

## Community Informatics

This mini-track provides one of the key international platforms relating to issues concerned with community informatics (CI), the study of the application of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to the social, economic, political or cultural goals of communities. CI as an approach begins with the perspective that ICT can provide a set of resources and tools that individuals and communities can use, initially to provide "access" to information management and processing and thus with "access", to pursue their goals in such areas as local economic development, cultural affairs, civic activism, and community based health and environmental initiatives. CI pays attention to the needs and objectives of communities and looks at how technology can support the achievement of those objectives. Thus, a CI approach is concerned with both the technology and the "user" (and the "uses"); and with community processes, user access and technology usability as well as systems analysis and hardware or software design. CI takes into account the design of the social system and culture within which the technology resides, as well as the technology system with which it interacts.

We take a wide view of community informatics so as to include relevance to developing as well as developed countries and rural as well as urban communities. As such CI is a technology strategy or discipline which links economic and social development efforts at the community level with emerging opportunities in such areas as electronic commerce, community and civic networks and telecentres, electronic democracy and on-line participation, self-help and virtual health communities, advocacy, cultural enhancement and others. We welcome papers that contain original ideas and examples of practical application and implementation of information technology in CI contexts.

As the CI approach is integrating the insights of Sociology, Social Psychology and Anthropology with the broader understanding of applied systems, there is a considerable interest in linking these understandings into the remarkably parallel processes of "virtual" communities. The dialogue between those with an interest in "geocommunities" and those concerned with "virtual communities" proved to be an exceptionally rich one at HICSS-34 and it is proposed to extend and deepen that dialogue at HICSS-35. In that context we have included as co-Chairs for our Mini-track those with an interest in both geo and virtual communities.

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