

Manthan e-Content award

Starting from the WSA statement “A truly Global Information Society is one where all persons, without distinction, are empowered freely to create, receive, share and utilize information and knowledge for their economic, social, cultural and political development.” – the creation of e-Content is imperative for providing faster, quicker access to rich, diverse sources of content and for the creation of a Global Information Society. Bridging the divide also means making sure that people, wherever they may live, get access to digital content that is localized, culturally relevant and available for use. Producing and distributing a diverse and original digital content is thus of paramount importance if citizens are to be provided access and bridging the digital divide.

Organized by Digital Empowerment Foundation (Delhi-based Non-Governmental Organisation) India, and PlaNet Finance India, the Manthan Award 2004-2005, India, has been inspired by the World Summit Award (WSA) aims to select quality e-Content and promote creativity and innovation in the development of new media applications in India. Digital Empowerment Foundation, and World

Summit Award in partnership with Planet Finance India, had launched the Manthan Award on October 1, 2004 and on July 23rd 2005, Mathan Awards were given for eight categories of e content comprising e-Learning, e-Culture, e-Science, e-Government, e-Health, e-Business, e-Entertainment and e-Inclusion.

The Manthan Award with an overall goal of narrowing of the content gap, is the first of its kind in India, which emphasizes the importance of content in bridging the ever widening digital divide. The aim and purpose of organizing the Manthan Award (Indian name given for the e-Content Award) was to recognize and acknowledge the achievements of producers and designers, showcase, encourage and further disseminate India's best e-Content practices thus celebrating creativity and digital cultures and at the same time break the information barrier.

Osama Manzar, the director of Digital Empowerment Foundation and the WSA country expert for India for e-Content applications in the year 2003, emphasized that the Manthan Award aimed at opening the doors of global recognition and support to local initiatives, was unique not only in

India but also in Asia. e-Content development can make the common man more self reliant through complete information on his/her rights, privileges, strengths and how he/she can use the information for their own development, This initiative would encourage developing e-content at every level and enhance the e-content production capabilities

The contest represents a showcasing and networking platform for e-content products

and a unique chance for producers to receive recognition outside their existing markets and customer communities. It was an unique opportunity for young talents not only to showcase their products and share ideas and techniques with professionals and international experts but also to learn from innovations in the use of IT tools and communication networks in content creation.

The Manthan Award 2004-2005 is unique through its specific categories, which cover all aspects and sectors of the emerging Information Society and put the added value of multimedia and electronic contents for specific user groups and purposes at the centre of competition and evaluation. It is also unique due to sustained outreach activities in all the Indian states and territories and its promotion by leading multimedia and Internet organizations and institutions

Several significant recommendations were made during the conference that preceded the awards ceremony. The floor recommended that instead of being limited to the Internet and website as medium, other more common electronic media like community radio, mobile phones and other oral and visual media can be adopted for sharing contents and knowledge as in many cases content users are illiterate or do not have access to the world wide web. Various content possibilities also have to be explored such that disabled people can also access to information and knowledge. Similarly content providers have to make sure that content is provided in local languages so that they are able to carry the right messages and create knowledge. ■

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