From the Editors

Looking Back, Moving Forward

We are delighted to conclude the inaugural volume of *Information Technologies and International Development* with a Special Issue devoted to the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

The three goals of *Information Technologies and International Development,* from the very beginning, have been: analytic excellence, to be reflective about our work in this emerging field, and to create a community of engaged scholars and thoughtful practitioners from around the globe. As we come to the end of our first volume year, we believe we have been able to meet all three goals. The articles have been of a high quality; the authors willing to situate their work in the context of other contemporary research in the field; and in our search for global community, *ITID* has consistently drawn the interest and engagement of scholars and practitioners from every continent and across many professions and epistemological positions. With 8 Research Articles, 4 Research Notes, Reports, and 43 Forum essays across the initial four issues, we have tried to bring to our readers both depth and range. We have not always achieved all that we wanted, but we are satisfied that this first volume takes promising steps toward what we hope will be a sustained, engaging, and productive journey for all of us.

This Special Issue on the World Summit on the Information Society exemplifies our three-part mission. Creating a mutually respectful epistemic community is especially important in a new field of research such as development and IT. We designed this volume to provide a follow-up forum for WSIS participants, creating a shared discourse and community among people coming from every region, ideological position, and professional background. Befitting a forum, the issue contains a diversity of views and we worked diligently to gain a representative balance to the essays.

Furthermore, we believe that the thirty-five Forum pieces are pointed, but thoughtful and reflective; they situate themselves within the many political, cultural, and intellectual currents of our modern information age, and then carve out their own unique positions.

We are also fortunate to have two longer research contributions that provide more sustained, detailed analyses of selected aspects of the Summit. Cogburn reports on his poll of WSIS attendees and the attitudes and behaviors of participants from nongovernmental organizations, and Klein offers a thoughtful treatment of the relationship between form and function in the Summit.

In Issue 1:2 (Winter 2003) we wrote an editorial making two points about the then-upcoming Geneva summit. First, we predicted that relative to the millions spent preparing for and hosting this gargantuan global get-together, the practical results from the official meetings would be modest. We stick by that evaluation. The modest results of the meeting could have been achieved much more economically and with fewer political entanglements under a different design.

Our original editorial also foresaw a real opportunity for the Summit to tackle some of the tough knowledge questions that confront us: identifying and communicating best practices and lessons learned, as well as critical, realistic, and robust assessments of on-the-ground realities. Certainly, some discussion of best practices did occur in various parts of the ICT4D platform (the honest self-assessments of the Malaysian delegation in their panel presentation comes to mind, as does the warning of pitfalls and promises during some of the infoDEV panel). But, to our tastes, there was not enough serious written reflection available at the Summit. And, as expected, the main plenary activities were more an opportunity to market success than to honestly reflect on the ground realities. A real opportunity was missed.

What we failed to appreciate fully in this earlier editorial, however, was just how much momentum, ambition, and resources had been bubbling up among various civil society actors. This exciting and explosive sentiment in Geneva marked the conference from beginning to end, and will certainly carry over to Tunis.

We were fortunate to have as partners in this Special Issue some wonderful colleagues at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School. They approached us about the possibility of collaborating on a project that would critically examine the WSIS and seek out the opinions of its participants. Our initial conversations blossomed into the issue you have before you. We are especially thankful for the hard work and good cheer of Berkman's Colin Maclay who served with us as the issue Co-Editor.

The opportunity to work closely with friends and colleagues at this excellent institution has been fruitful and now we are looking for opportunities to extend this model. We are in discussions with colleagues at other institutions about opportunities to co-edit additional special issues. And, indeed, we welcome other suggestions along these lines from our readers.

With a year to go before the Tunis meeting we have several other expectations and ambitions for *ITID* and how it can further contribute to this ongoing dialogue.

- First, we hope this Special Issue of the journal will reach the hands of many who will attend the second session, and that it will prove helpful in framing and evaluating the past meeting and planning for the next.
- Second, we expect that some among you will be inspired to respond to the opinions, perspectives, and proposals herein. We invite your commentaries and scholarly contributions.
- Third, based on the levels of interest and reactions to this issue, we are contemplating the preparation of a second Special Issue (or perhaps a larger edited volume) that will try to capture further reflections on the WSIS, the road to Tunis, and on the kinds of results we should expect from the second summit.

Vote of Thanks

We end Volume 1 of *ITID* with our sincere thanks—to our board members (noted on the inside front cover), our authors (listed in the Index to Volume 1 which is at the end of this issue), those contributors whom we were not able to publish in this inaugural volume, and our publishers at the MIT Press. Special thanks to our editorial assistant, Tanja Owe, who is often the actual voice behind many e-mails marked with our names. Many thanks to Dorothea Kleine who has ably served as our new managing editor. And very special thanks to all of our readers, who ultimately decide whether *ITID* is to survive and prosper. We have tried to meet your high expectations. If you have gained from this first year, as we hope you have, we urge you to take out a subscription or ask your organization to do so. And as

always, we invite your manuscript submissions, your commentaries on our performance to date, and your ideas on what you want to see from *ITID* in the future. You can always reach us at itid-ed@mit.edu.

Finally, our thanks to the many referees who have provided superb criticisms of the research papers submitted. We have been delighted by these thoughtful and probing peer reviews, and we are certain all of the authors have benefited enormously from them. Thank you to each and every reviewer here listed: Olugbenga Adesida, Raymond Akwule, Elizabeth Alexander, Jon Alterman, Jon W. Anderson, Eleonora Badilla-Saxe, Subhash Bhatnagar, Chris Blattman, Antonio Botelho, Sheryl Brown, Stephen Browne, Robert Bruce, Diane Cabell, Janet Cahn, Antonio Carvalho, Jeff Cochrane, Derrick L. Cogburn, Royal Colle, Aditya Dev Sood, Carter Eltzroth, Will Foster, Hamish Fraser, Rob Frieden, Iddo Gal, Sharon Gillett, Anil K. Gupta, Nagy Hanna, Anne Holohan, Robert Horwitz, Heather Hudson, Magda Ismail, Mike Jensen, K.J. John, Calestous Juma, Tim Kelly, Sangbae Kim, Geoffrey Kirkman, Richa Kumar, Chad Leechor, Mingzhi Li, Gareth Locksley, Colin Maclay, Catherine Mann, Lee McKnight, Andrew McLaughlin, Sunil Mehta, Michel Menou, Peter Meso, Bakhtiar Mikhak, Alemayehu Molla, Milton Mueller, Hema A. Murthy, Sharvari Nerurkar, Carlos A. Osorio-Urzua, Claudia Padovani, Durga Prasad Pandey, Meredith Pearson, Alex (Sandy) Pentland, Ben Petrazzini, Mitchel Resnick, Rafal Rohozinski, Warren Sack, Rohan Samarajiva, Rajeev Sangal, Nitin Sawhney, Audrey Selian, Hani Shakeel, John Sherry, Jerzy Szeremeta, Alex Tan, William Tetteh, Joseph Thomas, Claudia Urrea, Stefaan Verhulst, Joachim von Braun, Kelvin Wong, Nor Adnan Yahaya, and Gaston Zongo.