

Content is Power

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PUBLISHED FROM

D - 307 FF
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Digital content is one of ICT's cornerstones. Its value against other ICT devices reflects the strength of its inherent value and is also a matter of sustenance of ICT-for-development paradigm. What ICT actually delivers is of great importance to the ICT user community. Consequently, its effective management is a great concern for any ICTD policy matrix. Currently this pillar of ICTD enabled framework is under constant monitoring and questioning from both visible and invisible camps. But there is no dearth of ICT deployments. A proliferation of ICT experiments and pilots over the past one decade or so has grown to a mega proportions.

According to reports, India has emerged as one of the largest country to have ICT deployments with the latest 100,000 Common Service Centre national tele-centre programme. Within India, states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana has witnessed large number of ICTD deployments in recent times. Many with great successes.

As countries around the globe indulge in ICTs for development, the spread of such technology drives leads to increasing uncertainty, undermining the confidence and trust of any such ICT thrust and in its inherent strength. This technology focus has led to half baked returns due to marginal focus on actual content services delivery through various ICT delivery channels. For the layman, this turns out to be some sort of 'technology vagueness' with devices everywhere swamping community space but no actual content services for them.

Not to overlook the sincere efforts across countries in creating digital content framework within identified limitations.

It is amazing to see content efforts in undeveloped countries like Guatemala, Rwanda, and Guyana as well as in developing countries like Philippines, South Africa and Bahrain. The applications in developed countries like Austria and China give therefore, ample scope to exchange and learn from each other's experience. Equally relevant are the practices in South Asian region in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India. It is timely to trace all these multi-sectoral and multi-efforts in digital content and linking the same from time to time. And there are already efforts towards this through global platforms.

The 2008 Internet Governance Forum held in India raised key critical areas in Internet Governance and digital content - content accessibility, affordability, democratic nature of digital content, monitoring and regulation. The hosting of the World Summit Award 2009 Grand Jury in India brings to focus the digital content and its relevance world wide.

The 40 country experts, called as Grand Jury, being hosted by Govt. of India through the Department of Information Technology, Ministry of Communications & Information Technology from April 2-9, 2009 is assembling to select some of the world's best digital content practices in various categories having mass impact and relevance in solving public service delivery and governance gaps.

The one day India Digital Content International Summit on the eve of the Grand Jury process brings in focus the nuances of digital content to settle development gaps using digital technology and content solutions. The launch of the "India Digital Content Forum" during this event processes equally brings in focus the need for an intelligent and

swift response for desirable consequences which is real.

Everyone in the ICT bandwagon understands just where the problem is. We also know where absence and lack of thrust on digital content leads to. In the course of ICTD development, one must have found out by now, just like any development intervention, there had been lack of co-ordination between various stakeholders involved in ICTD to address various digital content criticalities and this had led to an appalling state of affairs wherein 60-70 percent of initiatives have failed to give desired outcomes.

In this special issue, we have accumulated at least 20 countries' e-content and ICT scenario and moreover hundreds of best practices as selected by the country experts. It is a great moment for India where hundreds of such best practices are being looked at and through this issue of d-Content, one has a list of global knowledge repositories through which many cross-learnings could be realised.

Knowledge society and economy, the foundation of a country's strength and confidence, requires a logical and uncompromising response. The content needs and issue areas may seem secondary in priority but its absence and resultant consequences are very real. There is no way out except giving wider scope to content matters in policy and debates. Let's join hands to make ICT work for development through best content delivered.

Cheers!

Osama Manzar

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CASELET

Governance through Oral Medium



Phone to the rescue, can be summed up as the title of this photo essay as the then District Collector of Sagar of Madhya Pradesh Administration thought of coming up with instant solutions to the problems facing the people through phones and on to radio. People could call LIVE the District Collector and hear him answer their query instantly over his radio sitting at home. The initiative won the Manthan Award in 2007.