Keynote Speakers

Dr Adi Paterson
Towards E-Research in South Africa.

Curriculum vitae: Adrian Paterson was born in Durban, South Africa on the 17th May, 1956. He is a graduate of the University of Cape Town with a B.Sc. in Chemistry and a Ph.D (Engineering). Following a period of research on ceramic materials, including a Post Doctoral year at the University of Leeds in the UK, he became Director of the Division of Materials Science and Technology at the CSIR in 1990. In 1995 he accepted an Acting position on the Executive of the CSIR and became an Executive Vice-President: Technology and Policy in 1996. He has (at different times) been responsible for Human Resources, Policy, Technology, and became the Chief Information Officer of the CSIR in April 1999. During 2000 and 2001 he was jointly the CIO of the CSIR and the University of Pretoria and served on the Executive of both institutions.

In October 2001 he was seconded to the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, (now the Department of Science and Technology as of 1 August 2002), as the Branch Manager (DDG) of the Science and Technology Branch. He currently fills the position of Deputy Director-General: Science and Technology Expert Services in the Department.

He was a member of the task team that drafted the South African Green Paper on Science and Technology in 1995. From 1998 – 2003 he served on the National Advisory Council for Innovation (NACI).

He has a keen interest in institutional development and has been involved in strategy and implementation of a number of significant South African institutions and initiatives. Among these, are the National Manufacturing Advisory Centre, the Innovation Hub (an initiative of the Gauteng Provincial Government) and the Innovation Fund – as the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

He has lectured and conducted workshops on IT strategy and the impact of the information revolution on organizations. He has been involved in the strategic management of intellectual capital, innovation and intellectual property. He has been involved in technology assessments in the UK, Europe, the United States and South Africa, and has served on numerous advisory boards.

He was involved in the South African delegation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the G77 High-Level Forum on Science and Technology and the EU-ACP Science and Technology initiatives, among others.

He was elected to the Academy of Science of South Africa in 1994 and to the South African Academy of Engineering in 2002.

Abstract: (Summary by Greg Youngen and Erica van der Westhuizen)
Dr Paterson addressed the country's electronic information research agenda. He praised the efforts of the ICAHIS, noting that self-organised groups are much more effective than governmental or institutional bureaucracies for crafting global solutions to problems related to information qaccess and exchange. He also noted that animal health informatics is seriously underdeveloped and needs to be on a par with human health informatics. He went on to note several instances of information breakdown and the resultant tragedies, including the present system of incentives and rewards that limit overall sharing of HIV/AIDS information. Dr Paterson concluded that information, by itself, is the most useless of resources – and only when it's mediated and made widely available is its usefulness fully realised.

Other interesting comments included:
- the need to build networks of people before other facilities can improve
- all changes in research have an impact on Info Specialists' work
- SA Research Network has been started but bandwidth connection costs are still extremely high in South Africa
- Open Access versus commercial access to journals - Regulations will be written during the following 18 months regarding an OA repository for publications in South Africa
- shared information is crucial in Africa especially - for example, trans-frontier game parks where the borders between countries have been removed
- the discipline of palaeontology has changed through new genetic research
- data of HIV Aids research cannot be shared as there is no metadata protocol of the data. Aids is the first disease showing this dilemma in sharing of data
- for the period 1990–2002, 98,000 journal articles were published in 5508 journals (half appeared in 132 journals)
- we must become more radical - how to get more information to more people as quickly as possible
- we should form an association - AVIP = African Veterinary Information Professionals - a network to share information
- There is a need to change the basic value system, to break the cycle of overdevelopment in the developed world and the cycle of despair in the third world