

APRU Internet Business Offsite: “The Internet in Asia: Looking Ahead to 2025” March 10-11, 2015

The APRU Internet Business Offsite brought together a group of leading corporate executives from major Internet related businesses and academic experts associated with major Internet research centers in the Asia Pacific and beyond for a wide-ranging dialogue on “*The Internet in Asia: Looking Ahead to 2025*” March 10-11 in Tokyo’s landmark International House of Japan.

While the Internet is just decades old, it already is an ubiquitous presence, globalizing business and transforming the nature of the university. Nowhere is the pace of change faster than in the Asia Pacific region. The Offsite challenged the fifty-plus participants to look over the horizon, extrapolating from current trends to assess the state of the Internet in Asia in 2025.

Corporate representatives include senior executives from Apple, AT&T, Daum Kakao, Fujitsu, Google, Facebook, GE, Intel, Microsoft, NTT, and Yahoo. They were joined by prominent academics from 17 APRU member universities, including Keio University, Korea University, Kyoto University, National University of Singapore, Seoul National University, Stanford University, Tohoku University, Tokyo University, UC San Diego, UC Santa Barbara, University of Hong Kong, University of Indonesia, University of Malaya, University of Philippines, University of Washington, and Waseda University. Representatives from the Japanese and United States governments, the Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU), the Global Network of Internet and Society Research Centers (NOC), the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), the Japan Network Information Center (JPNIC), and the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR) also participated.

Welcoming Remarks by Keio University Professor Heizo Takenaka, Director, Global Security Research Institute, Keio University

As a key member of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi’s government from 2001 through 2006, responsible for economic reform and IT policy, Professor Takenaka led government efforts to lay the foundation for Japan’s Internet economy. In his welcoming remarks, Takenaka reflected on the changes in emphasis and the growing complexity of the issues surrounding the Internet from an earlier, logistical focus on expanding the broadband infrastructure to current policy concerns with privacy and cybersecurity.

Professor Takenaka reflected on the approaching fourth year anniversary of the 2011 Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. He emphasized the resilience and flexibility of Internet technologies and their important role in immediate relief effort as well their continuing importance in the reconstruction process.

Session One: The Internet Economy in 2025 Opportunities and Challenges in the Asia Pacific Region

The Internet Economy is rapidly becoming a major driver of economic growth. Cloud Computing, Big Data, and the Internet of Things are rapidly emerging as new opportunities for growth, disrupting established business models and blurring the borders between national economies. To jumpstart the discussion on “what the Internet Economy in Asia will look like in 2025,” participants in the session were asked to offer a single word or brief phrase to highlight what they saw as the key issue for the future of the Internet in the region and by extrapolation the world. Their answers provided an interesting set of concerns and challenges for the Internet in Asia: fragmentation, privacy, singularity, fairness, solution-driven innovation, human-centric, and harmonization. The conversation started with “fairness.”

Key Takeaways & Topics for Future Research

- The problem of “fairness” is an acute problem for the Internet that is complicated by assertions of cyber-sovereignty as well as by individual and business concerns.
- “Openness” and government regulation are not necessarily contradictory. Alignment of policies not harmonization is the way forward in Asia.
- The digital economy is increasingly the economy; rulemaking does not start from zero – and balanced regulation is crucial to innovation.
- Privacy and security are critical to the future of the Internet; we ignore the human element on these issues at our peril. Good policy requires both accountability and transparency.
- Diversity is Asia’s strength, but the region also needs to find the right policy mix if it is to escape fragmentation of the Internet.

Session Two: Research Perspectives: What Will the Internet Become in 2025?

Key Takeaways & Topics for Future Research

- Research indicates that we already know a lot about how to manage the Internet, based on our experience with international trade.
- Privacy is also a well-researched area. 123 countries now have privacy laws on the books. But with nearly a trillion devices tracking us in 2025, more research and thought is clearly needed.
- Key issues for the academic research agenda include practical recommendations for ICANN reform, an explication of how “competition” is changing in the context of the global Internet, and a balanced assessment of the risks and opportunities associated with the ongoing fragmentation of the global Internet.
- The key learning is that much of what the Internet might look like in 2025 is currently unknowable – the pace of innovation is simply too fast and unpredictable.

Session Three: The Internet and Asia Regional Integration: How Will the Next Decade Unfold?

Key Takeaways and Topics for Future Research

- Asia may be the new center for the Internet, but infrastructure capacity and access issues are obstacle to addressing a still huge digital divide in the region.
- Nation states will remain the predominate face of Asia and will seek to manage the Internet in line with their national economic and security interests.
- Regional institutions, such as TPP and APEC can help support closer alignment (if not harmonization) of policies related to the Internet, but ultimately it will be business and users that will demand and drive greater integration within the Asian Internet time zone.
- EU policy on the Internet is not necessarily a model for Asia, but more research can help illuminate areas where European practices are both worth emulating and avoiding.

Evening Dialogue

Embedding the Multistakeholder Process in Asia’s Internet

Key Takeaways and Topics for Future Research

- Progress is being made on the transfer of technical function related to the Internet domain name system to the global Internet multistakeholder community – although September is not a fixed deadline.
- The transfer process has been complicated by unilateral assertions of national cyber-sovereignty and the challenge of trying to assure greater accountability and transparency from the multistakeholder process.
- Harvard’s Berkman Center for the Internet & Society has done an excellent benchmark study on the multistakeholder concept, but more research is needed as to how the process has worked in other settings, particularly Asia.
- A key focus of the APRU Internet Governance Initiative is to develop programs that promote greater engagement of the academic community with other elements of the multistakeholder community in the region so that it may serve as a source of expertise and as an honest broker offering unbiased and data-based views.

Session Four: The Future of the “Global” Internet in Asia Looking Back from 2025

Key Takeaway and Topics for Future Research

- There is no necessarily “Asian” model for the Internet, i.e. a common set of values and institutions unique to the region. Diversity is what distinguishes Asia most.
- Greatest risk in Asia is the emergence of “walled gardens” to mitigate risk. Rules may look similar but are operationally quite different.
- Need more granular research on the trade-offs between fragmentation and interoperability, mapping out issues and providing policymakers and users with more actionable data.
- China’s Internet policies may be moving in a problematic direction; this requires more not less engagement; the academic community, in particular, has a role in this through joint research, faculty exchange and evidence-based discussion.