Conflict Information Consortium *

Colorado

A online version of this flier with links to Consortium resources is available at: http://conflict.colorado.edu/fast-facts.html

The Conflict Information Consortium

The University of Colorado Conflict Information Consortium, directed by Guy and Heidi Burgess, was founded in 1988 as a multi-disciplinary center for research and teaching about conflict and its transformation. With its primary focus on difficult and intractable conflicts, the Consortium has pioneered efforts to use rapidly-advancing information technologies to provide people from all walks of life with the information that they need in order to deal with conflicts more constructively. The Consortium sees such efforts to enhance and mobilize the skills of the general population as critical to efforts to deal with complex, society-wide conflicts.

This flier provides a quick overview of Consortium programs, with much more detailed information available online.

Consortium Web Sites / Projects

The Consortium currently operates the following conflict-related Web projects. (For links to these websites, see: http://conflict.colorado.edu/fast-fact.html.)

- *Major Knowledge Base Systems*
  - **Beyond Intractability** – Focused on especially difficult and destructive large-scale conflicts, this site is the product of the Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base project.
  - **CRInfo: The Conflict Resolution Information Source** – Focuses on more tractable disputes and alternative dispute resolution topics.

- *New "Next-Generation" Initiatives*
  - **CETR: Conflict Education & Training Resource Systems** – Affordable, next-generation conflict learning systems tailored to specific client/partner needs.
  - **Conflict Frontiers** – Conflict is a "global warming-class" problem. This site addresses the tough but critical challenges at the frontier of the conflict field.

Consortium websites are visited by 90,000-120,000 different people each month.

More than 10,000 external Web pages link to Consortium websites.

- *Additional, more specialized Web resources include:*
  - How to Stop Fighting: A Seven-Step Tutorial
  - Online Courses and Instructional Resources
  - "Building a Culture of Peace Conference" Website
  - Civil Rights Mediation Oral History Project

Promoting Constructive Approaches to Conflict

All Consortium Websites are based on the realization that costly, destructive conflicts are everywhere—family disputes, community conflict, sectarian tensions, unsuccessful business negotiations, labor strife, civil and international war, genocide, terrorism, and, conceivably, catastrophic conflict involving weapons of mass destruction. Destructive conflict dynamics also contribute to our chronic inability to sensibly deal with a broad range of other problems such as crime, poverty, disease, environmental degradation, and economic revitalization.

Conflict is also inevitable and, in fact, desirable. It is a major driver behind the processes of positive social change. It is through conflict processes that people are able to oppose activities that they believe are unwise and unjust. The challenge is to promote constructive conflict while also limiting its destructiveness.

Consortium systems were created under grants from the Hewlett Foundation totaling over $2.5 million.

Contributions from system users, the University of Colorado, and funders of other Consortium projects maintain these systems.

Conflict Learning and Information Systems

The course of conflict is determined by the cumulative actions of everyone involved. This includes people at all social levels in the full range of formal and informal conflict roles. This means that there is a society-wide need for materials that help people from all walks of life improve their conflict skills.

To help meet this need, the Conflict Information Consortium has produced an increasingly sophisticated series of Web-based, conflict information systems designed to support formal and informal education and training programs, as well as provide reference materials for use by individual citizens and those working to advance the field.

While there is obviously a need for new ideas and continuing research, we believe there is an even greater need for programs which increase the utilization of existing knowledge about supe-

rior conflict-handling techniques which are well-developed, understood, and tested. Unfortunately, most people lack this knowledge and, as a result, either rely on destructive, conflict-as-usual practices or try, often unsuccessfully, to "reinvent the wheel."

Our goal is to provide increasingly efficient learning and information systems that provide people with the information that they need, when they need it, from sources that they can trust, in a format they can understand, and at a price they can afford.

Consortium Web pages are integrated into the websites of the United Nations and the Association for Conflict Resolution and, soon, the United States Institute of Peace.

More specifically, our goal is to develop systems which are:
- *Resistant to information overload* – with succinct, "make-a-difference" information easily found;
- *Quickly and easily accessible* by individuals with different types of computer systems and network connections;
- *Trustworthy* – offering conflict advice from recognized experts that really works;
- *Affordable* (preferably free);
- *Relevant to user-specific conflict problems*;
- *Realistically applicable* in the user's conflict role;
- *Appropriate to user personalities, skills, and learning styles*;
- *Attractively presented* in ways which can reasonably compete with other information sources;
- *Understandable* by users with differing backgrounds and vocabularies (and languages); and
- *Comprehensive* – with access to information on all potentially-viable options.

While we have yet to reach these ambitious goals, each succeeding generation of Consortium information systems brings us one step closer.

Information Available

Currently, Consortium systems offer the following:

- Coverage of over 500 conflict-related topics with recommended references from our panel of experts;
- Core-knowledge and encyclopedia-type essays on over 400 topics;
- Additional learning materials, case studies, inspirational stories;
- Summaries of over 600 books and articles;

Consortium content was created from the contributions of over 300 people from around the world.

- Over 5,000 pages of full-text material with over 2,000 internal cross-links;
- Searchable, keyword-coded bibliographic databases with over 10,000 Web and 20,000 print publications;
- Continually updating Web "crawlers" covering 10,000+ additional pages;
- Recent Publications program featuring the latest print resource additions;
- Information on over 2500 organizations;

- Over 800 audio recordings (175 hours) available online;
- Conflict news from selected and diverse worldwide news sources with continually-updated listings on 80+ topics.

Information Access Options

A full range of powerful tools for accessing Consortium information are integrated into our various Websites. These include:

- **Search** – *For users who know what they are looking for:*
  - Simple and advanced search options.
- **Browse** – *For users who would appreciate a few suggestions:*
  - "Virtual" bookshelves with lists of resources by topic,
  - Diagnostic checklists with advice and "things to think about" for people involved in different types of conflict.
  - User Guides – Highlighting features of likely interest to specific user groups.
- **Online Courses** – *For users looking for instructor guidance:*
- **Teaching Materials** – *Tools that strengthen conflict instruction:*
  - Teaching guides, build-your-own-text, exercises (including role plays and simulations).