

## Venkataraman Balaji



Dr. Venkataraman Balaji, a specialist in the area of Information and Communication Technology applied to rural development, joined COL on September 1, 2010. He has been active with his students and colleagues in the area of Learning Technology as well, for close to a decade. He received the World Technology Award in the Education category in 2001 ( [www.wtn.net](http://www.wtn.net) ).

Balaji received his Masters' degree from the Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur in 1984, and completed his PhD in Energy Studies from the University of Madras in India in 1991. He was on the staff of the M S Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai in India in various capacities (1991-2000), notably as the director of the informatics. During his tenure there, he facilitated the development of the Information Villages research project that has created a globally recognized model for applying contemporary ICT in rural development. His work was featured in the international media extensively.

After a short stint in France at a CNRS laboratory in Montpellier, Balaji returned to India in 2001 to join the International Crops Research institute for the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) which has been a partner of the COL over the last decade. At ICRISAT, which has laboratories and offices in seven countries in sub Saharan Africa and South Asia, Balaji served as the Global Leader for Knowledge Management and Sharing. While here, he has worked with a number of Open Universities in South and Southeast Asia and in Eastern and Southern Africa in organizing training programs and workshops to bring technology-mediated knowledge management and ODL closer. His recent work with the Indian Council of Agricultural Research is associated with development of digitized UG course materials equivalent to about 10 000 hours of teaching, and in building the Agropedia, a platform that uses advanced web technologies and links web space to mobile telephony. He is also associated with a project to create a generic re-usable learning

objects repository.

Balaji has considerable international experience in project and IT management and in consulting. He has worked with the FAO, UNESCO, UNDP-GEF, IDRC (Canada) and with a host of international agricultural research organizations on over a dozen projects, and is associated with the University of Florida as the honorary manager for the joint education center with ICRISAT. He is a member of a number of professional societies such as the IEEE and the ACM and serves as editor or reviewer for journals in knowledge management, ICT-for-development and Geomatics.