iConference 2023

Casa Convalescència, Barcelona

Good morning,

Welcome to the city of Barcelona and, whether in person or online, thank you very much for taking part in this 18th iConference. This hybrid format is, to a degree, a legacy of the pandemic and, to a degree, part of the new world we live in, which is summed up so well in the theme for this conference: *"Normality, Virtuality, Physicality, Inclusivity"*.

A few days ago, at the UOC, we awarded an honorary doctorate to the researcher Dame Wendy Hall. In her excellent acceptance speech, she went over her academic and professional career, including some fascinating insights from her area of expertise. I found one of her reflections particularly pertinent for the conference we're opening today.

Dame Hall warned those who "get very deep in the detail, and don't look at the big picture" and contrasted this with her own ability "to know what we can do today" and, above all, **"to think about where this might lead us tomorrow"**[1].

Indeed, the iConference, thanks to expertise and interdisciplinarity, is able to look up from the day-to-day and tackle the leading questions that will define our future, both technologically and socially: from big data to artificial intelligence, from quantum computing to digital memory.

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And let me reiterate the twofold horizon I've just mentioned: technological and social. Because it is precisely here at this intersection between the two fields that we – as universities, research centres and scholars – have a special role to play. The three organizers of this conference, the Faculty of Information Technology at Monash University, the School of Information Sciences at the University of Illinois at Urbana-

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[1] Andrea Romanos, "Wendy Hall: "The way our governments regulate artificial intelligence will determine our futures very much", https://www.uoc.edu/portal/en/news/actualitat/2023/055-wendy-hall-way-governments-regulate-artificial-intelligence-determine-futures.html, 3 March 2023.

Champaign, and the UOC's Faculty of Computer Science, Multimedia and Telecommunications – which has just celebrated its 25th anniversary – share this perspective and look **to make this intersection one of the main focuses for learning, research and exchange**.

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Thus, meetings such as today's succeed when they foster mutual growth and strengthen existing networks. Because this leads to the multiplication of knowledge. That was the case here a hundred years ago, when this *Casa Convalescència*, this convalescent home, saw medical, healthcare and research activity that left its mark on a whole generation of medics, specialists and researchers.

Today, this *Casa Convalescència* is now the venue for this conference and will again bear witness to debate and exchange... Because **when the questions and the disciplines change, we also need to update our responses and approaches**. Whether you're here in Barcelona or joining us via one of the online platforms, this conference must help us connect the different nodes for creation, generation, dissemination and exchange of the knowledge provided by each and every one of the participants, each and every one of the institutions involved.

Because it's just as important to get as far as possible, as it is to do so in a way that is as fair, balanced, solidary, inclusive and human as possible. And to do so, as Dame Hall said, we need to know where the technology of tomorrow might take us.

Thank you very much,

Josep. A. Planell.