

Call for Participation

What Makes Good ICTD Research?

Friday 17 April 2009

in conjunction with
3rd IEEE/ACM International Conference on Information and Communication
Technologies and Development (ICTD2009)

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<http://www.ictd2009.org>

Description

As this conference's call for papers points out, *in spite of the tremendous energy and resources behind [ICTD] projects, scientifically sound research in this space is just beginning to emerge.* There are many reasons for this, but one of the most fundamental is the lack of a strong identity and moreover of standard metrics for quality by which research in this field can be judged.

In this workshop, we aim to address this gap by tackling the question of how to define ICTD research, and moreover, how to define scientific rigor in ICTD research. This question has been a widespread and ongoing source of confusion and contention among researchers from all walks of the ICTD community, and yet it is a question we must tackle if we wish to make any claim to rigor and intellectual merit within the scientific community. To do so, we need to reach consensus internally on how 'scientific rigor' can even be applied to the work we do. In so doing, we will determine the criteria that set this community apart from a number of existing efforts on technology and development in the public, private, and non-profit sector.

To tackle these questions, we must address not only the classical contention between the qualitative and quantitative sciences but also define the minimum which each discipline must draw from each other. How much 'development' evaluation needs to go into technology research, and how much 'technology' evaluation needs to go into development research? Further, what are the pillars on which the quality of this research can be universally judged? Indeed, we must agree upon universal standards, however arbitrary, so that we can make qualified decisions on the people who sit on our program committees and the ones who edit our journals and so that those people can make qualified decisions about what to publish and what not to publish across so many different fields of work. In closing, we will explore the implications of our answers to these questions on the ICTD community going forward, including implications for conferences and journals old and new. In so doing, we will incorporate strategies for fostering a greater understanding among communities with such divergent ideologies.

Intended Audience: This workshop is intended for ICTD researchers from a variety of backgrounds, including academia, government, NGOs, and the private sector. We further welcome ICTD practitioners from all sectors interested in situating the role of ICTD research within the broader context of ICTD practitioners.

Outcomes: As a forum for discussion, expected outcomes include a compendium of existing efforts and open issues.

Format (Tentative)

- Introduction and brief discussion of the topic by facilitators
- Part I: Small group discussions on definitions/boundaries broken down by topic area
- Large group review of findings, crystallize themes, establish a mandate
- Part II: Small group discussions on quality/evaluation broken down by topic area
- Large group consolidation of ideas, development of action items for the ICTD community

Group Discussions Part I

What is and is not ICTD research?

Each small group will be given a list of potential ICTD publications, hopefully drawn or inspired by real-world submissions to prior ICTD conferences. In determining which one of these examples does or does not constitute ICTD research, they will independently develop criteria for inclusion in (or exclusion from) the ICTD community. They will present to the large group what criteria were chosen and why, as well as criteria for a 'mission statement' for ICTD research. Some examples from this list might include:

- * Innovative technology to address intermittent connectivity which is never tested in the field
- * Ethnographic research on the management of health and wealth information in local villages
- * Case studies on isolated communities with unique technologies, etc.
- * Bayesian models to predict cell phone adoption in rural India based on previous trends.

Group Discussions Part II

Returning to the list of publications, each small group will determine the metrics by which the quality of each publication would be judged. In so doing, they will develop specific criteria for quality in ICTD research across a broad range of disciplines. This will include defining the concept of 'quality' and 'novelty', as well as establishing criteria by which disciplines gain intellectual merit within the broader research community.

Final Large Group Discussion

In addition to consolidating our findings from Part II of the small group discussions, the final large group discussion will also address implications of these discussions for the ICTD community. We will ask what gaps exist in the current ICTD publication/conference venues, and develop strategies for fostering a greater understanding among our constituent communities.

Learning goals

- To foster a more nuanced, rigorous understanding of what constitutes ICTD research
- To demonstrate clearly the kind of academic contributions sought at ICTD venues
- To build a common understanding among research communities with diverse ideologies
- To determine a clear set of metrics by which ICTD publications across various disciplines can be compared
- To explore implications for the future of the ICTD research community

Training Materials

We will supply all needed materials ourselves.

Participation: To participate, please send an email copied to the corresponding organizers Rowena Luk (rowenaluk@gmail.com) and David Hollow (D.M.Hollow@rhul.ac.uk) with a brief description of your interest in workshop. Please email your interest as soon as possible because participation will be capped at a first-come-first-selected basis to 40 participants to ensure a manageable and insightful conversation.

Cost: Workshop attendance is free for ICTD2009 conference attendees. Attendees however have to be registered for ICTD2009 to attend the workshop, or apply for a waiver.

Attendee Sponsorships: There are very limited sponsorships and waivers for workshop participants. If you need these, you have to apply directly through the website at: <http://www.ictd2009.org/scholarships.html> Note -- the deadline is Feb 25, enforced strictly.

Organisers:

Rowena Luk, Independent ICTD Researcher/Practitioner, Founder AMITA

John Traxler, University of Wolverhampton, UK

David Hollow, Royal Holloway, UK

PRESENTERS, CONTACT INFORMATION, AND BIOGRAPHIES

JOHN TRAXLER

Reader in Mobile Technology for e-Learning
Director, Learning Lab, University of Wolverhampton
Priorslee, Shropshire, TF2 9NT, UK
John.traxler@wlv.ac.uk
+44 (0)1902 518591

John Traxler is Reader in Mobile Technology for e-Learning and Director of the Learning Lab at the University of Wolverhampton. He works with the University's Centre for International Development and Training exploring ways of using appropriate innovative technologies to deliver education in developing countries.

He is a Director of the International Association for Mobile Learning, Associate Editor of the International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning and was Conference Chair of mLearn2008, the world's biggest and oldest mobile learning research conference.

John has co-written a guide to mobile learning in developing countries and is co-editor of the definitive book on mobile learning: Kukulska-Hulme, A. and Traxler, J. (2005) *Mobile Learning: A Handbook for Educators and Trainers*, Routledge.

He has been invited to present at the South African national science festival, SciFest, at Rhodes University, and invited by Microsoft to the Mobile Learning Summit in Seattle and by the Canadian government to the ICTD conference in Bangalore. He will shortly start a two-months as visiting scientist at the Meraka Institute in Pretoria supporting mobile technology projects rolling out across South Africa.

He is jointly responsible for national workshops on mobile learning for UK universities and has delivered similar workshops to university staff in Germany, Kenya, South Africa, Canada and India.

He advises the Swiss BioVision Foundation on appropriate technologies to support Kenya farmers and worked with the Kenyan government implementing national support for teachers' in-service training using mobile phones and video. He works with IDRC supporting research capacity building projects in south Asia and with Avallain AG, one of Europe's leading e-learning system developers, and was the Evaluator for the EU FP6 m-learning project.

DAVID HOLLOW

Geography Department
Royal Holloway College
Egham, Surrey, TW20 OEX, UK
d.m.hollow@rhul.ac.uk
+44 (0)7881 781771

David Hollow is a final year PhD candidate in the ICT4D collective at Royal Holloway University. His research focuses on monitoring and evaluation of ICT for education initiatives in Africa, using reflection on applied case studies to critique and explore potential improvements to current practices.

David has widespread experience conducting partnership-based research with private sector and civil society organisations in Africa. Recently completed work includes evaluations for the Malawi Ministry of Education and Ethiopia Ministry of Capacity Building.

KENTARO TOYAMA

Assistant Managing Director, Microsoft Research India
kentaro.toyama@microsoft.com

Biography

Kentaro Toyama is assistant managing director of Microsoft Research India, which opened in Bangalore in January, 2005; he played a critical role in establishing the lab and is responsible for helping guide its direction and growth. In addition to his responsibilities to MSR India overall, Kentaro leads the Technology for Emerging Markets research group as a principal researcher, and is a co-founder of the IEEE/ACM International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD). Before being named assistant managing director of MSR India, Kentaro spent seven years in MSR Redmond, Washington, U.S.A., and in Cambridge, U.K., working on computer vision, multimedia and geographic information systems. Kentaro earned his Ph.D. in computer science at Yale University and received a bachelor's degree in physics from Harvard University. During the autumn of 2002, he took personal leave from Microsoft to teach mathematics at Ashesi University in Ghana.

RAHUL TONGIA

Senior Systems Scientist, Program on Computation, Organizations, and Society (COS)
School of Computer Science, Carnegie Mellon University
tongia@cmu.edu

Biography

Rahul Tongia is a faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University, and his research focuses on infrastructure and technology for sustainable development, especially for underserved regions such as India or Africa. Using quantitative policy and decision analysis, he has focused on the Information and Communications as well as the energy/power domains. In addition to engineering-economic analyses, his work also deals with broader policy issues such as security, international collaboration (especially US-India), and technology analysis and transfer.

His current work covers the broad areas of Digital Divide, ICT for Sustainable Development, Smart Metering for Electricity Networks, and Energy for Developing Regions. Being at Carnegie Mellon, an institution renowned for interdisciplinary research, he has been able to pursue these diverse topics through appointments in the School of Computer Science (Program in Computation, Organizations, and Society) and the Dept. of Engineering and Public Policy. He has a doctorate in Engineering and Public Policy from Carnegie Mellon, and a Sc.B. in Electrical Engineering from Brown University.

BALAJI PARTHASARATHY

ICICI Associate Professor, International Institute of Information Technology
pbalaji@iiitb.ac.in

Balaji Parthasarathy is the ICICI Associate Professor at the International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore, India. Balaji's interests focus on the relationship between technological innovation, economic globalization, and social change. Within this broad focus, his work follows two threads. One thread examines the impacts of public policy and firm strategies on the technological and organizational development of the ICT industry. Another thread deals with "ICTs for Development," or ICTD. Here his interests lie in understanding how ICTs are deployed in various domains of activity to transform social relationships, especially in less affluent contexts. Balaji has a bachelor's degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, and a PhD from the University of California, Berkeley.

ISHA RAY

Assistant Professor, Energy and Resources Group
University of California, Berkeley
isharay@berkeley.edu

Biography

Isha Ray joined the faculty of the Energy and Resources Group in January 2002. She has a BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Somerville College, Oxford University, and a PhD in Applied Economics from the Food Research Institute at Stanford University. Before coming to ERG, she was an analyst on economics and institutions at the Turkey office of the International Water Management Institute, and then a Ciriacy-Wantrup Postdoctoral Fellow at UCB's Geography Department.

Professor Ray's research interests are water and development; technology and development; common property resources; and social science research methods. Her research projects focus on access to water and sanitation for the rural and urban poor, and on the role of technology in improving livelihoods. Her research in California is focused on methods to elicit public perceptions of energy and climate change policies. She teaches courses on research methods in the social sciences, water and development, and environmental classics.

In addition to research and teaching, she has extensive past and ongoing experience in the non-profit sector on sustainable rural development in India, and international development- and freshwater-related issues.

HEATHER HORST

Associate Project Scientist, University of California, Irvine
hhorst@uci.edu

Biography

Heather A. Horst (PhD Social Anthropology, University College London) is Sociocultural Anthropologist at the Humanities Research Institute, University of California, Irvine whose research interests revolve around the relationship between information and communication technologies, culture and development. Dr. Horst carried out research on new information and communication technologies in Jamaica as part of a DFID-funded project entitled "Information Society: Emergent Technologies and Development in the South" that compared Ghana, India, Jamaica and South Africa. The very first ethnography of mobile phones in the developing world,

her co-authored book "The Cell Phone: An Anthropology of Communication" (Horst and Miller, Oxford and NY: Berg, 2006) explores the implications of the cell phone for development in rural and urban Jamaica. Dr. Horst's current work involves the study of mobile phone, gaming, internet use and digital media production in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, South and Southeast Asia, Africa and the Pacific Islands.

RENEE KURIYAN

Research Scientist, People & Practices, Intel Research
renee.kuriyan.wittemyer@intel.com

Biography

Renee Kuriyan is a Research Scientist at Intel Research, People and Practices Research. She received her PhD from University of California, Berkeley. Her dissertation work, focused in development studies, examined the political economy of ICT kiosks in South India (particularly looking at questions of states, entrepreneurship and interactions with citizens). Renee holds a Masters in International Affairs from Princeton University, with a focus in development studies and science and technology policy. She has conducted research on development issues (mainly in East Africa and India) with a range of organizations including UNDP, UNEP, International Finance Corporation, Microsoft Research India, and NGOs.

ROWENA LUK

Founder, AMITA Telemedicine Inc.
rowena@amitatelemedicine.org

Rowena Luk is founder of AMITA Telemedicine Inc, a non-profit whose mission is to improve the quality of healthcare in Africa through research, development, and deployments of information technology. Recently she has worked in collaboration with Intel Research in order to develop and deploy a telemedicine network in Ghana consisting of 5 major hospitals and 125 doctors from around the world. She has also developed mobile technologies for a cervical cancer screening project in Zambia, has worked on open-source medical record systems for Burundi in collaboration with Partners in Health, and is organizing an engineering outreach mission to Uganda in 2009. She holds a Masters in Information Management and Systems from the University of California in Berkeley, where she was an active member of the TIER Research Group. She also holds an undergraduate degree in Computer Engineering from the University of Waterloo.

JO TACCHI

Principal Research Fellow, Creative Industries Faculty
Queensland University of Technology
j.tacchi@qut.edu.au

Biography

Jo Tacchi holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from University College London. She is an Associate Professor in the Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation, Queensland University of Technology. She has specialized in research on radio and new media technologies and currently works on a range of media research and development projects in Australia and the Asia and Pacific region, including India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Jo has worked closely with UNESCO's Regional Bureau for Communication and Information for the Asia and Pacific region to develop and test the Ethnographic Action Research methodology. Jo is a co-author of *Action Research and New Media*, published by Hampton Press, 2008.