PREFACE

Toshio Kobayashi
Symposium Organizer
Professor, NIME

With the arrival of the information age the application of ICT to higher education has progressed remarkably. This has brought about the near realization of distance education and the international distribution of educational digital content across national boundaries and cultural spheres. In the international learning community, however, problems persist, and cultural and linguistic diversity sometimes presents barriers to the full realization of the promise of ICT.

At this symposium held on October 30 and 31, 2002 at NIME we explored ideas about E-learning in the 21st century, a time when multi-cultural and polyglot societies are aiming for co-existence, and discussed how such issues are being addressed in higher education worldwide. The main objective of the Symposium was to bring to light a course for E-learning that will take into account the uniqueness of diverse cultures. Furthermore, at the symposium we tried to seek the possibility for Japan to provide both educational programs and content overseas. Following the keynote address focusing on linguistic barriers, we had three sessions that dealt with multi-cultural relations and distance education, as well as problems concerning system design and content development.

At the Symposium scholars and experts representing eight nations from Asia, Oceania, North America, South America, Europe and the Middle East gathered together to share their views and exchange ideas for open and distance education through IT in the 21st century. Throughout the symposium there was heated and vigorous discussion on various topics involving local and community issues and E-learning.

As Symposium Organizer I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the speakers for their academic contributions to the symposium that lasted over two days. The symposium was attended by a general audience of some 200 and transmitted in its entirety to universities across Japan through the inter-university satellite network (SCS). Thanks are also due to those participants both on site and off for making this meaningful international event so stimulating and successful. I must pay tribute also to a number of my colleagues and staff behind the scenes whose efforts contributed to the success of this international symposium.

Last but not least I owe a personal debt of gratitude to the members of the
Executive Committee for the 02 NIME Symposium, to Ms. Kazuko Katagiri, our international liaison officer, to Professor Naoki Takatsu, technical director of the symposium, to the other members of the Committee for their hard and tireless work in preparing for the symposium, making all the necessary arrangements and technical linkage, and to Dr. Thomas O'Connor, currently a visiting researcher at NIME, for helping to proofread some of the manuscripts for this report.