

Internet Researchers' Conference 2017 (IRC17) Bengaluru, March 03-05, 2017

Organised by the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS)¹ in partnership with the Centre for Information Technology and Public Policy, International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B)²

Call for Sessions

IRC17: Key Provocations

Two critical questions that emerged from the conversations at the previous edition of the Conference (IRC16) were about the **digital objects of research**, and the **digital/internet experiences in Indic languages**. As we discussed various aspects and challenges of 'studying internet in India', it was noted that we have not sufficiently explored how ongoing research methods, assumptions, and analytical frames are being challenged (if at all) by the **becoming-digital** of the objects of research across disciplines: from various artifacts and traces of human and machinic interactions, to archival entries and sites of ethnography, to practices and necessities of collaboration.

We found that the analyses of such **digital objects of research** often tend to assume either an aesthetic and functional **uniqueness** or **sameness** vis-à-vis the pre-/proto-digital objects of research, while neither of these positions are discussed in detail. Further, we tend to universalise the English-speaking user's/researcher's experience of working with such digital objects, without sufficiently considering their lives and functions in other (especially, Indic) languages.

These we take as the key provocations of the 2017 edition of IRC:

- How does the **becoming-digital** of the research objects challenge our current research practices, concerns, and assumptions?
- How do we appreciate, study, and theorise the functioning of and meaning-making by digital objects in **Indic languages**?
- What **research tools and infrastructures** are needed to study, document, annotate, analyse, archive, cite, and work with (in general) digital objects, especially those in Indic languages?

¹ See: <http://cis-india.org/>.

² See: <http://citapp.iitb.ac.in/>

Call for Sessions

We invite teams of two or more researchers and practitioners to propose sessions for IRC17. We do understand that finding team members for a session you have in mind might be difficult in certain cases. Please feel free to share initial sessions ideas on the **researchers@cis-india** mailing list.³ Also, please keep an eye on the list to see what potential topics are being discussed.

All sessions will be one and half hours long, and will be fully designed and facilitated by the team concerned, including moderation (if any). The sessions are expected to drive conversations on the topic concerned. They may include presentation of research papers but this is **not at all** mandatory.

If you plan to organise a session structured around presentation of research papers, please note that we are exploring potential publication outlets for a collection of full-length research papers. If your session is selected for IRC17, we will notify you of guidelines to be followed for the submission and review of full-length papers prior to the conference. If you are interested in this publication possibility, **please indicate** that in your session proposal submission.

Sessions that involve collaborative work (either in group or otherwise), including discussions, interactions, documentation, learning, and making, are **most welcome**.

Further, we look forward to sessions conducted in **Indic languages**. The proposing team, in such a case, should consider how participants who do not understand the language can participate in it. IRC organisers and other participants will play an active role in making such engagements possible.

The **only eligibility criteria** for proposing sessions are that they must be proposed by a **team of at least two members**, and that they must engage with **one (or more) of the three key provocations** mentioned above. Further, the teams whose sessions are selected for IRC17 must commit to producing **at least one post-conference essay/documentation** on the topic of their session.

The **deadline** for submission of sessions proposals for IRC17 is **Friday, October 21**.

To propose a session, please send the following documents (as attached text files) to **raw[at]cis-india[dot]org**:

- **Title and description of the session:** The session should be named in the form of a hashtag (check the IRC16 sessions for reference⁴). The description of the session should clearly state what the key focus of the session is, and which of the three central concerns it will address. The description should be approximately **300 words** long.

³ See: <https://lists.ghserv.net/mailman/listinfo/researchers>.

⁴ See: <http://cis-india.org/raw/irc16>.

- **Session plan:** This should describe how the session will be conducted and moderated. Any specific requirements (technical, language support, etc.) of the session should also be noted here. This should not be more than **200 words** long. If your session plan involves presentation of research papers, please indicate whether you would be interested in having these papers considered for academic publication.
- **Documentation plan:** This should indicate how documentation will be done during the session, and more importantly what form the post-conference essay/documentation will take and what issue(s) it will address. This should not be more than **100 words** long.
- **Short Abstracts (Only for Sessions with Paper Presentations):** If your session involves presentation of research papers, please share a **250 words** abstract for each paper.
- **Details of the session team:** Please share brief biographic notes of each member of the session team, and contact details.

Session Selection Process

October 21: Deadline of submission of session proposals.

October 31: All submitted sessions will be posted on the CIS website, along with the names, biographic brief, and contact details of the members of the session teams.

November 01-30: Open review period. All session teams, as well as other interested contributors, may review the submitted proposals and share comments directly with the session teams, or discuss the session on the researchers@cis-india list. The session teams may fully and continuously edit the proposal during this period, including adding/changing session teams.

December 01: Open review ends and voting begins. All session teams will select 10 sessions to be included in the IRC17 programme. The votes will be anonymous, that is which session team has voted for which set of sessions will not be made public.

December 23: Voting ends.

January 02: Announcement of selected sessions.

February 12: Deadline for selected session teams to submit a detailed session plan, information about which will be shared later. If a selected session involves presentation of papers, then the draft papers are to be submitted by this date (no need to submit a detailed session plan in that case).

Venue, Accommodation, and Travel

The conference will take place at the International Institute of Information Technology Bangalore (IIIT-B) during March 03-05, 2017.⁵

The conference does **not** have any participation fees. The organisers will cover **all** costs related to accommodation and hospitality during the conference. We look forward to offer a limited number of (domestic) travel fellowships for students and other deserving applicants. We will also confirm this on **January 02, 2017**.

About the IRC Series

The Researchers at Work (RAW) programme⁶ at the Centre for Internet and Society (CIS) initiated the Internet Researchers' Conference (IRC) series to address these concerns, and to create an annual temporary space in India, for internet researchers to gather and share experiences.

The IRC series is driven by the following interests:

- creating discussion spaces for researchers and practitioners studying internet in India and in other comparable regions,
- foregrounding the multiplicity, hierarchies, tensions, and urgencies of the digital sites and users in India,
- accounting for the various layers, conceptual and material, of experiences and usages of internet and networked digital media in India, and
- exploring and practicing new modes of research and documentation necessitated by new (digital) objects of power/knowledge.

The first edition of the Internet Researchers' Conference series was held in February 2016.⁷ It was hosted by the Centre for Political Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University,⁸ and was supported by the CSCS Digital Innovation Fund.⁹ The Conference was constituted by eleven discussion sessions (majority of which were organised around presentation of several papers), four workshop sessions (which involved group discussions, activities, and learnings), a book sprint over three sessions to develop an outline of a (re)sourcebook for internet researchers in India, and a concluding round table. The audio recordings and notes from IRC16 are now being compiled into an online Reader. A detailed reflection note on the IRC16 has already been published.¹⁰

⁵ See: <http://iiitb.ac.in/>.

⁶ See: <http://cis-india.org/raw/>.

⁷ See: <http://cis-india.org/raw/irc16>.

⁸ See: <http://www.jnu.ac.in/SSS/CPS/>.

⁹ See: <http://cis-india.org/raw/cscs-digital-innovation-fund>.

¹⁰ See: <http://cis-india.org/raw/iirc-reflections-on-irc16>.