UNDERSTANDING AND DESIGNING FOR LATE-LIFE ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

presented by

Robin Brewer
Northwestern University

Abstract:
The older adult population will grow exponentially in the coming years with more baby boomers reaching retirement age. Yet, our online communities are not well supported for engaging them online. Older adults with internet access struggle to see the value of engaging online. Also, research has shown how seniors who are offline face many barriers to internet use including high cost of internet-enabled devices, lack of access in their homes, and navigating complex interfaces that are difficult to learn. Despite these barriers, prior work has shown how there are social, financial, and health benefits to engaging online, specifically for older adults. In my work, I primarily use qualitative methods (e.g. interviews, observations) combined with quantitative methods (e.g. surveys) and software development to understand people and technology. In this talk, I present my research investigating how to create more accessible online communities for seniors with vision impairments to engage in self-expression and connection, and discuss the implications for future technology development. This work will be foregrounded with a discussion of my research examining accessibility and engagement on crowd work platforms.

Bio:
Robin Brewer studies human behavior within the context of technology and software development. Her interests include accessibility, social computing, and learning for underrepresented populations online. In her current work, she examines how voice-based interfaces can be used to better support people with internet access in their homes. Brewer’s work incorporates qualitative research methods with user-centered design and iterative development. She is completing her Ph.D. in Technology and Social Behavior at Northwestern University.