



APrIGF Macao 2015 Workshop Summary Report

Date: 2 July 2015

Time: 9:45-10:45

Workshop Title: Internet Openness & Transparency Reporting

Reported by & Contact Email: Jennifer Zhang, jcheung1@hku.hk

Gender Balance (approx. number of female vs. male participants): 2 vs. 1

Moderators: Jennifer Zhang

Panelists:

Jennifer Zhang, Hong Kong Transparency Report, The University of Hong Kong
Glacier Kwong, Keyboard Frontline

Dr. Clement Chen, Law Faculty, The University of Hong Kong

A brief summary of presentations (If any)

Hong Kong's Internet activism has become an important driving force for mobilising and organising social movements since the Occupy movement last year. In response, the city's law enforcement agencies have enhanced their cybercrime and cyber security team and doubled their efforts to monitor and censor the Internet. While law makers are debating such measures' implications on citizen's online privacy and free speech, the panel discussed internet governance from the angles of transparency and accountability by reviewing the legal and regulatory frameworks and the current state of transparency reporting by the Hong Kong government and local ICT companies. The panelists also proposed a multi-stakeholder based transparency reporting mechanism.

A substantive summary and the key issues that were raised:

Jennifer Zhang briefed the audience with the research and advocacy work of Hong Kong Transparency Report, including the study of the annual surveillance data released by Hong Kong's commissioner on interception of communications and surveillance, and the collection and analysis of Internet user data and content removal requests the Hong Kong government have released since 2010. Jennifer shared the experience of HKTR's success in gathering more data by using the city's code on access to information, and called for voluntary and regular transparency reporting from both the government and local Internet service providers for better accountability and protection of Internet users' privacy rights online.



Glacier Kwong introduced the advocacy work of Keyboard Frontline, and its latest Who's On Your Side survey on Hong Kong's popular web forums in collaboration with Hong Kong Transparency Report and IT Legislator Charles Mok's research team. The survey evaluated the forums in terms of their levels of transparency reporting and respect for users' privacy, and highlighted the need for local internet companies to be more transparent when communicating with users.

Dr. Clement Chen presented his findings titled Freedom of Information without a Statutory Right to Know: Open Government in Hong Kong. Dr. Chen outlined the access to information regime and analysed the statistics regarding FOI disclosure in Hong Kong. Dr. Chen also succinctly pointed out the focus of information access policy of Hong Kong has stressed the economic dimension of free flow of information rather than the dimension of accountability and civil engagement.

Conclusion & Further Comments:

The panel managed to put into perspective the necessity and urgency for both the government and ICT companies to engage in transparency reporting in light of citizens' lack of a general statutory right of access to information. In the context of Hong Kong's enhanced cyber law enforcement since last year's Occupy movement, it is crucial for the academics and the civil society to proactively study and advocate best transparency reporting standards practices by the government and ICT companies. After all, sunshine is best disinfectant, and we need transparency to hold our government and Internet companies accountable and to safeguard Internet users' privacy rights.