

UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

Third International Information ETHICS Conference for Africa 6-7 September 2010

Theme: " Teaching Information Ethics in Africa-Current Status, Opportunities, and Challenges'"

OPENING REMARKS

By

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Director of Ceremonies

The Minister of Transport & Communications, Mr. Frank Ramsden.

Ag. Provost University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Prof Johannes Britz

UNESCO Representative in Southern Africa Mr. Jaco Du Toit

International organizers of this conference – Coetzee Bester (University of Pretoria), Prof Rafael Capurro (Director, Steinbeis-Transfer-Institute Information Ethics (STI-IE), Karlsruhe, Germany), Prof Dennis Ocholla (University of Zululand), Prof Stephen Mutula, (University of Botswana), Anthony Hoffman (University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee),

Local organizing Committee in the Department of Library & Information studies- Dr. Peter Sebina, Dr. Priti Jain, Prof Nathan Mnjama, Dr. Sekgomotso Keakopa & Ms. Molly Nthobasang

All representatives from Universities and other institutions in Africa & abroad –Makerere University (Uganda), University of Nairobi (Kenya), Moi University (Kenya), University of Ibadan (Nigeria) , University of Tennessee, Knoxville (USA) University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee, USA), University of Zambia, University of Zimbabwe, Tshwane University of Technology (South Africa), Kenya Polytechnic University, University of Pretoria, University of Zululand, University of Ilorin (Nigeria); *NIST/International Leadership University; & Council for Literacy Development (Kenya)*

Fellow colleagues at UB

Speakers at this conference

Invited guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I warmly welcome you to the University of Botswana to attend the Third International Conference on the theme ‘Teaching Information Ethics in Africa-Current Status, Opportunities, and Challenges’. The University of Botswana takes great pride to host a

conference of such international repute bringing together renowned scholars in a critical and emerging discipline such as information ethics. The development of information ethics curriculum in Africa comes at a critical moment when governments building on WSIS are striving to promulgate policies to engender an information society.

The University of Botswana is undergoing remarkable transformation to position itself as a leading university of excellence not only in Africa and beyond. The transformation is in areas of curriculum redesign, intensifying research, deploying innovative technologies in teaching and research and strengthening the ethical dimensions in teaching and research. This conference therefore comes at an opportune time for the University to learn from best practices from the best scholars of the world. The information ethics curricula you envisage to develop for Africa will provide a strong moral foundation within our curriculum that has for long been neglected or at best treated only marginally.

The University's vision to become "a leading academic centre of excellence in Africa and the world" can only be realized if we continuously invest in cutting-edge scholarship and adherence to international standards not only in terms of quality of the programmes but also in the way we advance virtues for the common good of humanity. For this reason the University of Botswana has committed itself to establishing a digital scholarship learning and research environment. The adoption and utilization of ICT in scholarship engenders various ethical issues related to trust, reliability, access, integrity, privacy and more. Holding this conference here gives us the chance to understand better how we can leverage your collective knowledge to our advantage in this regard.

Besides, this Conference is important for the University of Botswana for many other reasons. One of the Strategic Priority Areas in the University's is "Intensifying Research Performance". Through this priority, the University expects to increase its research output, enhance research quality, improve research impact and increase its visibility among the global community of scholars. There is no doubt that this Conference will in many ways contribute to achieving this goal through the exchange and sharing of knowledge on how we can enrich our curriculum by way of integrating information ethics content and values to ensure that quality is not divorced from moral values. The University of Botswana is also developing an institutional repository and a university press. These developments are expected to enhance access to both published and unpublished digital content and ease the constraints imposed by copyright restrictions, the high cost of hard copies, limited access to local content and more. Information ethics would illuminate on how issues related to cost and access need to be addressed in a morally acceptable way for the common good.

From the Conference programme, one can discern the richness of the expertise represented here from academia, development agencies & public sector in Africa, North America and Europe. The topics to be discussed in during this Conference are also relevant and diverse, covering not only information ethics but the whole spectrum of

knowledge management. The Conference therefore promises to be exciting and likely to impact positively on efforts by governments to create a just and moral society.

Director of Ceremonies, ladies and gentlemen, I am personally passionate about issues of information ethics especially in the digital era, and would love to go on talking about them and their importance for contemporary higher education and the University of Botswana in particular. But my task was simply to make a few opening remarks and welcome you to the conference as well as to the University of Botswana. I wish therefore without much a do conclude by wishing you a very productive two days.

Thank you.