

PIP REPORT : PACINET 2006

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PacINET 2006 : The Digital Pacific

Day One opened with the CEO of MICT welcoming all delegates to PacINET 2006. I was very impressed with the level of interest and vision that the Samoan Prime Minister Hon. Tuilepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi has for the development of ICT in Samoa.

The analogy of the Internet as a virtual super highway that pose similar dangers to those associated with physical highways was an interesting presentation. Martin Cocker of Netsafe whose Internet Safety presentation covered the dangers of the Internet was an impressive and informative session. Since arriving in the Solomon Islands, I have been actively pursuing avenues through which I can actively raise the awareness of Internet users in the Solomon Islands on online safety.

“Bridging the Barriers of Distance: online Learning with Diplo Foundation” by Fuatai Purcell was of particular interest to me in my capacity as a student currently undertaking the DiploFoundation’s Capacity Building Programme which discusses Internet Governance. The concept of Internet Governance is new to me and subsequent discussions on this issue especially on the IG Forum provided me with an opportunity to expand my knowledge on what I had learnt during the course.

Keynote address: Vinton Cerf

Meeting Dr. Vinton Cerf was a privilege. His vision for the Internet and interest in its development in the Pacific Region is motivating. The simplicity with which he explained this vision makes it easier for Pacific Islanders to comprehend the future development of the Internet and how we can embrace the technology and utilize it to our advantage. His presentation on deep space network for inter-terrestrial Internet communication was visionary. Data retention was a contentious issue highlighted during his keynote address in which he highlighted that newer and more advanced software and programs should have the ability to still retrieve and interpret “previous bits” from our past. He also highlighted the ownership of the Internet – who owns it and what policies are relevant to its governance. He also touched on issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights and the fair use or indexing of digital libraries.

Open Source

Certain topics in open source were of particular interest to me. The implementation of a PBX system by Franck Martin was interesting since my experience in PBX systems is limited to analog/digital handsets. The use of VoIP PBX presented a newer approach to the traditional systems I had been exposed to. Although, Phil Hardstaff spent considerable time discussing network monitoring with focus on Windows utilities, discussions that followed highlighting open source equivalents of these utilities was interesting and opened up a lot of options for consideration.

My work colleagues, Bryan Scott and Ben Hall’s discussions on Content Management Systems provided a simple working solution for the deployment of websites. This is a very practical solution for Solomon Islanders and FFA in particular.

PacINET 2006 Participation

As a board member of PICISOC, I was able to assist in PacINET 2006 by carrying out tasks assigned to me by PICISOC executives. Aside from these tasks, Rajnesh Singh and Franck Martin, the PICISOC president and his vice, were very helpful in ensuring that I actively participated during the PICISOC AGM.

As PacINET 2007 will be held in the Solomon Islands, undertaking these different responsibilities during the conference gave me a deeper insight into how the conference is run and what we can do to improve PacINET 2007. I understand that the task is enormous and being accepted as the HostOrg Committee Interim Chair for PacINET 2007, I feel being close to the PacINET 2006 organizers and learning from them was an added bonus. I am very determined to see that the Solomon Islands HostOrg Committee maintains contact with the Samoan organizers in preparations leading up to this conference in 2007.

Women in Information Technology (WIT SIG – PICISOC)

I have gained greater confidence in public speaking through active participation in Women in Information Technology forums and workshops. I was able to make a presentation during a WIT workshop on the possible reasons why the uptake of women in ICT in the Solomon Islands remains low. This was the result of a 3 month survey carried out in 2 of the countries leading high schools. These workshops have also enlightened me on how other Pacific Island countries have embarked on attaining a balance between women and their male counterparts. WIT, before PacINET, was rudimentary in structure but through interaction and dialogue during PacINET, we were able to establish contacts with women in IT in other Pacific Island countries and were able to formulate a more focused aims and objectives for WIT. I have also learnt that progress of women in ICT in Pacific island countries have differed to the situation in the Solomon Islands. By interacting with other successful women in the region, I am able to identify how much effort, resources and education Solomon Islands needs to put into the efforts on raising the profile of ICT to women in the Solomon Islands. I was especially pleased with this outcome.

My trip to Manono Island to witness the successful implementation of wireless Internet access to rural Samoan schools on the island was enjoyable as it was practical. Other trips to the telecentre on Upolu impressed me on how women in communities can help to bring and sustain Internet technology in rural areas.

IPv6

Miwa Fuji of APNIC presented a day long tutorial on IPv6. Personally, she clarified a lot of misconception I have had about address allocations and the implications of how IPv6 will impact the region. One of the interesting issues highlighted by Franck Martin in regards to IPv6 which highlights the uniqueness of Pacific Islanders is the case of Tokelau. There are approximately 10,000 people in the country and the allocation of smallest block of IPv6 to the country would far exceed its needs and at a cost which is simply unsustainable. Although it is important that Pacific Islands countries keep abreast with the changes in technologies and policies that will affect them, certain exceptions must be seriously considered as highlighted in the Tokelau case.

FOSS WORKSHOP

28th - 31st August 2006

I was pleased with making the effort to utilize the PIP Fellowship to also allow me to spend an extra week in Samoa to attend the FOSS Workshop conducted by Dr. Marko Schutz at the SPREP headquarters, Vailima, Apia.

SHARING ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE

I am already actively pursuing ways to increase the uptake of women in IT and focusing my attention on pre-degree students in high schools and IT graduates in the Solomon Islands. Using the WIT model, I hope to establish a local WIT grouping for Solomon Islands women.

My husband, Lynnold Wini, and I are also currently pursuing a project with the Betikama Adventist College with the aim of teaching basic web development skills to their students enrolled in computing studies at the University of the South Pacific Foundation Programme. The outcome of this project will be the deployment of a website for the college using Drupal as a CMS. This project is undertaken purely on voluntary basis with no financial remuneration for our participation. This project if successful will be used as a modal for implementation in other high schools in Honiara. One of the most important objective for this project is the development of local content and to embark on initiatives to educate students on online safety. Inevitably we will also encourage the participation of women in these projects as a prerequisite. We are also trying to encourage other Solomon Islands IT professionals to be actively involved in such projects aside from their immediate work responsibilities.

This project will not duplicate PFNet initiatives because we believe PFNet is deploying appropriate technology for rural advancement but our initiative focuses on empowering people to use these tools to create local content and be responsible citizens in the Online Community.

In my capacity as Interim Chair for the HostOrg Committee for PacINET 2007, I am actively working on involving resources persons within the public and private sectors to assist in the hosting of this important ICT conference within the region.

PacINET 2006 has also motivated me to actively participate on discussions relating to the development of a national ICT policy and I sincerely hope that PacINET 2007 will be a catalyst for this to eventuate. I envision PacINET 2007 to be a forum where all the key stakeholders in ICT in the Solomon Islands will utilize to acknowledge the importance of ICT for Solomon Islands and its implications on the national and global level.

CONCLUSION

PacINET 2006 has surpassed all my expectations and I am very thankful to PIP for providing me with an opportunity to expand my knowledge on ICT issues and how technology affects us on a local and global level. Thankyou PIP, especially Don Hollander and everyone else associated with PIP Fellowship programme.