

The Promise of International Digital Library Collaborations for the Academe, Faculty and Students

Keynote by Ching-chih Chen

Abstract:

In the last decade, we have witnessed how the Internet has changed our world in every conceivable aspect -- everything from how we communicate, learn, conduct research, deal with information, do business, receive health care, and dealing with our governments at all levels. In higher education, networked-based learning and education has become a reality, and the information needs of academe, faculty and students can be met by global collections and resources far beyond their own academic libraries.

With the fast and powerful global network communications, the infrastructure and environment are naturally inductive for all kinds of international collaboration prohibited with the barriers of physical distance before. Thus, "digital libraries" have offered new meanings and potentials to academe, faculty and students. In this Internet era, we have witnessed the exciting convergence of content, technology, and global collaboration. For the first time, academe, faculty and students can benefit from the rich contents and treasured resources of other higher education institutions and organizations of other countries at the point of needs. The old model of "owning" the collection on site has given way to "sharing," and the new emphases have shifted from the large "physical libraries" to "virtual libraries" all over the world.

Admittedly we are still a long way from the realization of a "global digital library" which the speaker has advocated for over a decade. Universal access to needed information regardless format, subject and type has poses great challenges to those who are involved in digital library development and will require considerable and continuing research and development efforts. Yet, convergence of content, technology, and global collaboration has spelled out clearly the requirement components.

In this talk, the speaker will share some of her own experiences in all these areas and transformations -- from the creation of the award-winning interactive videodisc and multimedia CD-ROM, called *The First Emperor of China*, in mid- and late-1980s, to her current international digital library project, called *Chinese Memory Net*, supported by the US National Science Foundation, as well as the latest China-US Million Book Digital Library Project, of which she is a co-PI with Dr. Raj Reddy of Carneige Mellon University, in cooperation with twelve most well-known universities in China under the joint sponsorship of the National Science Foundation, the Chinese Ministry of Education, and high-tech industry.