

# The Pacific Neighborhood Consortium: The First Three Years

By Curtis Hardyck

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Good Morning and welcome to the third meeting of the Pacific Neighborhood Consortium. In many ways, this meeting is a transition point for the PNC--marking a time when we shift from being an organization that has planned and developed goals, to an organization that now implements these goals. The increased length of this meeting and the necessity to go to concurrent presentations at some times are evidence of this. I don't mean to imply by that remark that I believe that the longer meetings get, the more productive they are-- but the longer time and multiple sessions are evidence of how PNC has developed and how the interests first brought out in the organizational meeting in Honolulu in 1993 have diversified.

The PNC began among a group of faculty and staff located at the University of California, Berkeley and University of California, San Francisco, as an exercise to discover a way in which a truly multinational organization of institutions of higher education, with extraordinary potential for mutual benefit, could be created. The outcome of those deliberations materialized initially as the Pacific Neighborhood Project.

Credit for transforming the PNC from an idea to a reality should be given to the Presidents, Chancellors, Rectors and other representatives attending the third meeting of Pacific Rim Public University Presidents in Seoul, Korea, April 1992. At that meeting, sponsored by the Asia Foundation, University of California, Berkeley Chancellor Chang-Lin Tien provided his agenda time for a presentation of the idea of the Pacific Neighborhood Project. I had the opportunity to present the idea of the Pacific Neighborhood and benefited from the enthusiastic support provided then University of Hawaii President Albert Simone, in his commentary following my presentation. In discussion following the presentation, the institutional representatives agreed to the fee structure and personnel support needed to launch the Pacific Neighborhood Project. Following the organizational meeting in Honolulu, the Pacific Neighborhood Project metamorphosed into the Pacific Neighborhood Consortium.

The PNC is now a multi-national organization, governed by an international board of directors, and oriented toward benefiting members in all participating countries. The enthusiasm remains high and the membership is increasing. If the pattern of development continues as in the present, the PNC will be a notable success among

institutions of higher education, as one of the first genuinely international organizations composed of institutions rather than individuals.

As an illustration of the kinds of continuity we have, let me review the guiding principles originally developed for a consortium of institutions of higher education to engage in a mutually beneficial information sharing enterprise. Guidelines included:

- Emphasis on use and application rather than technology. The view taken was that the Internet and related developments were proceeding rapidly and with excellent technical guidance. The network in fact, may be developing faster than the knowledge of how to use it, hence the focus on applications and use.
- The development of mutual interest and sharing policies. The view was taken that the larger the corpus of freely shared data bases among the consortium members, the more effective the functioning of the consortium and the easier the expansion of the number of shared data bases.
- A n emphasis on provision of aid from those rich in both information and technology to those less fortunate. Consortium membership was not dependent on the ability to contribute volumes of collections, databases, etc., but on the provision of those items unique to the contributor that were of interest to other members of the consortium.

The Pacific Neighborhood Consortium came into formal existence on the morning of January 14, 1992, when the first formal session was convened. Representatives from thirty institutions located in sixteen countries were present for the start of the organizational meeting.

The organizational meeting began the morning of January 14, with welcoming remarks by Curtis Hardyck for the Consortium, by Lawrence Landweber on behalf of the Internet Society and by Joan Lippincott for the Coalition for Networked Information. An inspiring keynote address was given by Dr. Charas Suwanwela, President of Chulalongkorn University of Thailand.

In that first meeting, we formed three task force groups

Library and Networked Information •

Distance Learning, Teleconferencing, and relations to Primary and Secondary Education Connectivity and Costs

For distance learning, etc., the primary areas of interest were

1. Language Instruction
2. Pacific Rim Area Studies
3. Science Instruction

Project Areas suggested were:

language Instruction. It would be a useful beginning to know about duo-national or multi-national language instruction projects. An inventory of such projects, including both those at the planning stage and efforts actually underway, would provide a useful baseline.

- The preparation of a database of Pacific Rim faculty interests, to be provided on the PNC server, and on other regional servers, should be undertaken as soon as possible..
- The development of a student and faculty exchange coordination plan to improve current student-faculty exchange programs.
- A directory of video and network services available at each participating institution.
- The sharing of library catalogues and services, especially document delivery should be developed as quickly as possible.
- The creation of an on-line database of information or pointers to information to assist in creation of new connections. This database might include information provided by the APCCIRN, PACCOM, or providers of communications services.
- A database of individuals or institutions involved in networking or communications services in PNC member institutions would be very helpful.
- Documentation of Appropriate Use Policies (AUP) or other communications policy documents would be helpful. The relevant documents may not be obvious to the first time browser so some general introduction to the topic should be written and included in the on-line server.
- A database of all universities and institutions of higher education, research, and development organizations in Pacific Rim countries should be created. Information

should include generic contact address, telephone and FAX numbers, and email addresses. Individuals at the institutions could be listed as well, if known

Have we made progress in any of these areas? Certainly our knowledge of each others capacities, special resources, unique abilities and so forth is now reasonably substantial. We are making progress in providing access of our databases to each other and we have the beginnings of common views on policy issues that affect us all. However, when we look at some areas such as distance education, ; the only reasonable conclusion is that we have not made much progress. Here the reason is not lack of interest, but technical limitations. We simply do not have enough bandwidth across the Pacific to develop distance education programs of sufficient richness to justify the effort.

As an illustration of progress, review the kinds of discussion groups

formed at the second PNC meeting in Hong Kong, January 1994

- Biological and Medical Sciences
- Physical Sciences;
- Humanities and Museum Collections;
- Business and Commerce.

And, in addition to the discussion groups, the topics of presentations at the meeting.

- A report on SGML applied to Chinese, Japanese and Korean
- A discussion of acceptable use policies.
- A review of the current status of internet development.

Perhaps the most significant indicators of PNC progress can be taken from the report of the session devoted to what PNC should work toward in the future.

- As the PNC serves both as a valuable forum for the discussion of multi-national issues and programs and as an organization devoted to the uses of communications, it provides a unique opportunity to discuss and formulate multinational projects. The

benefits of this organization warrant intensification of efforts to expand the role of the PNC in the development of multinational projects.

- There are numerous opportunities to obtain funding for multinational projects through cooperative arrangements. To facilitate this, the PNC secretariat will develop a list of those institutions wishing to participate in such projects, the resources available and the persons willing to participate as co-principal investigators. PNC members will shortly receive a request for information about resources, and the names of appropriate contact persons.
- A PNC Gopher should be initiated as soon as possible, with the PNC database as the first entry, followed by descriptions of member institutions and the projects currently underway. PNC members will receive requests for Gopher information and related projects in the near future.
- There is strong interest in the development of an electronic museum of the Pacific. Since many of the member institutions have material already in suitable form for inclusion in an electronic museum, development of a project to create such a museum should proceed as rapidly as possible.
- Efforts are currently underway to develop a program for a future meeting on database linking and usage, combining both a tutorial review and a discussion of the problems encountered in the linking of disparate databases.

As a summary list that meshes well with the program for this meeting, the above set would be hard to surpass. We are here to continue as a unique forum for the exchange of ideas on how to share information and resources and we have expanded the reach and the scope of the issues under consideration. We have currently underway, the preparation of a multi-institution, multi nation funding proposal, to fund the areas we want to develop.

We did not develop a PNC gopher, but only because WWW technology advanced so rapidly that we thought we should bypass the Gopher stage, especially in view of the interest in image data.

The tutorials planned for this meeting represent the beginnings of the implementation of our plans, These are not blueprints--the viewpoint of the tutors is one to examine, question and evaluate. The tutors were told that they could have the orientation such that each one could say Here is how a (Museum, Server Network, Library) system for the Pacific Rim would work if I were to do it. The panelists who follow and discuss

the tutorial may be supportive, skeptical or critical--each one of them is free to say "Well, this is the way I would do it" All of you are also free to do this in the hope that we can wring out a consensus and then develop a blueprint that we can all agree on for the basic structures The next three days should be exciting and a lot of fun.