

Empowering citizens through digital voices

At the third Digital Citizen Indaba (DCI) in Grahamstown, South Africa, 6 - 9 September 2008, over 150 digital citizens will gather to take a closer look at those technologies that empower Africans to have a digital voice. The indaba welcomes bloggers, podcasters, vodcasters, mobile reporters, citizen reporters, new media practitioners, new media students, online industry experts, and civil society representatives.



This year's theme is 'Technology for the Digital Citizen', DCI will not only focus on that what we say and who is saying it, but it also looks at how we say it. With the numerous new media technologies available to citizens, it becomes increasingly difficult to identify the ones we should take note of and those we shouldn't waste any time on. Therefore DCI will concentrate on only those technologies that have proven to empower Africa's digital citizens.

It is important to note that the African digital voice should not be silenced by local challenges such as broadband access or budget constraints. DCI therefore seeks to assess more practical solutions with presentations on how to access cheap Internet and the use of free mobile technologies.

The participants at the Digital Citizen Indaba (DCI) will find out more about mobile technologies such as MXit, learn about setting up and sustaining a community blog and discover how to create a podcast that people want to listen to. With the help of these technologies, African citizens can create and sustain a digital voice, just as the DCI aspires.

DCI starts with an opening party on Saturday 6 September and commences on Sunday 7 September with five morning sessions, an interactive panel and a debate. For the first time, there will also be workshops, two on Monday 8 September and another two on Tuesday 9 September.

Programme

Toby Shapshak (South Africa), editor of *Stuff* magazine, will give a presentation full with insights into technology during the opening party at local Grahamstown institution er pub Rat 'n Parrot on Saturday 6 September.

On Sunday 7 September, the main programme starts at 9am at Eden Grove Complex at Rhodes University with Chris Kabwato (Zimbabwe), the Highway Africa director, welcoming DCI participants. Blogger and journalist Damaria Senne

(South Africa), will give the keynote address.

Nono Dewa (Zimbabwe), master student in Journalism & Media Studies at Rhodes University, is the moderator of the five 30-minute morning sessions. Marlon Parker (South Africa) from Cape Peninsula University will present on his community project with drug addicts, using MXit technologies. Jayne Morgan (South Africa) from www.Podcart.co.za will give a presentation entitled 'creating a podcast that people want to listen to'. Nicholas Haralambous (South Africa), GM Johannesburg at www.zoopy.com, will talk about mobile Internet, Andriankoto Ratozamanana (Madagascar) will speak about blogging in a small community and Henk Kleynhans (South Africa), the Skyrove CEO, presents on accessing cheap Internet and more.

In the afternoon, there will be an interactive panel with three cellphone reporters from the Voices of Africa project from Africa Interactive (www.africa-interactive.net). Reporters Elisabeth Benkam (Cameroon), Munene Kilongi (Kenya) and Ameyaw Debrah (Ghana) will discuss their mobile contributions and show off how easy it is to become a cellphone reporter. The moderator of this session is Prof Peter Verweij from the School of Journalism in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Jude Mathurine (South Africa), New Media Lab at Rhodes University, will lead a debate with the topic 'Citizen journalism doesn't need editors, managers or money' with two big names in journalism: Matthew Buckland (South Africa), GM publishing and social media at Media24, and Dan Gilmor (USA), the author of 'We Media'.

The DCI finishes with closing remarks from Adam Clayton Powell (USA), University of Southern California, and Elvira van Noort (The Netherlands), the DCI coordinator.

Workshops

In addition to the DCI main programme, there will be closed workshops on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 September. As this indaba carries the theme 'Technology for the Digital Citizens', a selected group of DCI participants will get the chance to put their newly acquired knowledge to the test. Morgan will give a workshop with the topic 'How to create a Podcast and attract an audience' and Parker will give a workshop entitled 'How to set up and maintain a micro-blog using MXit'.

On Tuesday 9 September, Ramon Thomas (South Africa), NETucation, will give two workshops on the topic 'How to take your blog to the next level'.

This third DCI, a Highway Africa project (www.highwayafrica.com), is made possible by the Netherlands Institute for Southern Africa (NiZA). For more about the Digital Citizen Indaba 3.0, go to <http://dci.ru.ac.za>.

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