



Guy and Heidi Burgess

Starting with getting their PhD's in Sociology from University of Colorado in 1979 and doing postdoctoral work at MIT, Guy and Heidi Burgess have spent a career working jointly on most of their professional activities – most notably as Co-Directors of the University of Colorado Conflict Information Consortium which they help found in the late 1980's.

Their work has focused around three highly interconnected efforts:

- 1. Conflict Information Systems** – Since the late 1980's the Burgesses have pursued a long series of projects designed to use the latest information technologies to make more readily available information on the full range of conflict problems and strategies for dealing with those problems. This work has led to two major online learning community and knowledge base systems: CRInfo, the Conflict Resolution Information Source (www.crinfor.org) and Beyond Intractability the website of the Intractable Conflict Knowledge Base Project (www.beyondintractability.org). (These systems currently contain around 20,000 resources and are accessed by roughly 120,000 different people each month.)
- 2. Intractable Conflict** – The bulk of the Burgess's theoretical work, also since the late 1980's, has focused around the synthesis of available conflict insights into a comprehensive strategy for dealing with those intractable conflicts that stubbornly defy the best available conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. This work, which focuses on the big problems at the frontier of the field, is now concentrated on facilitating a paradigm shift toward a view of the field focused around very large-scale complex adaptive systems.
- 3. Conflict Education** – Recognizing that the key to improving conflict behavior is teaching very large numbers of people at all levels of society more constructive approaches to handling conflict, the Burgesses spend roughly half of their time teaching conflict-related courses at the sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate school levels in both face-to-face and online formats the University of Colorado, the University of Denver, and George Mason University. The Burgesses are especially interested in online teaching since it offers the potential of scaling up the field's impact by reaching far more people at far lower cost. The key, of course, is to find ways of doing this that preserve the quality and interactive nature of the teaching.

Their current work is based on couple of key assumptions: 1) society's chronic inability to deal with a wide range of intractable conflict problems represents as great a threat to human society as climate change and, somehow, we have to find a way to give the problem the attention it deserves, 2) the key to dealing with today's conflicts problems is to find ways of facilitating, in as many settings as possible, a shift to more "complexity-oriented" strategies, 3) the latest generation of information systems and social networking technologies provide the most promising strategy for facilitating this shift on the enormous scale that is required. Based on these assumptions, the Burgesses are currently trying to assemble an informal group of collaborators to jointly create a much more sophisticated, next generation, system – one that would go far beyond anything that Beyond Intractability has yet been able to produce.