

Groundbreaking research study to measure 'how much information?' is in the world

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Researchers at the University of California, San Diego, today announced a new study to quantify the amounts and kinds of information being produced worldwide by businesses and consumers alike. The "How Much Information?" study will be completed by a multi-disciplinary, multi-university faculty team supported by corporate and foundation sponsorship. The program will be undertaken at the Global Information Industry Center (GIIC) at the School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS), with support from the Jacobs School of Engineering and the San Diego Supercomputer Center.

"Experts say that we live in an information economy, but how much information is there, and do countries count and value information comparably? The previous generation of studies have reported information as countable bits and bytes, and documented large growth numbers" said IR/PS Dean Peter F. Cowhey. "The next generation of studies will count more precisely the impacts and implications of information growth, and do this internationally," continued Cowhey.

The How Much Information (HMI) program is a three-year effort by specialists at University of California, San Diego, MIT and University of California, Berkeley. Previous theorists involved in developing baseline data are UC Berkeley professors Hal Varian and Peter Lyman, highly regarded for work in this field. Professor Varian noted "we are very pleased that GIIC is undertaking this next generation of studies."

Industry experts from AT&T, Cisco Systems, IBM, LSI, Oracle, Seagate

Technology LLC, and PARC will work as part of the "How Much Information" team, representing the leading firms in the enterprise software, network and information storage industries. Each company brings a unique perspective on information growth seen by their professionals in the field and in the use of their information technologies in industry, public sector organizations, and the home.

"We have designed this research as a partnership between industry and academics to take the next steps in understanding how to think about, measure, and understand the implications of dramatic growth in digital information," said Professor Roger Bohn of UC San Diego, co-leader of the new program. "As the costs per byte of creating, storing, and moving data fall, the amounts rise exponentially. We know that overall information technology increases productivity and human welfare, but not all information is equally valuable."

Bohn's co-leader, Dr. James Short, noted that recent industry studies have reported larger and larger amounts of information being produced and stored in networks, companies and homes. "We will continue to document the growth in information," Short said, "but at the end of the day we are studying how information works. How information works is about measuring and counting the uses and applications driving the massive increases in networking and data growth, allowing businesses and consumers to use information more effectively to make better decisions."

Source: University of California - San Diego

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