

CHAPTER 5

Global Conferences 2026.3.10

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Overview

ARPANET was developed in 1969 and was demonstrated at the International Conference on Computer Communications (ICCC) in 1972, as documented in IETF RFC 371 [IETF 1972]. The South Korean domestic IPv4 network was established in 1982 and showcased at the Pacific Computer Communication Symposium (PCCS) in 1985 [Asia 2020]. It led to the formation of the Joint Workshop on Computer Communications (JWCC) in 1986, which was renamed the International Conference on Information Networking (ICOIN) in the 1990s. The International Academic Networkshop (IANW) was held annually from 1982 to 1989 [Asia 2020]. Its goal was to exchange information about research and education networks, including the Internet, between North America and Europe. It was later expanded to include three additional continents. INET succeeded it in 1991. For detailed information on these conferences, refer to Asia Internet History, First Decade (1980s) and Second Decade (1990s). The upcoming sections will introduce the international Internet-related conferences that continue to the present.

Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF)

The first major conference that has been held continuously up to now is the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF) [Asia 2020]. It started in 1986 and occurs three times a year worldwide, attracting 1,000 to 3,000 participants. Its goal is to develop and maintain Internet protocol standards. Its outputs are assigned RFC numbers by the RFC Editor. Please refer to Chapter 5, Meeting and Organizations in the 1980s of Asia Internet History, First Decade (1980s), for a detailed description.

IETF. Please also visit the IETF's website, IETF.org, for more information, including its beginner's guide to the Internet, Tao of IETF, and RFC 6722 [IETF 2012].

Other global standardization bodies on the Internet include the following organizations;

- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE)
- International Standardization Organization (ISO)
- International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
- World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)

Interop

The first Interop meeting occurred in San Francisco in 1986. Interop offers interoperability testing of Internet protocols along with conferences and exhibitions [Interop 2020]. It expanded to other cities across the USA, Asia, and Europe. Today, it is held annually in the USA and Japan. The event features testing, conferences, and exhibitions, with recent attendance ranging from 10,000 to 100,000 people. Its key contribution in the last century was testing the interoperability of Internet equipment, including routers. This testing helped establish global interoperability of the Internet in the twentieth century. Interop was the precursor to exhibition-based conferences with 100,000 to 1,000,000 participants. These include the Consumer Electronics Summit (CES) in Las Vegas, South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin, and the World Mobile Congress (WMC) in Barcelona.

INET

When the International Academic Network Workshop (IANW) became too large to function as a single-track event in the late 1980s, it was decided to rename it INET, a global Internet conference that would include a Developing Country Workshop starting in 1991. INET, as the annual worldwide conference, was managed by the Internet Society from 1992 until 2002. Since then, smaller INET conferences have been organized by the Internet Society. For more details, see Chapter 3 of Asia Internet History, Second Decade (1990s), or visit the Internet Society homepage.

Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

Internet Cooperation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) was established in 1998, and ICANN Meetings began from that point onward.

year. Their meetings happen three times a year, rotating locations across the five continents, with 2,000 to 3,000 participants at each one. ICANN is “responsible for coordinating the maintenance and procedures of databases related to the namespaces and numerical spaces of the Internet” [ICANN 2020]. Please see Chapter 3 of *Asia Internet History, Second Decade (1990s)*, and the ICANN.org website for more details.

International World Wide Web Conference (IW3C)

The World Wide Web (WWW) was first proposed by Tim Berners-Lee at CERN in 1989, and the initial conference called WWW1 was held in 1994 [IW3C 2020]. It is now held annually to discuss many aspects of the WWW. Please visit the International World Wide Web Conference Committee website, iw3c2.org, or Wikipedia for more information.

Internet Governance Forum (IGF)

The second meeting of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in 2005 decided to create the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). The first annual IGF meeting was held in Athens the following year. The IGF is a global multistakeholder platform that promotes discussion of public policy issues related to the Internet, according to its website, intgovforum.org. Annual IGF meetings are hosted by national governments and draw about 2,000 to 4,000 participants from more than 100 countries.

2020 IGF Program had the following four Thematic Tracks.

- Data
- Environment
- Inclusion
- Trust

RightsCon

“RightsCon is the world’s leading event on human rights in the digital age,” according to RightsCon’s website, rightscon.org [RightsCon 2020]. Its annual conferences began in Silicon Valley in 2011. The 2019 conference in Tunis drew 2,750 participants from 122 countries, with over 450 sessions covering many aspects of digital governance.

Numerous proposals in the listed areas were submitted for the 2020 RightsCon.

- Content Control and Censorship (119 proposals)
- AI, Automation, and Algorithms (107 proposals)

An Asia Internet History

Digital Inclusion and Diversity (101 proposals)
Peace, Stabilization, and Conflict Prevention (97 proposals)
Global State of Civil Society (92 proposals)
Privacy, Surveillance, and Individual Security (85 proposals)
Democracy, Elections, and Political Participation (84 proposals)
Public Interest Tech and Human Rights-Centered Design (78 proposals)
Global Governance, Justice, and Jurisdiction (78 proposals)
Cybersecurity Norms and Practice (78 proposals)
Data Governance, Protection, and Consent (75 proposals)
Freedom of the Media (65 proposals)
Alternative Models for Business and Labor (64 proposals)
Network Connectivity and Internet Shutoffs (53 proposals)
Environmental Sustainability and Human Resilience (53 proposals) Future,
Fictions, and Creativity (47 proposals)
Philanthropy, Wellness and Operational Development (40 proposals)
Trade, Commerce, and the Digital Commons (23 proposals)

RightsCon 2020 was postponed to 2021 because of the coronavirus, like many other conferences that year. Instead, RightsCon held a smaller online event from July 27 to 31, 2020.

World Internet Conference

The World Internet Conference (WIC) is one of the newest global events focused on the Internet. The first conference was held in Wuzhen, Zhejiang Province, China, in 2014. It is organized by Chinese government agencies to discuss Internet issues and policies, according to Wikipedia on World Internet Conference [WIC 2020]. Currently, the World Internet Conference remains one of the few remaining global forums to address broad Internet-related topics.

The 2019 World Internet Conference featured the following sub-forums;

Protection of Minors Online and Internet Ecology Governance
Forum of legal protection of data in cyberspace
Cross-Strait, Hong Kong, and Macao Internet Development Forum
Capital market drives the Innovation and Development of Digital Economy
Forum.
Business leader's dialogue: innovative economy and shared community
Smart society and sustainable development
FinTech: deep integration and multi-directional empowerment
Wu Talk: Beauty of intelligent interconnection

Fifth Decade

Forum on industrial Internet

Belt and Road forum for international cooperation on cyberspace Industry digitalization forum

Cybersecurity forum for technology development and international cooperation

Cyberculture and youth forum

Internet public welfare and charity forum

Forum on media integration

AI forum: new era of intelligence economy

5G forum: opening a new era of digital economy

Forum on open-source chip ecosystem

Norms in cyberspace forum

Interaction of civilization and role of think tanks in the information age

Other major conferences on the Internet in China include the following:

China Internet Conference

Global Network Technology Conference

IPv6 Summit

They are described in Appendix E of Asia Internet History, Fourth Decade (2010s) as well as Chapter 5 Domestic Conferences of Asia Internet History, Second Decade (1990s).

Major Exhibitions with Conferences

There are major exhibitions with conferences on digital space which attract 100,000 to 1,000,000 participants. They include Interop, CES, WMC and SXSW among others. They cover specific industry sectors such as

Interop: Internet

Consumer Electronics Summit (CES): Consumer electronics

World Mobile Conference (WMC): Mobile telecommunications South By Southwest (SXSW): Media

Since they are prominent events on particular industry sector, they attract many companies in the relevant industry sector.

Artificial Intelligence Conferences

Academic conferences on artificial intelligence attract many paper submissions as well as many AI researchers lately. Participants of popular conferences range from 3,000 to 10,000. These phenomena are unique

among academic conferences. Extreme popularity of the artificial intelligence produces such phenomena lately.

Major academic AI conferences include the following;
American Association of Artificial Intelligence (AAAI)
International Conference on Learning Representation (ICLR)
International Conference on Machine Learning (ICML)
International Conference on Pattern Recognition (ICPR)
International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IJCAI)
Neural Information Processing Systems (NeurIPS)
Open Data Science Conference (ODSC)
Uncertainty in Artificial Intelligence (UAI)

Industry-driven AI conferences are also appearing lately due to popularity of AI among commercial sectors. Notable examples include the following;

O'Reilly AI Conferences, San Jose, London
Spark + AI Summit, San Francisco
World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC), Shanghai
World Summit Artificial Intelligence, Amsterdam

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- [WMC 2020] World Mobile Conference (WMC), Barcelona, 2020.

