

# IT Managers Connection

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**Resident Bloggers**  
 Stephen Ibaraki Industry Analyst  
 FCIPS, I.S.P., DFNPA, CMP, MVP



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## [Interview] Part 5: Dr. Nakashima

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals.



In this blog series, we continue our talk with Professor Hideyuki Nakashima: President Future University – Hakodate; the internationally renowned computer scientist, inspirational visionary and top-ranked leader. To find out more about Dr. Nakashima, go to the first blog in this series. I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Nakashima at the invitation-only international large society summit where CIPS participated/presented. Hideyuki's reputation for innovation and leadership is well known worldwide and this led to this blog series. Dr. Nakashima was the youngest professor to ever be offered the presidency of a university in the history of Japan, due to his significant and outstanding achievements. Dr. Nakashima is creating new branches of computer science and merging others that will impact the world into the future. It's worth your time to follow his work. There is an element of "Star Trek" which I find compelling and in talking with Hideyuki, I can feel his passion...I wanted to share this with you too!

Thank you and Enjoy!

Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), [I.S.P.](#), [MVP](#)

Cyber Assist Applications; Small Payment Systems; Information Abuse; Information Societies; Practitioner Involvement; IT Curriculum Changes; MIT—Brooks/Minsky.

Stephen: Can you profile these societal applications? What will this feel, sound, and look like? What opportunities will this provide to business, government, education, and media?

Hidey: In our Cyber Assist project, we illustrated several of them. Let me just list them here:

- Efficient transportation systems such as global car navigation, bus-on-call without any fixed route nor time table.
- Personal navigation system through a theme park or through a city.
- Semantic computing for world-wide document authoring and sharing.
- Search engine based on semantic matching (in contrast to key-word matching).
- On-line government that allow all citizens to directly participate in decision making.

Stephen: How can these projects build out further so they are in common use? For example, your semantic matching and semantic world-wide document authoring and sharing?

Hidey: The above examples are all related each other. World-wide document sharing may provide a good information source for personal navigation system. For them to be used commonly, the system must be used in commercial activities. Currently, the business model of many services on Web is based on advertisement. I do not think it healthy if companies with large resources dominate the future world. One of the keys for those systems to be practical without such drawbacks is the realization of small-payment systems. One cent or even sub-decimal cents should be able to be collected with comparably small costs. In current Japan, the cost of communication infrastructure is still relatively high to realize this.

Stephen: What are the negative aspects to information processing technologies?

Hidey: Well, I do not see any inherent problems. Of course, abuse of any technology creates negative aspects. For example, if children are raised in an Internet dominant environment where they meet others only through digital lines, there is a potential damage to their cognitive systems. It is important that children interact each other physically, sometimes fist-fighting each other. Children must also be exposed to the nature.

The slogan of Cyber Assist, "cyber = digital + real", was created with the above in mind. We must use IT to support and enhance human interaction with the nature, not to replace it.

Stephen: Profile your role with IPSJ (Information Processing Society of Japan) and what you hope to accomplish? [Note: The IPSJ plays a similar role in Japan that CIPS does in Canada though IPSJ has a more academic focus.]

Hidey: I am a vice president of IPSJ in charge of managing research-oriented activities of the society including management of special interest groups, publications, and annual conferences.

an academic activities are changing its infrastructure due to the Internet changes the structure of our society. For example,



Ruth Morbin IT Pro Advisor  
MoresoftCanada



John Osley Director Community Evangelism  
MoresoftCanada



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As academic societies are changing their roles these days as the internet changes the structure of our society. For example, twenty years ago, we researchers could not have an international workshop without the help of an academic society. But these days we can not only organize a large conference using only the Internet, but needless to say, small workshops. An academic society must adjust its role to this new environment. Moreover, as I mentioned before, IT is mature enough to be applied to the real world problems. IPSJ used to be a closed society to academia, but now it has to deal with societal applications of IT. I hope I can contribute to change the function of IPSJ toward that direction. One of the problems I am working on currently is to eliminate printed publications of the society and make them available only on-line. Printed technical notes distributed at the SIG workshops will be eliminated by our 50th anniversary in 2010.

At the large society summit in Vancouver, the President of British Computer Society said "Most senior decision makers - political, social or business - are almost totally unaware of the capabilities and the limitations of IT, and expectations are often totally unrealistic." I think this comment applies to many countries including Japan. IPSJ must initiate its work toward public understanding of IT. We must try to get more attention and memberships of practitioners working at companies. We must also try to change the curriculum of IT related courses not only at universities but also at high schools.

Stephen: How do you propose to get more practitioners involved with the IPSJ?

Hidey: This is a good question. IPSJ recently initiated a series of "IT forums". These forums are for practitioners as SIG's are for researchers. We are hoping IT forums will get the attention of practitioners who are potential members of IPSJ.

IBM is proposing "service science". My personal understanding of service science is that it is a study of design-construct-service-evaluation cycle of IT products. Then, IT forums of IPSJ are a good opportunity for both researchers and practitioners to get together and discuss service science.

Stephen: What kinds of changes are you making to the IT curriculum at the high school and university levels?

Hidey: The following idea is under discussion, and is not an action plan yet. In Japan, "Informatics" was introduced into the high-school curriculum several years ago. However, the content of the course is just a surface introduction of IT-literacy (how to use computer systems) rather than deep understanding of the concept of information. Viewing our world from the point of view of information and its processing (the latter is called computation) is an alternative to viewing our world as matters and energy as in physics [Cf. Jannette M. Wing: "Computational Thinking" CACM Volume 49, Issue 3 (March 2006)]. I think it is important to teach this computational view to university students not majoring in computer science, and high-school students. Either IPSJ or FUN may take the initiative toward this direction in the near future.

Stephen: You did graduate studies at MIT. Can you describe your time there and what innovations you introduced?

Hidey: My visit to MIT was my very first experience abroad. My first impression of the US was that I could behave more freely there. You know, in Japan, we have to use special honorary expressions to elderly people. In a sense we have to know who is an elder before we initiate a conversation. I thus thought that life in the US fit me better than that in Japan. However, as time goes by, I began to realize that I was raised in the Japanese culture and the Japanese way of viewing world is engraved deep in me. Thereafter I favor my Buddhist-like view even when I do research and write AI programs. The emphasis on philosophy is what I learned from MIT. At the University of Tokyo, classes on AI taught us only technical contents, but at MIT, a large portion of time was dedicated to philosophical questions on the nature of intelligence.

My research theme at the time was on logic programming. By the way, logic programming was the key technology for Japanese "Fifth Generation Computing" project. The concept of logic programming language Prolog was invented in Europe (France and GB). When I visited MIT, researchers there did not know the success of Prolog and I was one of the first to introduce it to MIT.

Stephen: Please share a few stories about working with Brooks and Minsky at MIT?

Hidey: At 1978 when I was at MIT, the computer environment was much poorer than that of today, even at MIT. Only a small number of terminals were connected to the AI Lab's network. A visiting student had a rather hard time to find a terminal during the daytime. After 5pm, many professors left their offices but kept them open for any students to use. At night, I often used Minsky's terminal in his office because his secretary was a good friend of mine.

Brooks was not there while I was at MIT. He joined later. But we came to know each other during his several visits to Japan. We sometimes went to Karaoke together. When the Cyber Assist Research Center was established, I asked him to serve as a member of external evaluation committee of the center.

In the next blog, Hidey will talk about:

- Future IT trends;
- Semantic Search//Computing;
- Biggest challenge for business—role change;
- Mashups/unconferences;
- IT Skills Shortage—causes/solutions;
- Career Tips;
- Second Life (Virtual Worlds).

I also encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at [sibaraki@cips.ca](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca).

Posted: Wednesday, February 21, 2007 7:26 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)

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