Special Issue of IJCIM

Proceedings of the Second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society

Bangkok, Thailand. August 4 - 7, 2005
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International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society

Message from
His Excellency Thaksin Shinawatra
Prime Minister of Thailand

Learning and education can never be overstressed as one of the key fundamentals of society. Learning takes a lifetime, but its benefits last for a lifetime too. In this regard, Thailand needs a skilled workforce ready to adapt to new, unforeseeable challenges, if we are to realise our goal of a knowledge-based society.

Today, eLearning encompasses a variety of models such as using electronic means to disseminate quality learning to a wider audience. Distance learning is one such example and is today an integral part of our education programme to provide quality education for all Thai citizens, even if they live in the remotest of areas. eLearning also paves the way for knowledge-on-demand and lifelong learning. People should never feel too old to learn new things, and new media such as the world wide web now give people the opportunity to learn only what they need to know, when and where they want to learn it. Giving people a basic education is important; giving them the desire to learn all their lives is simply invaluable.

It is thus indeed a great honour for Thailand to host this inaugural International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society. The Conference should help expand our awareness of the importance of eLearning, not just as users, students and teachers, but as decision-makers and policy-setters in Thailand, and indeed the entire Asia-Pacific region.

(Thaksin Shinawatra)
Prime Minister
International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society

Message from Chairman and
Chief Software Architect, Microsoft Corporation

Vision for the New Knowledge-Based Society

Our common goal should be to provide every classroom in every school with Internet access. The Internet should be part of the curriculum, and we must help every teacher understand how best to use this incredible new tool. Every student starts out with amazing curiosity. They want to explore new subjects. They want to find kids who have similar interests. And the Internet is a fantastic means of letting people go out and explore things on their own. If it’s done properly, this knowledge can then be brought back to the classroom and shared with other students. We can also create a “connected learning community,” where parents can go online to see homework assignments and assist their kids in researching a topic. But in order for this to become a reality, school curriculums need to be redesigned to take full advantage of the technology.

The Internet is the most amazing tool for educators that has ever been created, but technology alone is not the answer. The answer is great teachers. We need to invest in preparing teachers for the modern classroom. Because for kids born during this decade, the Internet will be a fact of life. And, given the right opportunities, this generation will show us how to take full advantage of this amazing technology.

Children start out with lots of curiosity about the world, and, as I’ve seen with my own children, they devote an amazing amount of energy to things they’re interested in. But if an adult is too busy or can’t answer a question, or if a textbook fails to meet a child’s particular needs, their curiosity often withers.

The PC helps stimulate that curiosity and encourage children to learn, while at the same time helping parents become more involved in the process. They can see what their children are learning at school, keep track of homework that has been assigned, and work with teachers to ensure that their children are getting the education they need. And at home they can spend time with their children on the PC, keep an eye on what they’re using it for, and showing them how to use it appropriately.

I hope we can play a vital role in changing our society to become a Knowledge-based society. Best wishes for the conference.

Bill Gates

(Bill Gates)
Chairman and Chief Software Architect, Microsoft Corporation
Message from the Minister of Information and Communication Technology

Information and Communication Technology has made the world a smaller place and has brought nations closer together. But there remains a problem in the route towards the Knowledge-based Society for many nations, the great barrier which has become known as the Digital Divide. Access to ICTs are not an end in themselves, but they are a prerequisite. We cannot begin to talk about e-Commerce, e-Industry, e-Education, e-Government and e-Society without first talking about the “E”. Access to ICTs may not be the goal, but they are a prerequisite if we are to succeed in bridging the digital divide.

Individuals, and indeed, nations, who can afford to access new technologies are today living a life that was previously never thought possible, while those without are left behind. Those who cannot — or will not — understand ICTs are disenfranchised not just from taking part in the new knowledge-based society, but are also unable to enjoy the benefits that this new world order brings. Knowledge-based society places great demands on people, but at the same time, has much to offer them in return. Education is the key to enable people to see these new possibilities and to realise their own potential and thereby improve their quality of life.

If knowledge is the key to development and achieving our goals, then ICT holds the key to the development of knowledge. With a basic understanding of ICTs, people can start off on a journey of discovery. In the past, people studied and then used what they studied for their career for the rest of their life. Today, studying in school and university is only the beginning. What we need is not to study per se, but to develop the capacity to study and learn new things as we go along in life. To this end, ICTs have helped to accelerate this process. Today, success in business depends not on what you know, but how fast you can find new, relevant information to the task at hand. Business is increasingly being done at the speed of thought.

The Second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-based Society is important as it is a platform where academics, researchers and policy-makers can work together to share their knowledge and experiences and help to build our ICT capacity for a better future. It is an honour and a privilege for Thailand to host this conference for the second time. I am sure it will be successful again and contribute to a greater understanding of the benefits of eLearning and the development of Knowledge-based Society in the Asia Pacific region and beyond.

(Suwit Khunkitti)
Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Message from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology

It is a fact that we are living in an age where the input to industry is the power of the mind and where people are valued on their intellectual capacity. Perhaps most importantly, it is an era where people value learning and have the desire to learn new things and improve their lives not just during their school and college years, but throughout their lives.

Learning is changing. No longer do people learn only for a paper degree, increasingly they learn what they want to know, when they want to know it. The culture of knowledge on demand is with us and eLearning is the way forward for the future.

The high interest in the inaugural conference, held in August 2004, demonstrated that the need for eLearning has never been more acute. Over the past months, my staff and I have been working closely with Professor Srisakdi Charmonman and the conference organizing committee in arranging the 2005 International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-based Society.

It is indeed an honour for Bangkok to host this conference again. I am confident that the Conference will be of great success like the preceding one and continue to focus attention on eLearning not only in 2005 but indeed for many years to come.

(Kraisorn Pornsutee)
Permanent Secretary
Message from the Chairman of the Organizing Committee

Education is included in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). It is said that in the future more than 50% of learning will be in the form of eLearning, i.e. eLearning will be the mainstream and classroom-based learning will be the supporting part. The commercial value of eLearning will be greater than that of eCommerce, especially in Asia Pacific where eCommerce is not progressing as much as in the US. All countries, including those in Asia Pacific, are promoting eLearning because it is for “Anyone, anywhere and anytime”.

It should not be forgotten that “eLearning is learning through electronic means”. The emphasis must be on “learning” and not on “electronic”. Software for eLearning used to be very expensive a few years ago but free eLearning software packages are now available on the Internet.

It is less expensive now to produce eLearning courseware than it was a few years ago. Therefore, eLearning will make it possible for “everyone to be able to get equal opportunity in learning” and that will be beneficial to all concerned.

The Government of Thailand through the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology must be highly commended for supporting this Second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-Based Society.

In my capacity as the Chairman of the Organizing Committee, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Thailand, the ICT Ministry, the sponsors of the Conference, the speakers, the organizations whose representatives are members of the committee, the committee members themselves, the editors and staff as well as all other parties who have contributed to the success of the Conference.

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman  
Chairman of the Organizing Committee
Foreword

The educational potential of distance learning is endless but can only be realized by a cooperative effort of technological and educational experts that is aimed at achieving real and productive innovation. To foster such cooperation and an exchange of ideas, we are holding the second International Conference on eLearning for Knowledge-based Society. Organized by the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Asia-Pacific eLearning Association, the conference has the support of many organizations, including but not limited to the College of Internet Distance Education of Assumption University, Ramkhamhaeng University, Civil Service Commission of Thailand, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Kasetsart University, Mahidol University, TOT Public Company Limited, Higher Education Commission, Thailand Chapter of the Internet Society, Thailand Chapter of the ACM, Thailand Chapter of the Computer Society of the IEEE, Internet Association, and the Association of Thai Internet Industry. That such an extraordinary collection of institutions, along with equally extraordinary individuals, have come together bodes very well for the future of distance learning.

The face to face interactions that occur at the Conference are very exciting but if the conference is to have a full impact its findings and arguments must be made available to all in the field, whether or not they were able to attend the conference. For this reason the IJCIM is proud to contribute to the effort by providing for the publication of its papers. These proceedings will have an effect not only on those attending but on all those in the future who read accounts of the fascinating ideas and research that are found in the journal.

The scholarly papers from the conference that are included in this issue provide an interdisciplinary overview of the entire field of distance learning. The papers deal with the technological issues, the theory and practice of the educational content of eLearning, the training of professionals who can work effectively in the field, and the development of norms and standards. The conference and this publication will allow professionals and educational policy makers to gain a broad understanding of the entire field while allowing them to make contact with other interested workers, a development that promises to help further accelerate this rapidly changing field. These developments are to be institutionalized by the foundation of a permanent regional eLearning portal.

We at IJCIM and at Assumption University of Thailand are very proud to take part in this important educational endeavor by publishing the “Pre-Conference” proceedings as was done last year. Topics range from general country surveys and broad accounts of pertinent issues and themes to very specific technical papers on problems that need to be solved for the realization of this vital new educational technology. The diversity of articles has resulted once again in an illuminating document that will remain an invaluable reference source in the years when this journal is consulted by the next generation as they continue the effort to promote an ideal community.

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