

SPECIAL SESSION ON HARNESSING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE USING DIGITAL TOOLS AND MEDIA

Sponsor: Institute for the Connectivity in the Americas

INTRODUCTION

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It is significant that the Elpub meeting this year is held in Brazil, as we need to acknowledge that while the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is now truly global, its development and diffusion is still highly uneven around the world. This Special Session brings together researchers and practitioners from various regions of the Americas who have extensive experience using ICT for various aspects of development and scientific advancement. The key objective is to share practical strategies for knowledge and community building using appropriate technology, and to exchange lessons on bridging “expert” and “lay” knowledge in the local as well as the global context.

Speakers at the session are asked to engage some of the following questions in the context of their work and practices:

- What do you consider to be local content and what types of local knowledge do you work with?
- How does your work create more effective mechanisms for increasing and improving the supply and access of local knowledge?
- Are digital media the most appropriate solution for providing access to local content?
- How does your work create added value to local knowledge so that it is more likely to be sought by users beyond the local community?
- What strategies do you use to integrate locally generated scientific knowledge with local content generated by experience?
- How does your work stimulate e-content creation and communication for local and global use?
- What financial, human resource, infrastructure and technical investments are needed to accomplish some of the goals stated above?
- What kind of training and learning programs need to be developed to facilitate local capacity building?
- What innovative uses of technology are effective, cost-efficient, and sustainable for local knowledge development and dissemination?

- Does the continuous strong push of content from the North threaten to overwhelm local knowledge and traditions and how would you address this imbalance?
- How could knowledge from the North be adapted so that it is relevant to local conditions?

While we recognize that ICTs and other media are providing new opportunities to strengthen local knowledge development, dissemination and exchange, we also recognize that different kinds of knowledge need to be treated differently. For example, the value and motivation for health information dissemination are different from that for information on biological diversity, although there are overlapping interests. Likewise, dissemination of information on agriculture and community development may require different treatments. For this reason, diverse practitioners of information sharing and designers of knowledge systems are brought together in this session to share their understandings of the challenges and opportunities offered by ICTs and various media.

The session is intended to be highly interactive, with ample demonstrations of projects that illustrate the theme of the symposium. Input from the audience will be encouraged and their comments will be recorded for a report.