New National Conflict Resolution Information Initiative Launched

The **Conflict Management in Higher Education Report** and the affiliated **Campus Mediation Resources** website are pleased to be involved in an important new national initiative known as the **Conflict Resolution Information Project**, or "CR-Info" for short. Bill Warters, the CMHER Editor, is a member of the Board of Governors of the CRInfo Project (described in more detail below), and is the director of CRInfo's Higher Education Focus Project, one of three charter special topic initiatives.

In addition to input into the design and development of CRInfo's web-based conflict resolution information development, refinement and sharing strategies, and access to the results of this work, the **Campus Mediation Resources** project received a $35,000 sub-grant spread over 2 years. These funds will be used to help provide special services to the higher education community (such as this **REPORT**), and to test and refine the "Focus Project" concept in preparation for other topical areas to follow. Future issues of the **REPORT** will lay out some of the larger vision of the Higher Education Focus Project as it gets underway.

What is the CRInfo Initiative all about?

The **Conflict Resolution Information Project** (CRInfo) is a cooperative effort to strengthen the conflict field's information infrastructure. The project's initial funding of $525,000 (for 3-years beginning in July of 1999) has come from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, longtime supporters of conflict resolution research, practice and theory-building in a range of domains. Starting from an initial planning and advising core of 22 participants, involvement in CRInfo is expected to expand considerably as work progresses. CRInfo's project directors are Guy and Heidi Burgess from the Conflict Research Consortium located at the University of Colorado.

The CRInfo project is based upon four key assumptions:

- Improving the flow of ideas among researchers, educators, trainers, practitioners, and disputants would contribute greatly to efforts to advance the conflict resolution field.
- More than most scientific and technical fields, the success of efforts to improve conflict processes requires that new insights be disseminated very broadly--to intermediaries and disputants at the grassroots level.
- The World-Wide-Web is creating opportunities for dramatically improving the communication capabilities of the field's information infrastructure.
- Although the number of conflict-related web sites is large and constantly growing, better coordination of these efforts can substantially reduce costs, improve quality, fill information gaps, and make key material much easier for the field's many constituents to find and use.

The focus of the CRInfo project thus goes beyond the establishment of individual web sites by people and organizations working in the field. Instead, the focus is on two major categories of "next generation" web projects. In the first category, CRInfo would assemble and publish (on the web) three conflict resolution information resource catalogs-one of existing web-based resources of value, a second on classic and new print-based resources, and a third on networking information about individuals and organizations working in the field. Complementing these catalogs will be a series of tools designed to help users search for and retrieve information on specific topics and related tools for limiting the "information overload" problem.

In the second major category, focus projects, CRInfo intends to support the development much more extensive and user-friendly information projects for specific sub-fields. Initial projects would focus on 1) the field's common core of theoretical ideas, 2) cultural and community conflicts, 3) higher education conflicts, and 4) environmental/public policy conflicts. Based upon an evaluation these initial projects, CRInfo will refine the focus project specifications and initiate a number of additional focus projects (through mini-grants and unfunded affiliated projects). In developing these projects funds would be used to produce initial demonstration versions with significant and very useful short-term deliverables. In addition, matching support for the more extensive development of these projects would be sought from organizations interested in promoting particular branches of the field.

Online Services Scheduled to Begin Roll-out

The CRInfo Board members and affiliates are hard at work now pulling together information retrieval and coding schemes, exploring the particular needs and interests of targeted user groups, identifying and acquiring the necessary software tools, and establishing the project' core webserver. The scheduled roll-out of services should be as follows:

- Technical Support -- A source of information and advice on how to use the web more effectively. **Spring 2000**

- Web-based resource catalog with sites selected and indexed by CRInfo editors (not the automated computer programs used by typical web search services). **Summer 2000**

- Print-based resource catalog with many summaries and abstracts and indexed by experts in the field. The focus will be on current publications and the classic literature. **Summer 2000**

- Networking resource catalog -- a comprehensive guide to directories of people and organizations working in the field. **Summer 2000**

- Core knowledge focus project -- an easy-to-read, full-text, online source for information about the field's core ideas. **Winter 2001**

- Focus Projects -- a series of comprehensive, full-text web sites focused on specific issues. Initial projects on higher education and culture and community conflict will be followed by additional projects created under our mini-grant and affiliates programs. **Spring 2001**

For more information on the CRInfo initiative, you are invited to visit the website (still under construction!) at www.crinfo.org, or contact the project directors using the following information.

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