From the Editors

Open Access Publishing and the Creative Community

This issue marks a milestone for *Information Technologies and International Development* as we transition from a journal of 'atoms and molecules' to one of mostly 'bits and bytes'. With this issue we will cease publication under a paid subscription model and with Volume 3 transition to an open-access publishing approach, with all content freely available on-line and open to all interested readers. Print versions will still be available on a fee basis. This will be the MIT Press' first foray into open access journal publishing and we are thrilled that ITID will be at the frontier.

Open access publishing is very much in keeping with the core mission and philosophy of ITID. It will allow us to reach scholars and practitioners at institutions that might not have been able to afford our earlier subscription rates, especially those in low-income countries. Furthermore, open access publishing will significantly enhance the overall readership of the journal, increasing our impact and boosting the value we offer to our authors. Meanwhile we will maintain the same level of rigor and substance expected from the MIT Press.

To celebrate this transition we hosted a workshop at the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis on November 18, 2005. Entitled "Creativity, Culture and Capacity", the workshop was co-organized with the Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard Law School and was sponsored by Microsoft and the Global Information Infrastructure Commission. The session brought together accomplished and interesting colleagues from all walks of life to debate the meaning and importance of creativity in the transition to an information society. It was truly a community of 'engaged scholars and thoughtful practitioners'. Panel presenters included noted academics, inventors, government ministers, authors, senior officials of international organizations—as well as two musicians, Ethiopian jazz legend Mulatu Astatke and North American hip hop artist Paul Miller, AKA 'DJ Spooky that Subliminal Kid.' The creative sparks were truly flying in the room, and one senior panelist told the group it was the most enjoyable panel he had seen in Tunis. Since many of the participants were authors ITID had published in our first two volume years, this was truly a happy blending of our efforts at global community building and world class publishing.

It is our feeling that most observers of the information revolution devote considerable attention to hard infrastructures, technical applications, and immediate public policy priorities. We certainly agree that these are critically important for the transitions to an information society. Yet we also believe that too often ignored are the 'softer' elements that are equally central to sustain the information society: issues like creativity and innovation, culture, and local capacity.

A huge challenge is for all communities to integrate these various elements more effectively. A bedrock value—and capability—of a global networked society must be that all communities, rich and poor alike, become 'innovation makers' and not merely 'innovation takers'. The question our panelists

and speakers addressed was how to help local innovators and their allies become more creative; indeed, to nurture a local culture of creativity.

National authorities in developing countries ignore culture, creativity, and capacity at their peril. Infrastructures and applications are essential; but fostering cultures of creativity and innovation, with the local capacities to match, are essential if LDCs are to continue growing, enhance their position within international systems, and maintain social cohesion and local community.

We will return to this theme in subsequent ITID issues, and we strongly encourage authors to submit essays and research papers on innovation and local capacity, and on the 'softer' elements of information technologies and international development. Several essays in the journal's pipeline address the Tunis meeting more generally, as well and these elements more specifically. And we refer readers to ITID's Special Issue on the World Summit on the Information Society, Geneva, that appeared last year (Volume 2 Issue 2/3).

As ITID makes the transition into our open-access future, we pledge to our readers to continue the same high quality analysis and balanced reflection necessary to meet the challenges of applying information and communication technologies to international development.

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