

ICASIT

INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR APPLIED STUDIES IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
School of Public Policy, George Mason University

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Check out the ICASIT
Web site to learn more
about ICASIT projects.

What's New at ICASIT?

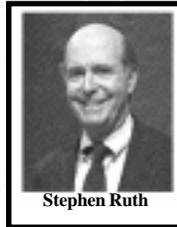
Since the spring newsletter the major ICASIT emphasis has been on international projects. If you get a chance to visit the ICASIT site you will find a map of the world showing our thirty-one project sites on four continents (select the international tab). ICASIT has received several million dollars from foundations for projects aimed at delivering Internet connectivity to research centers in developing nations. We make it easier for them to link to their colleague institutions in the U.S.: Princeton, Johns Hopkins, University of North Carolina, and many others. ICASIT has recently added two new capabilities that further this international emphasis. First, we have developed a significant new database, which has already made possible several interesting research projects. See, for example the recent paper on the digital divide in Africa, available at ICASIT site—the data base makes it possible for us to share research approaches with many other organizations. Lately we have been augmenting the database with new indicators, like worldwide statistics on gender equity, women in parliaments, freedom of the press, corruption, etc. Jiwan Giri and Ming Li, both Ph.D. students, manage the database.

The second specific area of international focus is our new effort on examining the impact of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) diffusion on Islamic nations. Our global data base easily shifts between the 56 predominantly Muslim nations to the 24 Middle East countries, to the 22 Arab states and allows us to make comparisons, analysis of variance etc. with greater efficiency.

We have also offered a masters level elective course for the school of Public Policy called Islam and the Internet. Since the work at ICASIT is interdisciplinary in the fullest sense, please contact me if you have interests in any of our work. We have collaborated with about a dozen units on campus over the past five years —so please join us! □

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The course site can be viewed at
<http://www.icasit.org/classes/itrn701009fall2002/>



Stephen Ruth

New Course Focuses on Islam and the Internet

In keeping with the increased interest in Islam spurred by last fall's terrorist attacks, Stephen Ruth, a professor in the School of Public Policy, presented a new graduate course this fall, Islam and the Internet: Telecommunications and Technology in the Muslim World. The course examined the diffusion of Internet and other information technologies in the more than fifty countries where Islam is the predominant religion. It focused on the public policy ramifications of the Internet age, and was a continuing part of a series of semester-long seminars that examine the problems inherent in coaxing profitability from information technology.

Topics explored included how the increasing use of the Internet and electronic commerce in delivering government services will change standards of living in the Muslim world; how serious a problem the digital divide presents and what can be done to alleviate its effects; what economic effects broadband proliferation may have in Muslim nations; and what role telemedicine and other Internet interventions will play in reducing death rates due to starvation in the world's poorer countries.

"It's a very interesting body of knowledge," says Ruth, who assembled a broad range of materials to be supplemented by guest speakers with regional and technical expertise. Ruth made extensive use of online resources and student-centered research projects in the course, using a blend of audio, visual, web-based, and traditional lecture approaches. Half of the class meetings took place in a traditional setting and the other half through distance learning settings. The course was open to graduate students from all disciplines, and no previous technology or public policy course work was required. The course content will also be a segment of the Spring 2003 graduate seminar Managing the Digital Divide, (PUBP 736) □

For more information contact
sppnews@gmu.edu

Russian Student Completes On-Line Course

Dr. Kingsley Haynes, dean of GMU's School of Public Policy, recently presented a certificate of completion for a course in International Electronic Commerce to Dmitry Skripichnikov, a graduate student in

engineering, at Moscow State University. The course, managed by ICASIT and taught by Professor Steve Ruth, was done completely online with assignments and exercises submitted and reviewed through Internet based resources. Lectures in streaming video are available online, along with many classroom audio seminars, with accompanying slides. In sending the certificate to Dmitri, Dean Haynes said, "I hope it will be possible to extend the reach of our courses to many of your colleagues at Moscow State University." □

The course site can be viewed at <http://www.icasit.org/classes/itrn701002summer2002/>

Afghanistan to Zimbabwe: ICASIT Develops New Database

Recently ICASIT completed a six-month project aimed at developing a research data base of technology and human development indicators for one hundred ninety-two nations. Professor Steve Ruth, ICASIT director, feels the new database is unique because it combines traditional technology numbers, such as telephones per capita, Internet usage, telephone lines per capita, with social data, like the various human development indices, per capita income, and the like. "We are particularly interested in data on the Muslim countries," says Ruth, who teaches a graduate course called Islam and the Internet. "There are almost sixty nations that can be legitimately classified as being predominantly Muslim, and our data base facilitates studies of these nations in the context of technology diffusion." Professor Laurie Schintler as well as Ph.D. students Jiwan Giri, Ming Li, Lei Deng, Xinxoa Ding and Sean Gorman have been working on the project. "The data base is constantly being updated," says Giri. "With tens of thousands of entries, we stay busy, but there are many opportunities for individual and group research." □

New ICASIT Research on the Digital Divide in Africa

ICASIT recently completed a new report summarizing public policy issues related to the digital divide in Africa. The report, prepared for the Italian journal *Africa e Mediterraneo* compared Information and Communications

Technology (ICT) data for the 12 largest African countries. "Africa has less than one percent of the world's Internet host sites and many of the countries have governments that are classified as 'not free' on the Freedom House scoring system," said Stephen Ruth, ICASIT's director. The report suggests three areas of national policy emphasis.

ICASIT's analysis brings up several fundamental challenges for Africa as well as other regions of the world where technology deployment rates are below global averages. The ICASIT report cites a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) finding about global Internet capacity: the entire bandwidth of Africa, most of which is deployed in South Africa, is roughly equivalent to the bandwidth of the city of Sao Paulo, Brazil; and the entire bandwidth of South America is roughly equivalent to that of Seoul, South Korea. This enormous disparity between the "have" and "have not" nations in the context of ICT is particularly noticeable in Africa, concludes the ICASIT report. □

Contact ICASIT for excerpts of the report at jgiri@gmu.edu

KMRT Hears "Evangelist"—Theme is Leveraging Distance Learning

Jay Chaitzel and Clay Dean, co leaders of ICASIT's Knowledge Management Roundtable (KMRT), hosted the fifteenth meeting of the group, October 15 at the George Mason Law School, in Arlington, VA. The main speaker for the session was Brook Manville, Chief Knowledge Officer and Customer Evangelist for Saba Software. Manville's topic was "Next Generation E-Learning: Successes, Pitfalls, and Lessons Learned From the Brief History of 'A New Way of Working.'" □

The KMRT session was designed to spark small group breakout sessions on topics related to the talk. As usual in these ICASIT-sponsored KM events, there were many representatives from the nearly 140 organizations that participate in KMRT. Examples of attendees' organizations: Naval Facilities Engineering Command, World Bank, Department of Energy, Knowledgegemax, KMPRO, IBM, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Department of Justice, GWU, ESI International, Progressive Practices, Department of the Navy CIO, Dell, EduTech and Engenuity.

<cont...>

Whereas e-learning, like many other major thrusts of the knowledge era, is often touted as a panacea, Manville candidly discussed the limitations and opportunities for e-learning, and provided an especially valuable view of the context and relationships necessary for learning to make a positive, strategic difference for an organization. Several key success factors are: encouraging more sophisticated and innovative approaches to blended learning and personalization; allowing learning and e-learning to become more invisible; making learning more worker-centric and manager-centric; Implementing Infrastructures that become broader, deeper, more powerful, and cross-enterprise. □

Further information may be found at <http://www.icasit.org/km/kmrt/index.htm>

Snapshots

ICASIT Welcomes

Sarasin Booppanon

Sarasin is a first-year Ph.D. student at the School of Public Policy, George Mason University. He joins ICASIT with an interest in Knowledge Management, E-Government, and Distance Learning. Sarasin holds a Master degree in Corporate Law from New York University in 2001. Last year he worked at a finance company in Thailand. He graduated with a Bachelor of Laws from Chulalongkorn University and subsequently passed the bar exam and received Barrister-at-Law in Thailand.

Ming Li

Ming is pursuing a Ph. D. degree in George Mason University's School of Public Policy. His research focus is international trade and international policy. Before going back to school, he worked in China's Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation and participated in China's WTO accession process. Ming holds a bachelors degree in management and a masters degree in economics from Nankai University, China.

~ Editor ~
Cory Nishi