



## Activity Report

2016 AEARU Young Researchers International Conference (AEARU-YRIC 2016)

- Dates  
September 17 - 19, 2016
- Theme  
Innovation for the Future: *Towards human well-being and a sustainable society*
- Venue
  - Tsukuba International Congress Center, Tsukuba City, Japan
- Support
  - Association of East Asian Research Universities (AEARU)
  - Faculty of Engineering, Information and System, University of Tsukuba
  - Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Tsukuba
  - Faculty of Library Information and Media Science, University of Tsukuba
  - Faculty of Pure and Applied Sciences, University of Tsukuba
  - Office of Global Initiatives, University of Tsukuba

- Overview  
The AEARU Young Researchers International Conference (AEARU-YRIC), initiated by the University of Tsukuba in 2015, specifically targeted young researchers. Following last year's momentum, we hosted the conference for the second time this year.

AEARU-YRIC 2016 was held on September 17 - 19, 2016 under the theme of "Innovation for the Future: *Towards human well-being and a sustainable society*". It aimed to provide a platform for young researchers to present their research and studies on innovation that promote people's quality of life to attain human well-being and a sustainable society.

We welcomed 24 young researchers from 9 AEARU member universities in China, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea and from 2 other distinguished universities from Korea. Participants included those with diverse nationalities representing Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Nepal and Russia whose active participation facilitated the conference and helped create a more international atmosphere.

AEARU-YRIC 2016 consisted of research presentation and report presentation sessions with two keynote speeches and two invited speeches by faculty members of the University of Tsukuba. The selected 24 participants gave their presentations based on their submitted papers. A total of about 60 attendees came to the



conference.

During the Q&A session, both the presenters and audience engaged in stimulating discussions and sharing of opinions freely and actively.

- All papers for presentations were compiled into a booklet and distributed to all conference participants.

- Conference Program (Appendix I)

On the first day, September 17, AEARU-YRIC 2016 was held at Tsukuba International Congress Center in Tsukuba City. University of Tsukuba's Vice President Caroline Benton gave the welcome address, followed by the Keynote speech on the theme of "Human Technology for Empowering People" from Professor Kenji Suzuki of the Faculty of Engineering, Information and System & Center for Cybernics Research. Three sessions were scheduled during the day, one session in the morning and two in the afternoon, wherein 13 participants presented. Each was allotted 20 minutes, 15-min for presentation and 5-min Q&A. In addition, two invited speakers, Assistant Professor Mai Otsuki and Assistant Professor Tomoyuki Yamaguchi from the Faculty of Engineering, Information and System, opened sessions 2 and 3, respectively, in the afternoon.

On the second day, September 18, still in the same venue, the conference started with a keynote speech by Associate Professor Fumihide Tanaka on the theme "Social Robotics for Children", followed by 11 presenters (4 of them were given 20-min presentations at the research presentation session and 9 gave 15-min presentations at the report presentation sessions, 10 min for their talk and 5-min Q&A). All presentations ended in the morning.

In the afternoon, the participants were free to attend other sessions being held during Tsukuba Global Science Week 2016 (TGSW). There were 42 sessions from diverse academic fields, attended by over 1,500 participants with approximately 720 presenters from 113 institutions and 33 countries. AEARU-YRIC 2016 participants were able to join some of these TGSW sessions according to their interests.

On the last day, September 19, a one-day trip to TeNQ and Asakusa in Tokyo was held, showcasing the merging of Japanese modernity and tradition. TeNQ is a space entertainment museum with the latest in audio-visual technology, whereas Asakusa is known as one of the historical old towns in Tokyo (Appendix III).

- Expenditures

Accommodation and meals were provided to all presenters during the conference period. In addition, a travel grant up to JPY50,000 was provided to each presenter.



AEARU funding of USD 10,000 (Appendix IV) was used to partially subsidize costs to cover AEARU students' accommodation, meals, tour, etc.

■ Breakdown of Participants: **Total Number (24)**

Institutions

Japan

- ◇ Tohoku University (1)
- ◇ Tokyo Institute of Technology (4)
- ◇ University of Tsukuba (3)

China

- ◇ Nanjing University (4)
- ◇ Peking University (4)

Hong Kong

- ◇ Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (1)

Korea

- ◇ Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (2)
- ◇ Pohang University of Science and Technology (1)
- ◇ Seoul National University (1)
- ◇ Konkuk University (1) \*non-AEARU member university
- ◇ Ulsan National Institute of Science and Technology (2) \*non-AEARU member university

**Note: AEARU funds were not used to support non-AEARU member students.**

Countries/Regions

Bangladesh (1), China (8), Ghana (1), Hong Kong (1), Indonesia (1), Japan (6), Korea (4), Nepal (1), Russia (1)

Year of Studies

Assistant Professor (1), Doctoral Students (9), Master Students (7), Undergraduate Students (7)

Gender

Male (16), Female (8)

■ Conclusions

It was our second time to host a conference targeting young researchers that also included undergraduate students. This year's theme focused on science and technology, while last year's theme was on humanities and social sciences. Nevertheless, the topics of the papers and presentations discussed by the participants covered the diverse fields of engineering, computer science, environmental science, social science, and the humanities, etc.

Generally, the papers and power point slides of the presenters were well-prepared.



They presented their research studies using understandable terms and visual images. They were doing serious work to enhance the quality of human life through various approaches that stimulated audience interest.

One of the objectives for convening an AEARU conference for young researchers is to provide a platform for them to give presentations on the international stage. Participants developed confidence in expressing their thoughts and opinions, and in asking questions about each other's work. The atmosphere of mutual respect was naturally formed.

Another important purpose is to provide an opportunity to establish friendships and networks for future collaboration. Participants were actively interacting with students from other countries. They enjoyed the camaraderie, aside from the new knowledge gained.

We think this conference provided opportunities for the young researchers to learn about what others of the same generation are interested in and concerned about. At the same time, the conference provided the chance for them to make friends beyond borders, as well as an impetus to sustain their passion to continuously seek knowledge and contribute to human well-being worldwide.

#### ■ Recommendations

1. To establish a review committee comprised of faculty members from AEARU member universities, to critique papers to be selected and published in the AEARU conference proceedings. Strengthening the review process of presentation selection with an official international selection committee may enhance the motivation of young researchers and the quality of papers.
2. To publicize our activities on the AEARU website to reach a wider audience.

#### ■ Comments and Feedback

A brief open-ended questionnaire was sent to participants by email after the conference.

#### 【Some comments from participants – in their own words】

1. The conference invited people with different discipline backgrounds and multiple nationalities, which made it an international platform for young researchers in this region.
2. I liked that the conference had people from different academic backgrounds and nationalities gathered at one place and proposed different ideas on how to improve life of humans in different areas.
3. I liked that the conference encouraged participants who are young and immature researchers.



- Appendices
  1. Program
  2. Poster
  3. One day field trip to Tokyo (TeNQ & Asakusa)
  4. Financial Statement
  5. Photos