A word from the Conference Chairs

IDIA, the *International Development Informatics Association*, is an association serving as a forum and network for international cooperation between individuals and organisations focusing on research into the use of ICTs by developing societies. This field of research is also known as *ICT4D*. IDIA was established as a platform to share initiatives, ideas, theories, practical problems and the many challenges facing the introduction of ICTs in developing societies and communities.

IDIA was founded in 2006 and has held national workshops on Development Informatics, as well as several international conferences. IDIA2014 is the 8th international conference, held in Port Elizabeth, South Africa.

The divided world is still with us after half a century of projects, policies, economic aid and thinking about ways to bridge the many divides among humans. Many divides have been identified, such as social, economic, political and gender-based divides. ICT4D is about a socio-technical approach to the role of ICTs as interventions and tools to address the divides.

When development projects began in the 1950s, there were few computers in the world. Paper post and radio communication technologies dominated with TV slowly increasing in use. Today the world is very different, and access to information and communication technologies are pervasive, even in the so-called developing world. The main issue of concern is which role ICTs can play in such contexts. Over the past two decades thinking about the role of ICTs in developing contexts has also changed. There is yet no theory in the discipline of development informatics (or *ICT4D*). Practitioners are still grappling with appropriate approaches, philosophies, and models.

IDIA conference themes attempt to address the most pressing issues, and share practical experiences from the field. This year, 2014, is no exception. We are still grappling with divides and notions of inclusivity.

The double-blind peer reviewed conference papers deal with various themes: from reporting on the practicalities of projects and fieldwork reports to methodological and model creation topics.

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