From the Guest Editor

Selected Papers from ICTD2016

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This Special Section of *Information Technologies & International Development* (*ITID*) presents selected papers from the International Conference on Information and Communication Technologies and Development (ICTD2016) held in Ann Arbor, Michigan June 3–5, 2017. This was the eighth iteration of the conference and marks the conference shift from an 18-month to an annual cycle.

Scholars from India, Pakistan, South Africa, and elsewhere presented 28 full papers. They were selected from 95 double-blind, peer-reviewed submissions and are available online at the ACM Digital Library: http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id 2516604 and http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id 2517899.

As guest editor I selected four articles that were among the highest rated (in terms of their review scores) to be reviewed again and then revised by their authors for this Special Section of *ITID.* In addition to being high-quality research, these articles reflect the breadth of methods and disciplines that epitomize the ICTD community, including those who study ICTs, those who build them, and those who ask the bigger questions that must be considered in the field. Significantly, these articles also reflect a broader trend within the community, that is, expanding the scope of its concerns beyond traditional areas within socioeconomic development (e.g., health, education, livelihoods) to include a wider range of activities (e.g., repair, privacy, women's empowerment). These articles also draw attention the diversity of people engaged in activities of relevance to ICTD research.

The first two articles examine mobile phone repairers. In their article, "Caring for the 'Next Billion' Mobile Handsets: Proprietary Closures and the Work of Repair," Houston and Jackson ask, "What might we learn from studying the precarious lives of mobile devices?" They draw on findings from their fieldwork in mobile repair workshops in Kampala, Uganda and describe the ways that repair extends the life of mobile handsets. More broadly, they draw attention to the "notion of care" in ICTD research. Ahmed, Guha, Rifat, and Shezan use multiple methods to investigate privacy—an established topic of interest in computing—but one that has not been fully considered in developing regions. One of the authors spent three months in a few of Dhaka, Bangladesh's mobile phone repair workshops and learned about the ways an individual's privacy can be compromised during the repair process, especially the loss of control over one's personal data. The authors also administered a survey among Bangladeshis to investigate their perceptions of privacy. Subsequently, the authors built *Protiraksha,* a mobile application "to explore what users would think about a software intervention to approach the problem of privacy." Findings from each of these efforts inform a discussion that reflects on the links between privacy and development.

Nguyen, Chib and Mahalingam interviewed Vietnamese foreign brides in Singapore, asking about their mobile phone use and the multiple ways the devices "empower" them. The authors make theoretical contributions to discussions about "the empowerment roles of ICTs" and conclude that ICTD researchers must work toward developing an "intersectional awareness" of the communities they study. Finally, Parthasarathy and Aoyama use an "evolutionary perspective" to critique ICT deployment studies. More specifically, they want to know "how changing conceptions of development have shaped ICT deployments." Drawing on two case studies of multinational enterprises and NGO partnerships in India, they conclude that ICTD deployments should seek new forms of innovation (i.e., frugal innovation) and new types of partnerships to build inclusive interventions.

Collectively, these articles illustrate in rich detail the complexity and diversity of people's lives and their

interactions with ICTs. The articles also encourage researchers to reconsider assumptions about ICTs and empowerment and to think more deeply about factors affecting deployments.

I thank the people who made the conference and this Special Section possible, in particular, Lakshmi Subramanian, who served with me as the papers cochair for the conference. Special thanks to Janaki Srinivasan and Carleen Maitland for overseeing the notes submissions at ICTD2016 and for helping develop the final program. It has been a pleasure to work with Arlene Luck and Jillian Kwong, who both played a significant role in creating this issue. Lastly, special thanks to Kentaro Toyama for organizing ICTD2016, for always providing thoughtful answers to my conference-related questions, and for inspiring me (and others) to continue to examine, understand, critique, and refine the persistent and pervasive hope that ICTs can support human development. ∎

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