Major ICT Leadership from HM the King of Thailand

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Abstract

HM the King of Thailand is highly talented in all kinds of fields including Information Technology. He provided the most significant inspiration for Thai Information Technology by visiting the IBM plant in San Jose, California, USA, in the year 1960. That event encouraged Thailand to start thinking about computerization and led to the installation of the first two computers in Thailand in the year 1964, when Singapore installed only one for the first time and Malaysia none. This paper presents examples of HM the King’s talents in developing computer fonts, composing New Year cards, Buddhist Scripture, weather maps, antenna, distance learning, Internet, and using the first version of portable computer. Also presented are his visiting computer exhibitions, and sample webs for information on HM the King.

1. Introduction

HM the King has highly remarkable talents in many fields such as Royal Projects, Energy, Water Management, HM Sufficiency Economy Doctrine, Economy, Arts, Culture, Music and Sports and Information Technology. HM the King realizes the importance of development in IT and supports relevant research. He studies, invents and applies IT in many royal activities.

All universities in Thailand have started teaching about IT. The first college to teach IT in Thailand is Asian Institution of Technology (AIT) where Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman taught Management Information System in early 1980’s. In the year 1992, HM the Queen visited AIT. In his capacity as the President of AIT Alumni Association, Prof. Charmonman was granted an audience.

Another example of Thai university teaching IT is Assumption University (AU or ABAC) where there are more than 25 IT-related degree programs. The first IT program at Assumption University is in the field of Business Computer in which Prof. Charmonman drafted the curriculum at Assumption University and served as Chairman of the Committee to approve it at the Ministry of University Affairs.

HM the Queen visiting AIT
HRH the Crown Prince graciously allowed Assumption University to present to him the Honorary Ph.D. in Information Technology and Prof. Charmonman drafted and presented the citation.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously allowed AIT to present to her Ph.D. in Technology. In his capacity as President of AIT Alumni Association (AITAA), Prof. Charmonman invited Her Royal Highness to become an Honorary Member of AITAA.

In the year 1960, there was no computer installed in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia. On July 1960, HM the King provided highly significant IT inspiration for Thailand by visiting IBM factory in San Jose, California, USA. That event encouraged Thailand to think about using computer in social and economic development of the country to keep abreast with developed countries.

An institution which followed HM the King’s inspiration was SEATO Graduate School of Engineering at Chulalongkorn University which later became AIT.

In the year 1960, AIT announced a scholarship for Ph.D. in Computer field for the one who ranked first and that one happened to be Srisakdi Charmonman who went to study in USA.

In the year 1964, Srisakdi Charmonman became the first Thai to earn a Ph.D. in the Computer field. It took him two and a half years to complete the degree.

In the year 2004, AIT Alumni Association declared Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman Outstanding Alumni for Education and Research, and General Boonsrang Niumpradit (the Supreme...
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Outstanding Alumni of the year 2004.


HM the King studied and experimented with the software program “Fontastic” [2] in the year 1987. He then developed many sets of Thai fonts such as Chitralada Font and Phu Phing Font. He used both of them in the New Year cards he composed. He has been highly interested in the teaching of the Lord Buddha and the scripture which was initiated and distributed in India. Therefore, he implemented the ancient Indian font named “Devanagari” [6, 11].

HM the King has developed computer program to display and print Thai font, Sanskrit font, and phonetic symbols.

To follow HM the King’s inspiration, Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman has made arrangement to implement ancient Thai Fonts which he named “Srisakdi font”, “Charmonman font” and “Charm@Au font” [5].

HM the King has been using computer in his work. He kept his various writing, such as His Majesty’s Thai version of “A Man Called Interpid” in the computer. On the New Year occasions, he has been composing New Year cards for Thai people [13]. Sample cards for the years 1988 and 2007 are given below.

Happy New Year 1988.

HM the King’s New Year Cards

HM the King has been using computer in his work. He kept his various writing, such as His Majesty’s Thai version of “A Man Called Interpid” in the computer. On the New Year occasions, he has been composing New Year cards for Thai people [13]. Sample cards for the years 1988 and 2007 are given below.
5. Computerized Buddhist Scripture

Computerized Buddhist Scripture is a royal project to make it convenient and accurate to study Buddhist Scripture and related statements, to make complete collection of information on Buddhist Scripture, and to make it easy for distribution.

In May 2001, HM the King kindly donated 1,472,900 baht to Mahidol University to develop computerized system for the study of Buddhist Scripture and related statements. The project was completed and presented to HM the King and HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The presentation was made on 18 January 1995 under the name “Buddhist Scriptures Information Retrieval IV (BUDSIR IV)”. A later version is “BUDSIR/TT V.3” including 194 books [1, 4].

6. Weather Maps

In November 1995, Typhoon Angela devastated Philippines and expected to reach Thailand. The Meteorological Department gave warning to Thais to prepare for the coming danger. HM the King followed the movement of Angela and declared in contradiction to the Meteorological Department warning that there was no need to be frightened because the typhoon was degenerating when it was moving into Vietnam and it was changing into a depression. Therefore, Thai people enjoyed the good news due to HM the King’s talent and skills in IT.

7. Communication and Antenna.

HM the King has been interested in the field of communication since he was young. He has been capable of repairing and tuning radio equipments.

HM the King using a radio communication device

HM the King explaining the weather map.

HM the King has been using radio communication regularly and has experimented with transmitting the signal more clearly. He gave directions to experts to research and develop antenna. He presented his model to government and enterprise units to produce antenna with increased efficiency.
In the year 1980, HM the King proposed his idea to design and construct antenna superior to the existing ones at that time instead of modifying the radio equipment which is more difficult than improving the antenna, resulting in Suthi 1, 2, 3, and 4. The antenna proposed by HM the King could be used with all the 22 radio equipments he was using at that time with not more than 1% fading of signal, while the commercial standards allow 10% fading.

Suthi 2 antenna is port-to-port. It is usable with mobile phone and can reach as far as from Bangkok to Chiang Mai. As of the year 2007, there is no commercial antenna similar to Suthi 2. Suthi 3 antenna may rotate 360°, and Suthi 4 antenna can solve the problem of fading due to weather condition and use Dual Polarization, horizontally, vertically and both ways.

8. Satellite-Based Distance Learning.

On 5 December 1995, celebrating HM the King 50th Anniversary on the throne, Distance Learning Foundation (DLF) was established with Khwankeo Vajarodaya, as the chairman to start distance education through satellite [7].

The DLF Project utilized actual class rooms at Klaikangwon school for broadcasting live teaching in the class of M.1 – M.6 (Grade 7 – Grade 12). It may be said that the DLF Project is only one in the world to use one actual class room for one television channel, for all the grades and channels.

In the year 1995, DLF broadcast to Secondary and high schools in every province of Thailand (2,700 government schools) and to 300 private schools. In the year 2007, DLF broadcast to 12,221 schools including about 400 schools in the southern part. About 2 million kids have studied in the DLF program and more than 350,000 UBC subscribers have access to DLF. Neighboring countries, namely, Kampuchea, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam have access to DLF. In addition to secondary and high school level, DLF also have the Community Education Program, the Professional Program from Klaikangwon Industrial and Community Education College and Program from Ratchamongkol Institute of Technology, Klaikangwon Comus.

In the year 2003, the DLF program may be accessed through the web at “www.dlf.ac.th”.

At DLF, there is also “Internet IT with Srisakdi Charmonman Program”, every Sunday at 12.00 – 13.00, UBC 56 in case of satellite and UBC 89 in case of cable. Internet IT with Srisakdi Charmonman
Program provides lectures on 5 courses, each with three credits (45 hours), that is, Introduction to Computer (45 hours), Introduction to the Internet (45 hours), Management Information Systems (45 hours), Computer and Internet Security (45 hours) and eLearning (45 hours). Internet IT with Srisakdi Charmonman program may also be accessed at www.WebAv.biz [14].

9. HM the King Using the Internet Regularly.

The Internet was born in the US in about 1969. In his capacity as Director of Graduate Studies in Computer Science at the University of Missouri and Director of research projects funded by the US National Science Foundation, Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman had the opportunity to use the Internet when it was born in the US.

The Internet came to Thailand in 1987 at AIT. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman was President of AIT Alumni Association who was one in the first group of users of the Internet when it arrived in Thailand. At that time, in his capacity as a member of a Board of Trustees of Assumption University, he got a grant from Assumption University to buy the computer and modem. He proposed to Assumption University to require all students to use the Internet (In the US, the Internet was available but not required). He helped Assumption University to become a Founding Member of the Internet Society. Assumption University is the only Founding Member of ISOC in ASEAN.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn presiding over the opening of the International Internet Gateway at Assumption University.

Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman is the founder and co-owner of KSC which is the first ISP to register with the Ministry of Commerce of Thailand. KSC at one point was the largest ISP in Thailand and valued at 1,000 million US$ but did not sell at that price because the Internet market collapsed worldwide. Assumption University and KSC presented Internet services to HM the King and HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously allowed Prof. Dr. Srisakdi to present Internet connection to her.
When HM the King travelled to Klaikangwon Palace, a staff member from the palace would notify Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman by phone. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman would send an urgent letter to TOT to provide leased line connection from Assumption University or KSC to HM the King’s study room. Sometimes, Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman had to take the computer on his own desk for HM the King to use at Klaikangwon palace. When HM the King returned to Bangkok, the palace staff would notify Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman, in turn, notified TOT to disconnect the link and Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman to take the computer back to Assumption University. Later, HM the King stayed longer at Klaikangwon palace and so TOT provided permanent connection.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously granted permission for Prof. Dr. Srisakdi to publish a book “Internet and Applications You Should Know About” or a more informal name “108 E from eAuction to eZoo”. The proceeds after deduction of expenses will be presented to HRH the Princess for charity.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously allowed Prof. Dr. Srisakdi to give a short course about the Internet.

HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn graciously granted permission for Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman to publish a book “Internet and Applications You Should Know About” or a more informal name “108 E from eAuction to eZoo”. The proceeds after deduction of expenses will be presented to HRH the Princess for charity.

HM the King giving a plaque to Prof. Dr. Srisakdi for providing Internet connection.

The front cover of the book on 108 Es.
10. HM the King Used the First Version of the Portable Computer.

The first portable computer in the world was named Osborne. It was invented by Adam Osborne who is a Thai by birth, i.e. he was born in Bangkok in the year 1939. His father is English and his mother is Polish. Later on, Osborne moved to India and the US. He earned a Ph.D. from Delaware University in the US. He invented the first portable computer in the world in the year 1981.

Osborne portable computer weighed 10.5 kilograms.

Computer Union Company in Bangkok is the agent of Osborne. H.E. Anand Panyarachun was the chairman of the company and Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman was a member of the Board of Directors. The company presented an Osborne portable computer to HM the King. 

11. HM the King Visited Computer Exhibitions.

HM the King together with HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and HRH Krom Luang Naradhipas Ratchanakarindra visited computer exhibition at KMIT Ladkrabang. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman was C-11 Professor and President of the Faculty Senate there and got Royal permission to report on the use of computer to teach the Thai alphabets, computer application in rice mills and artificial intelligence.
12. Sample Webs for Information on HM the King.

There are many webs with information on HM the King, such as www.kanchanapisek.or.th [10], and www.BelovedKing.com [3].


Had HM the King not visited the IBM plant in the US in the year 1960, AIT would not have given the Ph.D. scholarship to Srisakdi Charmonman. If Srisakdi Charmonman had not earned his Ph.D. in 1964, he would not have become the first C-11 Professor in Engineering, the father of Thai Internet in the year 2000 and the father of Thai eLearning in the year 2006. Assumption University would not have constructed Srisakdi Charmonman IT Center [12] which is the seat of the College of Internet Distance Education [9].

Therefore, it may be said that Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman has become what he is today because of the kindness and the most significant IT inspiration from HM the King. Prof. Dr. Srisakdi Charmonman is one of many Thai citizens who are highly grateful to HM the King and ready to serve him for the benefits of Thailand. HM the King is outstandingly talented in IT and has made significant contribution to the country. HM the King has great vision. He realizes the importance of IT in providing benefits for the happiness of his people. He is the one who provided significant inspiration for computerization. He has studied and developed IT applications, whose footsteps Thai professionals should follow.
All Thai people are deeply grateful to HM the King’s inspiration and contribution.

Reference

1. http://budsir.mahidol.ac.th
2. http://fontastic.i-n.net
5. http://www.charm.au.edu