Introduction to the Cultural Knowledge Minitrack

David T. Croasdell  
University of Nevada, Reno  
davec@unr.edu

Nilmini Wickramasinghe  
RMIT University, Australia  
nilmini.wickramasinghe@rmit.edu.au

This minitrack includes manuscripts that presents research that focuses on the use of cultural or indigenous knowledge in knowledge based systems. Cultural knowledge is that knowledge particular to a subgroup of a population. Understanding cultural knowledge facilitates the exploration of values, beliefs, and behaviors in any culture and provides a perspective for comparing and contrasting cultures. For example in a diverse culture such as the United States there are many sub-cultures with their own knowledge such as ethnic groups, activity focus groups (such as rappers or skate boarders, or organizational sub cultures), or other groups formed on some demographic premise. Indigenous knowledge focuses on that knowledge, frequently contained in oral systems, that has evolved over the time that Native Peoples have inhabited their homelands. For example, Knowledge Systems of outsiders are discussed by indigenous peoples in North America such as Native Americans, First Nations People, and Alaska Natives as 'Western' knowledge. Indigenous knowledge also applies to rather homogenous populations that migrated to, and settled in, an area and have remained settled in that area for generations. Such populations are noted for maintenance of customs, language, and beliefs that their ancestors brought to the new location. In addition, story-telling, to convey the customs and beliefs, are a component to these populations, as they are to more traditionally defined indigenous populations. Cultural knowledge may be similar to indigenous knowledge but may have a much shorter history and may be conveyed through its own language and online communities. Such knowledge systems are, in many respects, endangered. Cultural groups may be short lived or if long lived, may be in danger of being sublimated into larger cultural groups. Indigenous peoples throughout the world are subject to external events, such as disease and war, which have annihilated certain populations in the past. In addition, efforts by outsiders to have the indigenous population assimilated into their world views frequently resulted in the loss of knowledge. Three papers are presented this year. Brief introductions are provided below. The mini-track chairs would like to thank the reviewers who have evaluated the papers for this mini-track. We anticipate conference goers will enjoy the paper that are presented.

Inquiring Knowledge Management Systems - A Chinese Medicine Perspective. This paper uses a mixed research method to study a case clinic in the context of Chinese Medicine (CM) clinical medicine management system. Different inquiring systems are analyzed to identify that CM can be more easily mapped as a combination of Hegelian and Kantian inquiring systems where multiple perspectives and facts as inputs are considered and analyzed in complicated tasks. These two inquiring systems also have characteristics to cater for formal data analysis but the outcome or solution maybe individual and/or non-predefined.

Fotohistorias: Participatory Photography as a Methodology to Elicit the Life Experiences of Migrants. This paper presents the rationale and deployment for a participatory photography approach to elicit the life experiences and worldviews of a community. The Fotohistorias participatory technique involves conducting interviews with potential participants, giving them digital cameras and asking them to take photos of their lives, followed by conversations with the participants about their photos and the experience of taking them. While offering a space for reflection, Fotohistorias explores how undocumented migrants at the U.S.-Mexico border express their identities and the reality of their everyday lives through the photos they take and the stories they tell.

The Role of Strategies of Practice-Based Learning for Becoming a Member of a Community of Practice. The paper examines mechanisms for introducing new members to an engineering community practices. Strategies and mechanisms for helping newcomers become knowledgeable members of a community are characterized in order to help engineers avoid decisions and actions that could lead to catastrophes.