is increasingly engaged in research and design in specific R/S contexts, there are many cases where researchers or designers encounter R/S outside of such contexts. In this workshop, we seek to bring together HCI researchers and designers across all research areas and with varying levels of experience with R/S to discuss encounters with R/S in their work, either intentional or not, and to develop principles and strategies to guide HCI research and design that intersects with R/S. Through this workshop, we also seek to further establish a network of scholars who can provide each other support in navigating R/S-related challenges and opportunities in their work and can participate in publication-oriented collaborations that consider the intersection of R/S and HCI.

CCS CONCEPTS

• Human-centered computing \rightarrow Human computer interaction (HCI).

KEYWORDS

religion, spirituality, techno-spirituality, field guide, principles, intersections

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1 INTRODUCTION

Religion and spirituality (R/S) are woven into the fabric of everyday life [1], from the personal beliefs and practices of individuals to

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structural aspects of society. In the case of research and design in HCI, the intersection with R/S finds expression in a variety of forms, from work that explicitly focuses on R/S, such as Buddhist chanting sessions [7] or Christian worship services [26], to work that engages with R/S in a wide variety of situations, including digital health and social computing [11, 20, 22, 24]. For instance, recent work uncovers how spiritual support becomes vital during health crises, requiring consideration in the design of online communities [22]. Ibtasam et al., meanwhile, explored the adoption of digital financial services by women in Pakistan, which was heavily influenced by Islamic law and the role of women in Islam [10]. Finally, R/S have been identified as important considerations in cultural heritage work, which requires cultural sensitivity to R/S perspectives (e.g., [8]) and may include interaction with R/S practices (e.g., [27]).

In considering the range of this work, we see different types of engagement with R/S. While some studies explicitly focus on R/S or consider its potential implications in advance, others unexpectedly encounter it as an aspect of the findings in an otherwise non-R/S-oriented study [6]. For this workshop, we are interested in how R/S can appear both in intentional and incidental ways, as well as how conversations between researchers and designers with diverse experiences with R/S can be mutually beneficial. For example, perhaps incidental encounters can prompt future work that is intentional and intentional encounters can sensitize individuals to incidental encounters or to more actively consider R/S, such as in Halperin and Rosner's work on "soulful speculation" [9] where they call for bringing concerns for the soul into secular sites of technology development. This workshop seeks to provide a discursive and reflective space in which HCI researchers and designers can explore these different kinds of encounters and their potential implications, a process that will enrich our modes of engagement with R/S and in HCI more broadly.

This workshop builds upon and extends a series of recent workshops at the intersection of R/S and HCI. Beginning with the CHI'22 workshop "Integrating Religion, Faith, and Spirituality in HCI" [21], additional workshops have focused explicitly on R/S contexts ("Coimagining Participatory Design in R/S Contexts" at NordiCHI'22 [17]) and on R/S purposes ("Designing Tangible Interactive Artifacts for Religious and Spiritual Purposes" at DIS'23 [16]). By focusing, however, on intentional and incidental intersections of R/S and HCI

and how these might inspire each other, this workshop will provide new strategies for navigating R/S-related issues and new lenses for seeing possibilities. Additionally, the workshop will offer opportunities for critical reflection and invite participants to consider and explore the role of R/S in their work.

2 INTENDED OUTCOMES

Our prior workshops resulted in several outcomes. Our NordiCHI '22 workshop [17] led to the publication of a zine [18] that compiled R/S design principles and to the creation of a transnational, transdisciplinary research and design collective (the Spirituality, Religion, and Interactive Technology Design (SPIRITED) Collective (spiritedhci.org)), while our DIS '23 workshop [16] aided in the publication of a TEI '24 paper [15] through the elicitation and analysis of R/S tangible interactive artifacts. We seek to continue this trend and have established two intended outcomes.

2.1 Networking and Professional Support

One key outcome is for HCI researchers and designers to be connected with others who are also engaged in work that intersects with R/S, connections which may be leveraged to discuss R/S-related research and design issues, to support collaborative R/S-related research or design, and to pursue R/S-related publications. Through this workshop, participants will also be integrated into the existing support network provided by the SPIRITED Collective.

2.2 Publications

Another set of intended outcomes are publication-related. First, we are targeting an *Interactions* article that surfaces the findings and discussions from the workshop (e.g., [19]). Second, we intend on publishing an article at a major SIGCHI (e.g., CHI, DIS, TEI, etc.) or ACM In-Cooperation (e.g., NordiCHI, etc.) conference focused on strategies and principles related to R/S work that have emerged from this and previous workshops. Third, through the workshop activities and submissions, we will begin compiling a "Field Guide to Religion and Spirituality in HCI Research and Design" to support researchers and designers in R/S-related work. Fourth, the next issue of the SPIRITED Collective zine will include photos and excerpts from the workshop submissions, activities, and the in-development Field Guide. Fifth, we will broaden the reach of our findings from this workshop via an article in an R/S-focused magazine (e.g. *Parabola* [23]).

3 OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

This one-day, in-person workshop will be held on Sunday, October 13 during the NordiCHI '24 pre-conference activities. An overview of the activities can be found in Table 1. After a short welcome, introduction, and overview, the workshop moves through seven phases, starting with an activity (Session 1) where participants will collaboratively explore their intersections with R/S. In Session 2, we will focus on the sharing and discussion of the workshop submissions and on additional conversations centered on the participants' past work and experiences. Building on this foundation, in Session 3 we will collectively examine some existing strategies and principles for conducting research and design that intersects with R/S. After a lunch break, we will bring together the participants' diverse

expertise and interests at the intersection of R/S and HCI. In Session 4, participants will self-select (by interest or experience) into groups based upon topical research and design focus (e.g., health, gaming, etc.) to surface key considerations and practices related to R/S in that space, while in Session 5 participants will self-select into groups based on methodological approaches (e.g., ethnography, participatory design, etc.) to discuss and generate ideas for methods relevant at the intersection of R/S and HCI. After a short break, participants will reconvene (Session 6) to share insights from their groups and to consolidate emerging findings that will be the basis for the Field Guide. Before wrapping up, in Session 7 we will discuss the next steps toward publication, including establishing timetables and interest groups for specific publications. The workshop will conclude with a brief wrap-up to allow participants to reflect on their experiences.

Time	Activity
9:00 - 9:30	Welcome, introductions, and overview
9:30 - 10:00	Session 1: Exploring our intersections with R/S
10:00 - 10:15	Morning break
10:15 - 11:15	Session 2: Discussion of workshop submissions
11:15 - 12:00	Session 3: Strategies for R/S-intersecting R&D
12:00 - 13:00	Lunch break
13:00 - 14:00	Session 4: Topical breakout sessions
14:00 - 15:00	Session 5: Methodological breakout sessions
15:00 - 15:15	Afternoon break
15:15 - 16:15	Session 6: Compiling the Field Guide
16:15 - 16:45	Session 7: Discussing publications
16:45 - 17:00	Workshop wrap-up

Table 1: The workshop structure.

4 CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

In this workshop, we bring together HCI researchers and designers to discuss personal experiences with encountering religion and spirituality (R/S) in their work, to consider principles and strategies for research and design that engages with R/S, to imagine possibilities at the intersection of R/S and HCI, to contribute to publications on working with R/S and HCI, and to further establish a network of scholars that can provide each other support in navigating R/S in their work. We invite anyone who is interested in this topic to participate, including those who don't generally work in R/S contexts but have had intersections (intentional or not) with R/S in their work, such as study participants who cite R/S beliefs as a key consideration in technology adoption. We call on potential participants to share short submissions (3-4 pages) that may take the form of (but are not limited to):

- case studies that discuss completed, in-progress, or potential studies that intersect with R/S;
- position papers that articulate strategies, principles, guidelines, or themes for R/S-related work in HCI;
- reflections on previous intersections with R/S, including navigating your own R/S identity in your work;
- design fictions or speculative designs imagining futures of R/S and HCI intersections; and

• artworks that contemplate R/S and interactive technology.

This call for participation is open to all HCI researchers or designers interested in further considering R/S as a component of their work, regardless of their research focus. We ask participants to submit non-anonymized submissions via the workshop website (sites.google.com/view/nordichi2024-rs). The submissions will be lightly reviewed by the organizers to ensure fit with the workshop theme, and potential participants will be notified of acceptance within 72 hours of submission. With author permission, accepted submissions will be posted on the workshop website.

5 ADVERTISEMENT OF THE WORKSHOP

We have established a website (sites.google.com/view/nordichi2024-rs) that will serve as the main vehicle to promote the workshop. We will publicize the workshop via members of the SPIRITED Collective and through the social media accounts of the organizers and SPIRITED Collective. We will also advertise the workshop through the "announcements.eu.nordichi Digest", aiming to reach individuals most likely to be attending the conference. Finally, we'll reach out directly to HCI research and design labs, particularly those most likely to intersect with R/S in their work.

6 ORGANIZERS

The organizers of this workshop have varied research and design backgrounds, including R/S-focused and non-R/S-focused work. This experience and expertise will allow the organizers to structure the activities and discussions and speak to the themes, principles, concepts, and questions central to this workshop's focus. The organizers are:

Robert B. Markum is a PhD candidate at the University of Michigan School of Information. His work centers on the intersection of interactive technology and R/S practices, both in terms of the impact of interactive technologies on R/S practices (and vice-versa) [14] and on the design of interactive technologies that support R/S purposes [15].

Franzisca Maas is a PhD candidate at the University of Würzburg, Germany. As part of the SPIRITED Collective, she participated in previous workshops and co-authored the first zine [18]. Her work is primarily concerned with non-R/S topics revolving around participatory design and technology for local citizen participation [13].

Sara Wolf is a PhD candidate at the University of Würzburg, Germany. Drawing upon participatory, design-oriented, qualitative methods, her current work explores religious [25] and non-religious rituals [12] with interactive technologies with a particular focus on how interactive technologies can be designed for rituals intentionally.

Brett A. Halperin is pursuing a PhD in Human Centered Design & Engineering with a graduate certificate in Cinema & Media Studies at University of Washington. In the realm of R/S HCI, he developed "soulful speculation" [9] as a method for embracing the soul as a design resource to rework the normative mind-body binary in engineering.

Caroline Claisse is a Lecturer in Interaction Design at Open Lab, Newcastle University, UK. She is a designer by background inspired by Feminist, Social Justice, and More-than-Human perspectives. In her R/S research, she explores the design of interactive and tangible technologies to support community practice [7] and how spirituality may shape new ways of designing with care.

Elizabeth Buie, PhD, is a UX consultant and independent researcher who helps create technology to meet user needs. She studies HCI work on techno-spirituality [2, 5, 6] and researches design to foster transcendent user experience (TUX). To support designing for TUX, she developed a design game [3] and three new forms of design fiction [4].

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