

# **Welcome to the First Indigenous Knowledge Technology Conference**

**Heike Winschiers-Theophilus, Conference Chair IKTC2011**

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to the first Indigenous Knowledge Technology Conference (IKTC2011) in Windhoek, Namibia. It is so exciting to see the realization of, what was, just a vague idea borne from the desire to bring together a critical mass of people engaged in studying indigenous knowledge systems and designing new and different technologies to support the representation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge.

Our aim for this conference is to pursue a critical dialogue that considers the tensions arising in representing indigenous knowledge digitally and the factors that contribute to these tensions. Through this we intend to identify opportunities and new epistemological and methodological perspectives that will enable developing technologies that can extend the practices of indigenous knowledge and support the emergence of local socio-technical systems globally.

We chose the theme of IKTC2011, “Embracing Indigenous Knowledge Systems in a new Technology Design Paradigm”, to raise awareness to fundamental differences between indigenous knowledge systems and the knowledge systems that underlie technology development. Many indigenous communities, especially those in rural places, have few opportunities to appropriate new technologies emerging in ubiquitous computing settings, such as social networking sites or virtual and augmented realities. While numerous initiatives aim to enable diverse, and often remote, communities to share their wisdom and practical know-how with conventional digital technologies; however, often, these endeavours overlook their mis-match with the very systems that indigenous people use in daily life to organize and make sense of the world. To design digital infrastructures for currently unserved knowledge systems we must account for the transformations that occur as technology interacts with the ways of knowing, doing and being that constitute indigenous knowledge systems.

We proudly present a great selection of reviewed submissions and invited and in-progress work from four continents and we are delighted to welcome presenters who, between them, represent Namibia, the southern African Region and overseas, in equal measure. We are also so pleased that you, amongst IKTC2011 delegates, come from such a wide range of sectors, practices and academic disciplines and include, to name but a few: technologists, researchers, artists, local practitioners, policy makers. We hope that you will engage with these many different viewpoints towards our common goal: the adequate representation of indigenous knowledge systems. And, thus, together, make IKTC2011 a platform for intense knowledge exchange across these spheres, in networking and in establishing new joint projects.

To create a new paradigm we need to challenge some of the existing boundaries between cultural forms, be they between academic disciplines, between sectors or between technology and everyday practice. IKTC2011 encompasses a fascinating mixture of contributions, including paper presentations, panels, workshops, interactive demonstrations and posters, exhibitions and performances. These works explore a variety of aspects important to representing and disseminating indigenous knowledge, from collecting and protecting data to suitable technology solutions, as well as conceptual, reflective and practical issues. We encourage you to think about the exhibitions and performances, presented by local artists, poets and dancers, as essential carriers of indigenous knowledge and an encounter with different realities, rather than purely entertainment. A rapporteur/respondant, accompanying each performer or performance group, will elaborate on deep meanings in the presentations and facilitate a dialogue between the performers and yourself, the conference delegate. We warmly invite you to use these opportunities to extend your understanding of what is required in designing, developing and deploying alternative technologies. Further, to ensure an all-embracing immersive experience of indigenous knowledge systems, we are delighted that local women will share with us their art of traditional food preparation which you, and other conference delegates, can taste at the Conference Reception in the National Museum.

The conference takes place in the capital of Namibia, a country rich in history, cultural diversity and natural beauty. We are thrilled that we can offer you, and other conference delegates, the unique pleasure of Namibia's natural environment during the conference dinner at Okapuka, one of the many lodges close to the city that offers game drives. With some 60% of Namibia's two million inhabitants living in rural areas, a vast amount of local and traditional knowledge is held by the elders in rural villages without having yet been digitally recorded. While English is the national language, most Namibians have a different mother tongue which they use in everyday life to communicate verbally, such as Oshivambo, Otjiherero, Damara, Kwangali, amongst many others. Currently, African indigenous languages, as an important means to express local worldviews are not part of formal education systems. However, the Namibian government is committed to document, validate, protect and explore commercial values of indigenous knowledge systems.

Lastly I would like, whole heartedly, to thank the people and organizations who committed themselves to make IKTC2011 a reality and a success. Please read the pages in these proceedings that acknowledge the support of: the hosting institute; the involved ministries and partners; IKTC2011 sponsors; the conference organization team; and, the programme committee of reviewers and meta-reviewers from all around the globe. Besides, my deep appreciation for the great many supporting IKTC2011, I wish to mention the two people by my side who put so much energy, despite their many other commitments, in organising the conference in the last year. Dr. Nicola J Bidwell, or "nic", was part of the original idea and ensured that the contributions meet international standards while including as many types of perspectives as possible. To do so she recruited, consulted and coordinated an expert review team, carefully designed and applied acceptance criteria, undertook cycles of shepharding authors and edited and formatted submissions. Moreover, her support in the entire organization beyond the Programme Chair duties were invaluable. The other most indispensable person in realizing this event is Rosalia (Mrs. Ngolo), who most of you have been in contact with, at one time or the other, as she was responsible for all organization support, logistics, finances and communicating with participants, sponsors, internal support units, and organizers. Despite spending many many unpleasant hours following-up, Rosalia always maintains a warm and friendly approach.

To conclude my warm welcome I hope that IKTC2011 will fulfill, and better still exceed, your expectations and, importantly, will benefit indigenous communities as well as the designers of technology. I wish you a pleasant and enriching stay.

