DEIM 2020 | NEWS RELEASE | NII National Institute of Informatics 国立情報学研究所

DEIM 2020 Academic Conference Held Online to Prevent Further Spread of COVID-19;
563 Researchers and Students Participate Remotely Using IT

In light of the current circumstances surrounding the spread of the COVID-19 in Japan, academic conferences and events that bring participants to a venue are being cancelled or postponed.

The IEICE Data Engineering Technical Group, The Database Society of Japan (DBSJ), and Information Processing Society of Japan Special Interest Group on Database Systems (IPSJ DBS) held the 12th Forum on Data Engineering and Information Management and 18th Annual Meeting of The Database Society of Japan (DEIM 2020; Forum Chair: Jun Miyazaki, Tokyo Institute of Technology) online from March 2 to 4, 2020. The National Institute of Informatics (NII; Director General: Masaru Kitsuregawa; Tokyo, Japan), which is part of the Inter-University Research Institute Corporation/Research Organization of Information and Systems (ROIS), cooperated with the development of an online conference environment.

DEIM 2020 is a retreat-style workshop aimed at facilitating discussion and exchange of opinions on various themes relating to data engineering and information management. Every year, DIEM attracts some 600 participants including students, researchers, and individuals from the private sector. In light of the spread of the COVID-19, the DEIM 2020 Executive Committee on February 17, 2020 decided against holding the conference on site as planned in Fukushima Prefecture.

NII Director General and DBSJ President Masaru Kitsuregawa said, "We should not be taking away precious opportunities for students to present their work. As IT professionals, we have the means to conduct the academic conference online, and it is up to us to take up the challenge."

The DEIM Executive Committee and NII launched a joint team to study the project, and the decision was made to conduct DEIM 2020 as an online conference (some sessions were excluded). After examining technical feasibility issues, the joint team moved forward with preparations including training to facilitate the conference proceedings, building up their expertise. The conference program included oral presentation sessions, interactive sessions, and plenary lectures, with 10 sessions scheduled simultaneously for each time slot. In all, there were 73 oral presentation sessions and 2 interactive sessions for three days. Staff monitored the progress of the DEIM Forum from NII's main offices in Tokyo, establishing a technical support center to facilitate the online proceedings and a set for invited speakers to give talks. Many large-screen displays were used in these facilities.

Session participants used Cisco Webex Meetings® (Cisco Systems, G.K.) to join the online sessions from their respective locations, whether at home, work, or a research lab. Each session featured a presentation and Q&A session facilitated by a session chair, in

addition to the presenter and audience. Talks by invited speakers were broadcasted on YouTube Live and LINE LIVE with the cooperation of LINE Corporation, due to the large number of viewers.

The DEIM 2020 Executive Committee and NII's joint team developed and tested an online participant dynamics monitoring system that successfully enables real-time visualization of the dynamics of academic conference participants.

Feedback from students included comments that "It was easy to ask questions, because I could ask on the chat whenever I wanted" and "As a novice presenter, I didn't feel nervous giving my presentation." In all, DEIM 2020 attracted 563 participants.

DEIM 2020 is open-sourcing its initiatives and accumulated expertise from conducting the academic conference online. The conference is sharing its expertise with the organizers of the 82nd National Convention of the Information Processing Society of Japan (IPSJ), which will be virtually conducted from March 5 to 7, 2020. NII has also been assisting these efforts by developing a batch registration function for online conference systems, as well as session automatic controls and session log monitoring, using the Webex Meetings API.

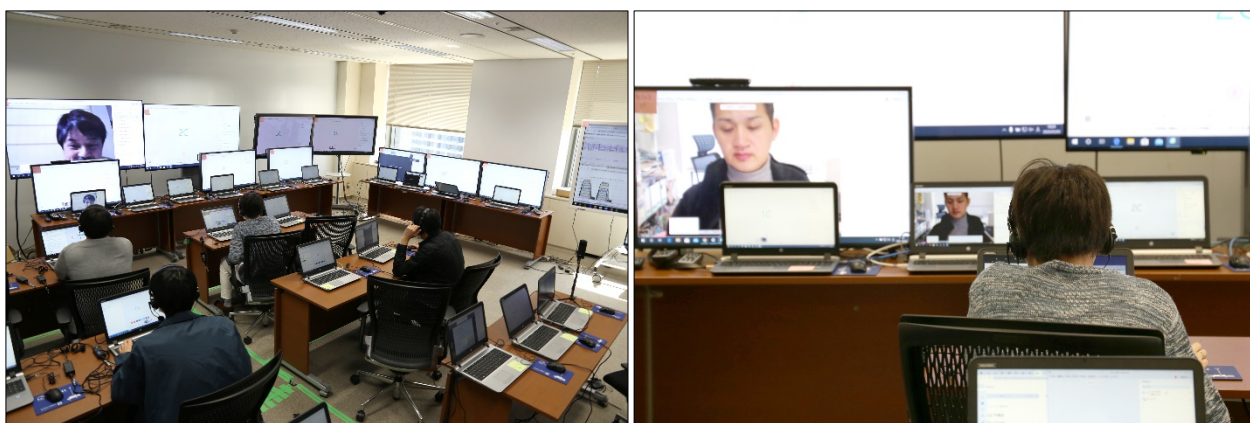Comment from Jun Miyazaki, Forum Chair of DEIM 2020:
"Despite only having two weeks to prepare, we successfully implemented all the oral presentations, interactive presentations, and plenary lectures online rather than on site as originally planned, thanks to the efforts of NII and the DEIM 2020 Executive Committee."

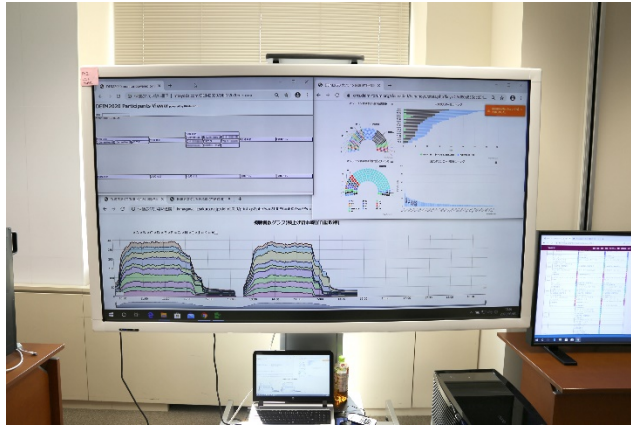Comment from Masaru Kitsuregawa, NII Director General and DBSJ President:
"It is very unfortunate that scientific conferences and symposiums throughout Japan have recently been cancelled or postponed under measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease. These events are often the first or last opportunity for students to give a research presentation in their entire lives. Such opportunities are extremely valuable to their later lives, as they were in my life, and I felt that we should not be taking them away. As IT experts, I was confident that we could use IT to successfully hold a large event with some 600 participants, with the DEIM team and NII work in unison to tackle the project. On February 17, 2020, we decided to conduct the symposium in cyberspace and thanks to the efforts of many individuals concerned, it went extremely well and there were no issues. I am also delighted that it gave our young IT researchers the confidence to know that they could have a direct hand in finding solutions to social issues."

12th Forum on Data Engineering and Information Management
(18th Annual Meeting of The Database Society of Japan)
https://db-event.jpn.org/deim2020

DEIM 2020 Online Conference Office

Real-time visualization system

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