I arrived in Colombo, Sri Lanka, early in the morning of Sunday, August 14, 2011, after a 27-hour trip. Prof. Chandika Wavegedara of the University of Muratuwa met me at the airport and escorted me to the Mount Lavinia Hotel, a colonial style hotel on the ocean that used to be the residence of the British governor. Later the same day, I had lunch with Prof. Wavegedara, Prof. Dileeka Dias, and Prof. Chulantha Kulasekere at a nearby restaurant. During the lunch discussion, I had the opportunity to learn about engineering research and education in Sri Lanka and the state of the local industry.

My first lecture took place late in the afternoon of Monday, August 15, 2011, at the University of Colombo, following a tea reception hosted by the departmental faculty. Approximately 35 people attended the lecture, including a few faculty and students, but most attendees were from the local industry. Due to the late of the hour, the Q&A session was rather short, but I did have the chance to speak with several of the local industry attendees, and we have followed up with establishing connections on social networks.

The second lecture took place in the morning of Tuesday, August 16, 2011, at the University of Muratuwa. Before the lecture, Prof. Dias gave me a tour of several labs in the Department of Electronic & Telecommunication Engineering, including her own lab where students briefly presented their work on sensor networks and capturing the channel surfing habits of TV watchers. The lecture was attended by several faculty members and more than 50 engineering students; most students were undergraduate but a few Masters students were also present. The department is in the process of building up its graduate degree programs, hence the number of graduate students is limited at this moment. This lecture was more interactive, and I was asked many interesting questions. Importantly, after the lecture, I was approached by several students who were interested in continuing for graduate studies abroad and wanted to learn more about opportunities in the U.S.A. Following a lunch discussion with Prof. Kulasekere, the head of the department, I boarded a taxi and started the five-hour trip to Kandy, a city in the middle of the country, about 70 miles from Colombo, where the ICIIS conference took place. We arrived at the University of Peradeniya in the evening, and after a brief meeting with the conference organizers, I was taken to the Hotel Hilltop with panoramic views of the city of Kandy.

On Wednesday, August 17, 2011, I attended the opening ceremony of the ICIIS conference at the University of Peradeniya that included presentations by government officials, University administrators, and local industry participants.
Following the opening ceremony, attendees traveled to the Earl’s Regency hotel in Kandy where the main technical program of the conference took place. My keynote presentation took place in mid-afternoon and was attended by most conference participants, including many students of the University of Peradeniya. Despite the fact that the conference program had slipped to the point that my presentation started more than 45 minutes later than its scheduled time, I received many questions and had substantial discussions on Future Internet Design (the topic of my talk) with several attendees following the session.

In the morning of the following day, Thursday, August 18, 2011, I took a taxi back to Colombo airport for my flight to the U.S. Despite the long trip, this was a unique experience that gave me the opportunity to learn about the culture, University practices, and IT/Telecom industry efforts in a developing country and the challenges facing academics and students who work and study in an area located relatively far from the main centers of research and development.