



January 4-7, 2011, The Grand Hyatt Kauai Resort & Spa, Koloa, Kauai, Hawaii.

## **Track: Internet and the Digital Economy**

### **Minitrack: Research 2.0: Web 2.0 and Virtual Worlds as Research Environments**

Web 2.0 has created a new environment of participation and collaboration for users and scholars. Users in the Web 2.0 environment are creating new content, tools and technologies in collaboration with other individuals, world-wide. A large number of studies have been conducted to understand how online communities (including social networks) form and evolve, how members communicate in computer-mediated environments, benefits of community membership, and other related topics. However, few studies examine the potential of Web 2.0 technologies and virtual worlds for advancing theory, method and methodology in the design and implementation of qualitative and quantitative research. Studies of research practice, including ethical and legal implications of conducting research in virtual environments, are needed to facilitate innovative and appropriate use of these new technologies for social research.

The Web 2.0 environment offers many new opportunities for researchers undertaking both qualitative and quantitative research (e.g., increased potential for collecting data from online communities and social networks around the globe). However, researchers can also use these technologies to enhance the research process (e.g., facilitating research collaboration between project team members to develop tools and technologies to analyze data and write papers). Understanding the privacy and legal implications in both contexts – i.e., the implementation of the study, as well as the research process – is an area that warrants further exploration in a minitrack environment.

This minitrack would invite papers on topics including (but not limited to):

#### **Topics**

- Changing landscape for qualitative and quantitative research due to emergence of Web 2.0 and virtual worlds;
- Development of online research communities;
- Online collaborative techniques in Web 2.0 environments for advancing research methodologies;
- Use of Web 2.0 tools and technologies in data collection and analyses;
- Use of Web 2.0 platforms and virtual worlds (e.g., *Second Life*) such as avatars, online communities, for conducting qualitative and quantitative research;
- Effectiveness of Web 2.0 for increasing participating rates in research (e.g., questionnaire response rates; online focus groups);
- Using user-generated content as a data source in research;

- Ethical and legal issues (e.g., privacy; copyright) in conducting qualitative and quantitative research in virtual environments;
- Use of social computing in building research communities;
- Role of social computing in the advancement of data collection techniques;
- New data collection approaches in Web 2.0 environments.

### **Minitrack Co-chairs**

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