

PacINET 2006 Report

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Overview of PacINET 2006

“PacINET is a regional conference for practitioners, developers, researchers and those interested in ICT from all sectors to exchange information on the system design, enabling technologies, and anecdotal experiences related to the use of ICT in the Pacific Islands.”¹

PacINET 2006 was hosted by the Samoan Information Technology Society (SITS) in Apia, Samoa from the 21st – 26th August 2006. The main conference venue was the SamoaTel Conference Centre at Maliufa with one session being held at the Samoan National University.

Agenda – PacINET 2006

PacINET 2006 was designed to strike a balance between the technical and non-technical issues regarding ICT. Being from a technical background, I was particularly interested in the technical discussions, however, I also had interest in non-technical issues such as network neutrality and initiatives within the Pacific Region that utilised ICT.

The discussions on Networking and Monitoring were of particular interest to me in my profession as an Assistant Engineer – Webmaster. Being responsible for the administration of our web server, it is important that I am aware of how to effectively monitor the traffic that crosses our network. Furthermore, discussions on Content Management Systems (CMS) also highlighted the need for Solomon Telekom Company Ltd to deploy a CMS to effectively administer its corporate website. I am preparing a proposal and a design of a CMS system to address this issue.

Discussions on IPv6 sparked a new area of interest for me. Although, it does not relate to my specific area of duty the knowledge gained from the tutorial conducted by APNIC’s Miwa Fuji has certainly help me to attain a better understanding of this issue and be aware of the implications IPv6 will have on ICT globally and also in the Pacific Region.

Sessions on Diplo and Internet Governance directly related to my current undertakings as a student at Diplo. Topics such as Network Neutrality touched on issues covered during our course and covered aspects of human rights which I am researching in the second phase of the Diplo training course. A forum on Internet Governance was especially interesting.

I also learnt a great deal of things in relation to Online Safety in the presentation by Martin Cocker. I believe it is imperative that as we embrace new technology, we must also enable people to be especially aware of the pitfalls and the dangers associated with it. I believe it is a vital ingredient for development in the Pacific Islands and I hope that I can influence policy makers in the Solomon Islands to implement such initiatives in any national ICT strategy. Building online communities using blogs was an interesting presentation.

One of the sessions which I had particular interest in was the discussion on “Fostering in-Country Computer Clubs and Societies”, primarily because Solomon Islands does not have an IT society and it would have been particularly interesting to learn how to

¹ Introduction: PacINET, <http://picisoc.org/tiki-index.php?page=Pacinet+2006#Introduction>

champion this initiative in the Solomon Islands. Unfortunately, Mr. Don Hollander had to return to New Zealand. However, the Solomon Islands delegates to PacINET 2006 agree that our successful bid to host PacINET 2007 may be a catalyst to start an IT society for Solomon Islands ICT professionals.

Manono: The Wireless Internet Experience

Having participated in the installation of wireless internet access for Manono Island was a highlight for me during PacINET 2006. Although, the technical issues and installations were already in place, being part of the initial group who went to Manono to witness the first test was an unforgettable experience.

FOSS Training: SPREP Headquarters, Apia, Samoa

I was able to utilise the PIP Fellowship to attend a 4 day FOSS Training at the SPREP headquarters in Apia, Samoa from the 28 – 31st August 2006. It was conducted by Dr. Marko Schutz from the University of the South Pacific.

Special Interest Groups (SIG)

A number of Special Interest Groups were formed during the PICISOC AGM and in subsequent discussions following the AGM to address issues in ICT.

I volunteered for membership to the SIG on VoIP, IPv6 and FOSS. This decision was taken because of my interest in these specific technical fields.

PacINET 2007: Honiara, Solomon Islands

Apart from the wealth of information acquired and the contacts that have been established, one of the biggest achievements we made was to present a bid for hosting rights to PacINET 2007. Although we had gone to PacINET 2006 with individual interests in hosting this conference next year, there was no collaborative discussions prior to our attendance in Samoa. However, we were able to collectively agree amongst ourselves to plan and present a bid during the PICISOC AGM on Wednesday 23rd August. My role, as an appointed Secretary of the HostOrg Interim, was to prepare the bid document including the slide presentation for our Chairperson. That was an interesting experience.

Press Releases

I was asked by PICISOC to write Press Releases for the duration of the conference. I wrote the press releases for the opening of PacINET 2006, a summary of three days of conference and a final press release for the closing of PacINET. I also wrote a press release for various media outlets in the Solomon Islands on Solomon Island's successful bid to host PacINET 2007 in Honiara.

Finance

The financial assistance given to me was adequate because I had saved a considerable amount of money to complement the assistance given by this fellowship.

I am especially impressed with the level of trust Pacific Islands Partners has placed on the recipients to organise and dispense the funds where it was needed. That level of trust was the motivation behind spending the fellowship's financial assistance wisely.

I was able to use the same funding to attend the FOSS Training that followed PacINET 2006.

Conclusion

I have been overwhelmed with the hospitality of the Samoan people. In addition to this, I believe the Samoan IT Society did an excellent job in ensuring that the conference met the expectations of those of us who attended for the very first time.

The personal contacts that I have established and the opportunity to discuss ICT issues with a pool of professionals was the best gain for me at PacINET 2006. We will certainly continue our liaising with the Samoan IT Society to ensure that we can meet or even surpass the expectations of delegates to PacINET 2007.

The opportunity to meet one of the founding fathers of the Internet was certainly an honour for me. There is no sure guarantee that Dr. Vinton Cerf may be in Honiara so listening to him address Pacific people on his visions for the Internet was certainly an overwhelming experience for me.

I am very thankful for the PIP Fellowship which enabled me to participate in PacINET 2006. I have gained considerable confidence which has enabled me to discuss with my senior peers on issues about ICT in the Solomon Islands. This fellowship has also enabled me to learn from the experience of others and that knowledge can then be transferred my colleagues, both my subordinates and superior. My department manager has been especially impressed with the knowledge I have acquired from PacINET 2006 based on a report I have submitted to him.