Launch Event Proposal
United Nations Internet Governance Forum 2023
October 8-12, 2023, Kyoto, Japan

Global Launch:

==In service of the public interest in the age of AI and in support of the Global Digital Compact and the UN's SDGs, the goal of this Launch event is to create a deeper awareness by leaders of higher education and other institutions of the urgent need to innovate and initiate new programs in support of heightened digital inclusion and digital literacy.== **Speakers at this event will release a position statement urging that all institutions actively assist in society's positive evolution with AI and other emerging technologies, more-deeply prioritizing the broadening and deepening of diverse public inclusion and education and the preparation of an educated public that is fully capable of contributing to a positive future. Prior to this IGF launch event and following it, the organizers will solicit endorsements of the position statement by a number of notable leaders in higher education and other supporters of this cause.**

This IGF-Kyoto Launch event is intended to significantly raise awareness of the need for far-more-enhanced digital inclusion and literacy and action to do so; these sectors of concern are critical in addressing the IGF-Kyoto subthemes "AI and Emerging Technologies," "Digital Divides & Inclusion," "Human Rights & Freedoms," "Data Governance & Trust, "Global Digital Governance" and the overall 2023 IGF theme, "*The Internet We Want – Empowering All People*," and it will work in support of the UN's Global Digital Compact, the UN's SDGs and the UN's Summit of the Future in September 2024. Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center is facilitating this event.

Lead Event Speakers:

Connie Ledoux Book, incoming chair of the National Association of Independent College and Universities (a US organization representing nearly 1,000 private, non-profit colleges and universities) and president of Elon University. Book is a past participant in IGF proceedings: She led a major research project, "Realizing the Global Promise of the Internet," at IGF 2007 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and she has worked in support of Elon University's Imagining the Internet Center's engagement in IGF. Elon has sent student teams to document proceedings at 11 Global IGF Forums, seven IGF-USA Forums and many other major technology events since 2005. Book has a doctorate in journalism from the University of Georgia and is a published scholar who is expert in digital communications technologies.

Divina Frau-Meigs, UNESCO Chair for Knowledge and Future in the Age of Sustainable Digital Development and professor of media and information and communications technology sociology at the Sorbonne Nouvelle University in Paris. A longtime IGF participant, she coordinates the French National Agency Project TRANSLIT (on media and digital literacies) and leads implementation of the European project ECO, which aims to produce massive open online courses to provide training in digital humanities and literacy. She served on the High-Level Group on Fake News for the European Commission, and serves as an expert for the European Union, the Council of Europe and a number of governments and other institutions.

Lee Rainie, longtime director of internet and technology research at Pew Research Center. Rainie has led research teams in producing more than 800 reports based on surveys and data-science analyses that examine people's online activities and the internet's role in their lives. He

is the co-author of the 20-year series of "Future of the Internet" reports in which thousands of experts share their insights as to the opportunities and challenges emerging in the next decade of digital life. He has served several times as a keynote speaker and a moderator at IGF-USA. Many experts quoted in Rainie's Pew reports over the past decade (co-led by Elon's Janna Anderson) have urged that much-heightened inclusion of diverse voices in tech design and regulation and much-deepened public literacy are crucial to a positive digital transition.

At the event, these three leaders will be joined by a number of diverse academic, business and technology leaders (yet to be determined upon acceptance of this event by the IGF MAG) in the release of this statement on higher education's role in assisting society's positive evolution with AI and other emerging technologies by broadening its initiatives to significantly enhance digital inclusion and digital literacy. We expect to attract a large number of people in-person in Kyoto and online who are energized to speak and take action to further these goals.

Supporters in developing this event
Dr. Alejandro Pisanty, Internet Hall of Fame member and professor of internet governance and the information society, has contributed to the growth and improvement of the Internet in Mexico and Latin America and across the world through his position at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and in his roles at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) and the Internet Society (ISOC), as well as other influential networking organizations. His advocacy, lobbying, and keen understanding of the unique needs of developing countries when it comes to the Internet have significantly influenced policy and directed funding to keep millions online.

Dr. Ang Peng Hwa is a professor of communication and information at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University (ranked by QS World University Rankings as the leading communication school in Asia, and a top-10 school in the field globally). In his 30-years-plus career, Professor Ang has directed the Singapore Internet Research Centre, served as president of the International Communications Association, as a member of the UN Working Group on Internet Governance and as inaugural chair of the Global Internet Governance Academic Network. He is currently chair of the Advertising Standards Authority of Singapore and editor of the Asian Journal of Communication.

We expect to add the names of more supporters for this initiative in the next few months, many of whom may be at IGF-Kyoto and in attendance at the event.

Plan for Release of the Statement at the Launch
Speakers at this Launch event will explain the importance of focusing more institutional energy by higher education and across all institutions toward enhancing full digital inclusion and more widespread digital literacy and adopt new approaches to facilitate change.

The rapid advance of artificial intelligence has created an urgent need for higher education institutions and others to develop and adopt formal programs to equip people to function in a much different world. The speedy co-evolution of humans and AI requires that every institution must focus significant energy on fostering more-widespread digital awareness, literacy and activism and a wider understanding of how human rights, human agency, identity, privacy, security, and trust are evolving. Of critical importance: There must be more-diverse participation by knowledgeable people from outside the technology bubble in co-creating the

future design of the human-centered digital intelligence and knowledge systems that serve the public interest.

Higher education institutions, in fact all institutions, can and must engage more diligently now in enabling society to achieve these goals.

Book, Frau-Meigs and Rainie (joined by other leading academics) will release a position statement that calls upon higher education leaders (presidents and top administrators and faculty) and leaders of other institutions around the world to adopt the spirit of the statement and take action to focus institutional energy and resources on developing a broader definition of digital inclusion – to include multistakeholder participation in the human-centered development of tools, platforms and systems and to much more broadly advance digital literacy.

We expect that the IGF-Kyoto session will attract many supporters who will join Book and Rainie in speaking out, calling on leaders across the world to commit to initiatives at their institutions that energize digital inclusion and digital literacy in order to inspire a new digital generation that understands how to best serve the public interest and a positive global future.

Continuing Campaign Efforts Beyond IGF-Kyoto
The action will not end with this launch event. We will have a video team there to record it and we intend to invite the media. We will produce a video that includes content from the launch session and a number of on-site multistakeholder interviews shot at IGF-Kyoto in support of this statement. The statement and video will be distributed to an extensive mailing list of college and university presidents and leaders of other institutions.

Rationale Based on Research
Over the past 20 years Pew Research and Elon University have surveyed thousands of experts in dozens of deep-dive surveys examining the challenges and opportunities of digital life. In nearly every one of these studies, the experts have urged that one of the greatest needs today is for greater digital inclusion and digital literacy. Other researchers' work echoes these findings.

The experts say that tech will continue to race ahead of the ability of individuals and human institutions to easily adjust to the digital dangers that arise along with digital opportunities. The global experts who build these technologies and the scholars who analyze their impact are convinced that the vast benefits of the Internet can be safely spread widely in future ONLY if digital technologies' design and regulation embrace multistakeholder participation from their earliest stages through to the end, and ONLY if the public has the capacity to use these technologies safely and effectively, embracing the new literacies this revolutionary era requires.

Higher levels of inclusion and literacy will heighten digital trust and security. Throughout history, greater inclusion and literacy have lifted civilizations and bred social amity while closing divides. At this moment, those of us committed to higher education know that advancing technological change demands that people from outside of the industry be involved in designing the tech and contributing to its regulation, and the global public must adopt new literacies and create new norms around positive digital change.

All of this requires new programs and initiatives in higher education and across all human institutions in digital inclusion and digital literacy. A heightened focus on these areas will give all a better opportunity to take full advantage of all the possible gains and help ward off emerging problems that arise as artificial intelligence spreads, as misinformation and deepfakes become common, and as stark differences continue to grow between tech sophisticates and those who struggle to get good access and good information.

A Sampling of Inclusion and Literacy Quotes from Experts Participating in Elon-Pew Reports
(Workplaces listed in their IDs were accurate at the time of the research; some have relocated since then)

The Future of Digital Spaces and Their Role in Democracy

Francine Berman, distinguished professor of computer science at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, said, "Forward-looking universities are creating courses, concentrations, minors and majors in public interest technology – an emerging area focused on the social impacts of technology. Education in public interest technology is more than just extra computer science courses. It involves interdisciplinary courses that focus on the broader impacts of technology – on personal freedom, on communities, on economics, etc. – with the purpose of developing the critical thinking needed to make informed choices about technology. And students are hungry for these courses and the skills they offer. Students who have taken courses and clinics in public-interest technology are better positioned to be knowledgeable next-generation policymakers, public servants and business professionals who may design and determine how tech services are developed and products are used. With an understanding of how technology works and how it impacts the common good, they can better promote a culture of tech in the public interest, rather than tech opportunism … Changing from a culture of tech opportunism to a culture of tech in the public interest will require many and sustained efforts on a number of fronts. We need to create the building blocks for culture change now – proactive short-term solutions, foundational long-term solutions and serious efforts to develop strategies for challenges that we don't yet know how to address."

Visions of the Internet in 2035

Zizi Papacharissi, professor of political science and professor and head of communication at the University of Illinois-Chicago, observed, "I envision a whole new class of professionals to help people develop this layer of social behavior – information curators, democracy conduits, literacy advisors and similar others – who will make good money (salaries comparable to those of designers and coders) to help curate, to advise and to help humans come to use these technologies in positive ways."

Ian O'Byrne, an assistant professor of Literacy Education at the College of Charleston, said, "Our digital futures will be fluid, deictic, and ambiguous in nature. New as-yet undeveloped literacies, technologies, and practices will take root. This requires a continual re-examination of the knowledge, skills and dispositions utilized as we read and write the web. We need our schools to create cognitively flexible individuals that are nimble enough to handle any digital contexts while being empowered to create new possibilities."

Charles Ess, emeritus professor in the department of media and communication at the University of Oslo, said, "Education must go far beyond the generic sorts of 'digital literacy' that tend to focus on basic how-to's of digital technologies. A robust and democratically/humanistically-oriented digital education includes attention to digital media

alongside other media that remain centrally important. Diverse media technologies entail diverse affordances, styles and capacities for thought and expression and so forth. This education would begin with a thorough examination of the role of freedom of expression in service to democratic societies, norms, processes and so on. This would include an understanding of the classic limits to freedom of expression – i.e., its forms, such as hate speech, defamation, and any speech that does not contribute to open and informed democratic debate and deliberation. Such well-educated citizens could largely be trusted to recognize and respect the boundaries between democratically oriented freedom of expression and merely destructive speech, and thereby have a better sense of how to engage more fruitfully in democratic deliberation.

The Future of Human Agency

Daniel S. Schiff, lead for Responsible AI at JP Morgan Chase and co-director of the Governance and Responsible AI Lab at Purdue University, commented, "Efforts to educate the public, emphasized in many national AI policy strategies, such as Finland's Elements of AI effort, must be aimed at building public literacy about AI and its implications."

Luis Germán Rodríguez Leal, teacher and researcher at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and consultant on technology for development, wrote, "Many relevant voices have been raised with warnings about the digital emergency we are experiencing. International organizations such as UNESCO, the European Commission and others have highlighted the need to advance information and digital literacy strategies, together with alternative skills of personal communication, promotion of empathy, resilience and, above all, the raising of ethical awareness among those who create these tools and systems on the influence and impact of all aspects of the creation, introduction and use of digital tools."

Frank Odasz, director at Lone Eagle Consulting, expressed little faith in the public gaining broad-based digital literacy, writing, "Increasing AI manipulation of beliefs, or media (such as deepfake videos) can be expected in future. I see a two-tiered society as 1) those who learn to smartly use AI tools without allowing themselves to be manipulated, and 2) those who allow themselves to believe that they can justify 'believing anything they want.' The big question is, in the future, which tier will be dominant in most global societies? … We also have those who will routinely check facts and have a moral compass dedicated to seeking out facts and truth. Eric Fromm said, 'In times of change, learners inherit the Earth.'"

Barry Chudakov, founder and principal, Sertain Research, predicted that widespread digital literacy will not have been achieved by 2035, writing, "It is now supremely important is to understand the dynamics and logic of smart machines, bots and systems powered mostly by autonomous and artificial intelligence. This is the new foundation of learning." And he said he fears that, "It will still be unclear to most by 2035 that humans are now sharing their intelligence, their intentions, their motivations with these technological entities. Why? Because we have not built, nor do we have plans to build, awareness and teaching tools that retrain our populace or make people aware of the consequences of using newer technologies; and because in 13 years the social structures of educational systems – ground zero for any culture's values – will not have been revamped, rethought, reimagined enough to enable humans to use these new entities wisely. Humans must come to understand and appreciate the complexity of the tools and technologies they have created and then teach one another how to engage with and embrace that complexity."

Luis German Rodriguez Leal, teacher and researcher at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and consultant on technology for development, said, "Only users of these systems who have the necessary digital literacy will be able to remain free from the ever-increasing onslaught of the technological avalanche that promotes the metaverse. Unfortunately for humanity, there are very few highly literate users. This translates into a worrying growth and expansion of modern slavery."

Amy Sample Ward, CEO of the Nonprofit Technology Enterprise Network, responded, "What does an inclusive metaverse look like? What timeline does an inclusive metaverse require? The investments we make today toward digital equity – from reliable and affordable broadband service to digital literacy and device access – are actually investments in a more inclusive future metaverse, whatever shape it takes."

Mary Chayko, author of "Superconnected," said, "In the absence of a national commitment and strategy to assist marginalized populations in attaining online access, skills and literacy, social inequalities will persist and deepen in the 'new normal.' This will exacerbate all current societal problems: racial and gender discrimination, poverty, health crises and complications, educational and work-related inequities, privacy and surveillance. Digital technologies can be employed to help to improve these conditions, but unless their benefits can be realized by all, social justice and equality will remain elusive."

Craig Spiezle, managing director and trust strategist for Agelight and chair emeritus for the Online Trust Alliance, said, "The new normal will arise with a transformation of many jobs and of the overall economy... While affordable, fast and reliable connectivity is paramount, the issues are not limited to access. Key digital obstacles include but are not limited to basic online literacy, language capabilities, understanding of relevancy and access to technical support. Combined with increasing privacy deficits and risks of fraud, these issues are impacting several segments of society more than others."

Ronnie Lowenstein, a pioneer in interactive technologies, commented, "My worries are related to: 1) Ethics and privacy rights. 2) Growing impact of misinformation and inability to actually discern reality in technology doctored videos, or the truth in media. 3) The lack of critical thinking/media literacy skills in populations. Since 2009, the UN, UNESCO and U.S. Department of State recognized that without media literacy skills, our democratic institutions are threatened."

Barry Chudakov, founder and principal of Sertain Research, commented, "With problems waxing even more complex, and invasive technologies such as facial recognition or predictive policing advancing to esoteric levels, we will be forced to address pressing issues using verifiable facts – otherwise democratic institutions will not survive**.** Thus, the new normal will encompass refereeing a facts-scrum: truth, lies, distortions, assertions, contradictory information, datasets, data streams from emerging technologies, analyses – all vying for our embrace and attention. This will foster a new media literacy, including a 'truth valuation' set of protocols, which will serve as a reality foundation and foster resiliency to organized disinformation. This 'truth valuation' is necessary because we are moving from the real world to

the meta summation of the real world – a mirror world – brought to us virtually on screens where distortions and untruths can easily slip past our five senses, which we no longer use solely as world navigation tools."

Daniel Pimienta, internet pioneer and founder and president of the Network and Development Foundation (FUNREDES), based in the Dominican Republic, commented, "A worrying phenomenon has been maturing for several years: the transfer into the non-virtual world of bad behaviors occurring online, especially in social networks (disinformation, hate and racist discourse). With the scientific sphere now impacted, hopefully a threshold has been reached and some positive reactions will emerge, for instance the reinforcing of existing laws towards criminal behaviors online. This will not prevent an extension of an already huge divide in the world between rather educated people with a capacity to evaluate information and not fall victim to fake news and people who have lesser information literacy. In a context in which more political leaders are targeting the second group, information literacy has become a paramount education priority. This has even reached emergency status today – perhaps even nearing the same level as global warming."

Ian O'Byrne, assistant professor of education at the College of Charleston, responded, "The 'new normal' will require strong connections to the internet and stronger digital literacies. Sadly, these are two areas that many communities have not strengthened over the last decade or two. Digital literacy practices necessary for the safe use of the internet in individuals' personal and professional lives is severely lacking in most contexts. I hope that education focused on identity, data privacy, security and open-source uses of technology will receive more focus in our schools and create a more informed citizenry. Also, the internet is already uninterpretable for most of the populace."

Charles M. Ess, a professor of media studies at the University of Oslo expert in information and computing ethics, said, "All of this [change] will require new forms of digital literacy, ones that are shaped and are far more fully informed by a holistic sense and understanding of what constitutes and contributes to human and social well-being, and thereby what political and economic institutions are required for fostering and contributing to such well-being (robust democracy and all of its requirements, as a start). Ideally, this would include a new Enlightenment, one that would help the rest of us develop the understandings and capacities needed for greater (relational) autonomy and community – and a technically informed understanding of how these technologies work, their affordances, potentials and downsides, etc., coupled with an increasing ability to determine and control them for our own humane and social purposes."

The Future of Democracy
Craig Watkins, a professor at the University of Texas-Austin, wrote, "The spread of these technologies around the world is happening faster than the knowledge and efforts to apply them in ways that support rather than weaken democracy. The spread of disinformation, deepfake videos and conspiracy theories requires a level of digital and civic literacy that, unfortunately, is underdeveloped around the world."

Future of Human Well-being
Alex Halavais, director of the M.A. in social technologies program at Arizona State University, said, "The primary change needs to come in education. From a very early age, people need to

understand how to interact with networked, digital technologies. They need to learn how to use social media and learn how not to be used by it. They need to understand how to assemble reliable information and how to detect crap. They need to be able to shape the media they are immersed in. They need to be aware of how algorithms and marketing – and the companies, governments, and other organizations that produce them – help to shape the ways in which they see the world. Unfortunately, from preschool to grad school, there isn't a lot of consensus about how this is to be achieved."

Jon Lebkowsky, CEO of Polycot Associates, said, "I believe we're in a transitional phase – a phase that will last one or more generations. Digital literacy will evolve, as will global understanding of the implications of technology developments. Though we'll always have issues and bad actors, I believe that we'll catch up with technology and diminish the negative impacts."

Aram Sinnreich, an associate professor at American University's School of Communication listed several ideas: "The most important thing we can do to mitigate the negative social effects of the internet is to draw on social scientific and communication research to understand the multifaceted roles it plays in public and private lives, and to use both state and market regulatory measures to address these different dimensions separately, while maintaining a holistic understanding of its transformative potential overall. In practice, this means measures including but not limited to: 1) Holding algorithms, and the companies responsible for them, accountable for their role in shifting and shaping social and political power dynamics. 2) Developing a 'digital bill of rights' that privileges human dignity over the profit motive. 3) Involving multiple stakeholders on a global scale in internet governance. 4) Integrating digital media literacy more deeply into our educational systems. 5) Regulating internet communications in [a] way that privileges diversity of participation at every level and requires accountability and transparency to consumers and citizens."

Charles Ess, professor in the department of media and communication at the University of Oslo, said, "It seems very clear that as these technologies become more comprehensive and complex, they require ever greater conscious attention and reflection on our part in order to ascertain what uses and balances in fact best contribute to individual and social well-being and flourishing. In some ways, this is ancient wisdom – and specifically at the core of the Enlightenment: if we are to escape bondage, we must have the courage to critically think (and feel) and act out of our own (shared) agency. This is the virtue ethics approach taken up by Norbert Wiener at the beginning of computing and cybernetics. ... Fairly simply put: The more these technologies both enhance my capabilities and threaten my freedom (e.g., the infinite surveillance possible through the Internet of Things), the more I am required to be aware of their advantages and threats, and to adjust my usage of them accordingly, whether in terms of close attention to, e.g., privacy settings on social media platforms, software and software enhancements (such as browsers and browser extensions, PgP apps, etc.), and/or simple decisions as to whether or not some technological conveniences may simply not be worth the cost in terms of loss of privacy or 'deskilling', as in the case of offloading care to carebots. But as these examples suggest, such awareness and attention also require enormous resources of time, attention and some level of technical expertise. How to help 'the many' acquire these levels of awareness, insight, technical expertise? The Enlightenment answer is, of course, education. A version of this might be 'media literacy' – but what is needed is something far more robust than 'how to use a spreadsheet' (as important and useful as spreadsheets are).

Rather, such a robust media literacy would include explicit attention to the ethical, social, and political dimensions that interweave through all of this – and highlight how such critical attention and conscious responsibility for our technological usages and choices is not just about being more savvy consumers, but, ultimately, engaged citizens in democratic polities and, most grandiosely, human beings pursuing good lives of flourishing in informed and conscious ways. All of that is obviously a lot to demand – both of educational systems and of human beings in general."

Annette Markham, professor of information studies and digital design at Aarhus University in Denmark, said, "We can help mitigate some of this stress and anxiety by engaging people to be more conscious of what's happening as well as – and this latter part is critical – more deliberate in establishing and maintaining better habits of digital media consumption. This means more work to develop effective media literacy (media, digital and data literacy), through strategic educational efforts or more informal consciousness raising, using feminist models of the women's liberation movements in the '60s and '70s. I've been wanting to figure out a way to have an international holiday called 'memory day,' where we spend time sorting through our own personal 'big data' to see what we've collected and generated throughout the year, to clean up our files and throw away junk, but to also more carefully curate what matters to us. This sort of regular reflection help people recognize how much they click, store, and share, which can in turn help people reflect on what those activities mean to them. Sorting through one's data to commemorate what matters is something that social media platforms like Facebook are happy to do, but are they the best curators for our memories? Tracing, remembering, and commemorating can help us slow down, be more deliberative about our digital lives, and be more reflexive about the impact of the internet overall."

Justin Reich, assistant professor of comparative media studies at MIT and the executive director of the MIT Teaching Systems Lab, wrote, "Just as earlier generations of media-literacy practices explained to students how advertising strategies work, we'll need similar education to folks about how consumer technologies are designed to capture and maintain attention, to surveil consumers and other network actors to harvest vast amounts of data, and … to organize that data for targeted advertising."