PNC 2015 Annual Conference and Joint Meetings, University of Macau Exploring the Effect of Taking Data into the Public Domain

The 2015 Pacific Neighborhood Consortium (PNC) and Joint Meetings were held for the first time at the University of Macau from September 27 to 29. The theme of this year's conference was "Taking Data into the Public Domain". The conference explored the revolutionary effect of Big Data as information data merged into our daily life and permeating into every public domain through instant and interactive linkage. The operationality of data production, transmission, storage, edition, reformation, interpretation and massive quantities of data had not only brought infinite possibilities for public decision making and commerce, but also had stirred debate on ethics, privacy and human rights. This year, Dr. Fan-Sen Wang, Vice President of Academia Sinica led nearly 50 domestic scholars to attend the conference. The conference attracted more than 200 experts and scholars from over 10 countries throughout the region.

The conference included four keynote presentations. The first keynote speaker, Professor Peter K. Bol, Vice Provost for Advances in Learning, and Charles H Carswell Professor of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, delivered a presentation entitled "Private Data, Public Goods". Professor Bol discussed how language, writing, action, sharing, decision and learning were once personal data, but had now become public goods available to others for a price, highlighting the importance of ensuring that data is used for public good. Professor Bol also explained the international phenomenon of Massive Open Online Courses by using "The China Lesson, ChinaX at Harvard University" as an example.

The second keynote speaker, Dr. Jane Win-Shih Liu, Distinguished Visiting Chair of the Institute of Information Science, Academia Sinica, delivered a presentation entitled "Disaster Risk Reduction Data, Challenges in making them Open". Dr. Liu is a renowned expert on real-time system. Dr. Liu provided insights into surveillance systems and participatory sensing systems in developed regions, where numerous observational data had been collected as a reference for decision-making by governments, businesses and other nonprofit organizations. If the data on inventory of life-saving supplies, structures and functional characteristics of buildings were available at critical times, it could prevent disasters, save lives, reduce property damage and make emergency response and rescue operations safer and more efficient. Many governments had made data about local public shelters and medical care facilities available online. The latest challenge for governments is how to set up a quick response mechanism, which includes accountability-based information brokerage services and management systems that can prevent disaster and reduce disaster risk.

Dr. Sheng-Wei Chen, Research Fellow at the Institute of Information Science, Academia Sinica

presented a keynote presentation entitled "Computational Social Science: The Collaborative Futures of Big Data, Computer Science, and Social Sciences". Computational Social Science is a young field of study that has started to embrace human behavior, sociology, psychology economics, political science, and even computer science, revealing new possibilities for solving the challenges in our society today. For example, the dynamics in social systems, risk assessment in financial systems, and inequity in economics. Researchers can use cross-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary information to review topics to gain new academic interpretation and perspectives.

The fourth keynote speaker is the world renowned computer scientist, Professor Lionel M. Ni, Chair Professor and Vice Rector of Academic Affairs at University of Macau. Professor Ni delivered a talk entitled "What is the Big Idea Behind Big Data?" Professor Ni explained why Big Data is a hot topic but shrouded in mystery. Few of us realized its multiple applications to various domains of human endeavor, from business to science and engineering, and from social service to public security. Professor Ni gave the audience a glimpse into the great promise of Big Data and elucidated how Big Data could change our way of thinking and even new technology itself. Realization of Big Data requires the tight coupling of ideas, data and technology, from which we can harvest deep insight and great value from Big Data. Lastly, he addressed what governments should do to harness the super-abundant opportunities in the Big Data era.

In addition to the keynote sessions, there were 29 sessions explored at the conference of this year, including 11 workshops held by Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative, Academia Sinica, the Chinese Academy of Science, and the Chinese Academy of Social Science to share experiences of information systems and centers, open data and popular science. Other topics included digital libraries, digital learning, intellectual property rights, privacy laws, biodiversity, geographical information systems, e-Learning, MOOCs (massive open online courses). The cultural heritage of Macau werealsointroduced including such topics as the Archives and Materials of the Macao Diocese and Macau Memory Project.

The Pacific Neighborhood Consortium (PNC) was founded in 1993 at the University of California at Berkeley with mission to enhance digital research and interaction among educators, professionals, and researchers throughout the Pacific Rim. The consortium aims to foster exchanges of academic resources and culture between the East and West through computer information technologies. In 1997, PNC administrative operation was transferred to Academia Sinica.

Related Websites:

http://pnclink.org/about/about-1-1.htm

http://www.pnclink.org/pnc2015/english/index.html