

CALL FOR BOOK CHAPTER PROPOSALS

Impact of Information Society Research in the Global South

The Strengthening Information Society Research Capacity Alliance (SIRCA II) invites submission of extended chapter proposals indicating interest for inclusion in the upcoming of SIRCA II volume. Volume I entitled *Linking Research to Practice* presented the core objective of research capacity-building by: firstly sharing management perspectives on the genesis of the SIRCA programme; secondly addressing theoretical, methodological, and ethical concerns on information society research of the academic community; and finally, showcasing the research outputs of selected projects. SIRCA I took a first step towards examining the broader impact of information society initiatives by extending the discussion of boundaries of academic research into the realm of practice in terms policy and programmes. The proposed 'Volume II' of the SIRCA book series further encompasses this investigation of the examinations and discussions on *impact within the information society*.

Objective

In discussing information society research, the international scholarly community has taken an assortment of approaches to question the various *impact aspects on the wider population*, ranging from those answering the question "impact of research" such as policy formulation, media coverage, implementation in practice, to those addressing "research on impact", i.e. end objectives of socio-economic development. There are thus two aspects this book hopes to address from the Global South:

1. "Impact of research": How is the research on ICTs in the Global South playing a role in achieving the Information society?
2. "Research on impact": What is the evidence of the impact of ICTs on society?

Furthermore to this inquiry, a variety of sub-questions arise: How have research projects influenced development policy decisions? How is the media formulating the public discourse on outcomes of development projects? How have development programmes reduced the level of inequality? How have development programmes and research projects (and others) changed the lives of individuals and the society?

The topic of research and its impact within the information society particularly from the Global South perspective offers immense potential for exploring the possible expansion of definitions, theoretical approaches, methods of evaluation, leading to discussions and debates within information society and the ICTD research communities.

As for applied evidence-based cases which measure impact, a preliminary investigation by the editorial team¹ examined the notion of impact in the three information society domains of mFinance, mHealth, poverty, and a cross-cutting theme of gender. Our literature review led us to some preliminary ideas and findings:

¹ SIRCA Programme Officers Kathleen Diga, and Laura Leon, and Yina Song under the guidance of Arul Chib

- The definition of impact is *varied*: the variation ranges from macro-structural, meso-social to micro-individual levels and could be seen as a technological output, an enquiry into adoption and appropriation levels, and/or behavioural or attitudinal changes; *but rarely are there cases which provide a link between these levels.*
- The definition of impact can be *limited*: dimensions of impact rarely go beyond strict boundaries of socio-economic advancement; particularly in examining influence on policy, legal frameworks, public opinion, or practical solutions *and when impact is measured, this can be too general and unrelated to specific recommendations (such as the Millennium Development Goals).*
- The literature on impact has tended to be optimistic: When projects are bordering on technological-determinism, there is a noticeable lack of critical perspectives or explanations for the failure to show evidence of credible and verifiable impact.
- The impact recorded under individual domains tends not to overlap, failing to provide a deeper sense of context and inter-relationships, or acknowledging the cross-cutting themes that are necessarily at play.

We seek both 1) a conceptual and 2) evidence-based studies in order to promote meaningful discussion on the impact of research in information societies in the global south. Hence, the proposed SIRCA II volume aims to both provide an agenda-setting platform for discussion, definition and debate, as well as a forum for showcasing empirical evidence from the individual research projects sponsored by SIRCA II. We declare a preference for including divisive notions and diverse opinions from a varied group of scholars, as a prelude to greater cohesiveness. We invite chapter proposals from scholars and practitioners, particularly SIRCA stakeholders, working both individually and together, on the following themes:

- “Definition(s)/Meanings” of impact (including philosophical orientations, within the Information Society/ICTD context;
- How research from the global South has been documented in its journey to influence the greater information society;
- Trends, linkages, and dis-connects in the impact of Information Society/ICTD research on development policies, law, public opinion, and practices;
- Impact of information and communication technologies within the fields of, including but not limited to, education, gender, health, livelihoods, poverty, in the Global South;

The call is open to all SIRCA participants (and selected invitees); however, SIRCA PIs and Collaborators are highly encouraged to participate both individually *and* collaboratively, and are given preference. The selection of manuscripts will go through a rigorous editorial-review process. We are adopting a developmental reviewing approach to the volume, with iterative feedback from the editors to authors periodically, as well as platforms and venues for peer-review and collaboration. Budget permitting, we plan a publication workshop to achieve a high quality output. Review and workshop attendance does not confer acceptance – final decisions on inclusion will depend on quality of final submissions.

Submission Guidelines

- Authors are invited to submit high quality and original work that is not under review in any other publications, namely, journals and/or books. Final chapters will range from 6000-8000 words.
- The author should submit an extended outline of 600-800 words, not including references.
- Submissions must be directly sent to the publication coordinator, Ms. Yina Song at yina.song@ntu.edu.sg.
- Submissions must be in MS Word (or similar open-source format) and should be labeled with your name (e.g. JohnSmith_SIRCAII_Impact2012).
- Complete guidelines for prospective authors will be made available on the SIRCA website

Important dates

Indication of interest (email)	: 21 October 2012
<i>Proposal (600-800 words) submission deadline</i>	: 30 November 2012
Notification of review results (includes publication guidelines)	: 30 December 2012
<i>Draft chapter (6000-8000 words) due</i>	: 01 March 2013
Publication workshop (Budget permitting)	: 18 May 2013
<i>Final manuscript due</i>	: 01 August 2013
Decisions on acceptance	: 01 October 2013

Co-editors

Arul Chib, Assistant Director, Singapore Internet Research Center

Julian May, Director, Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape

Roxana Barrantes, General Director, Instituto de Estudios Peruanos