“SPOTLIGHT” Articles

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Christina Merchant and the State of Dispute System Design
Lisa Blomgren Amsler, Janet K. Martinez and Stephanie E. Smith
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Abstract
Christina Merchant made an important contribution to the field of dispute resolution through her teaching, writing, and training on dispute system design. Using principles of organization development, she brought a new organizational lens to thinking about dispute system design (DSD) beyond collective bargaining and grievance procedures; she looked at the whole organization, its many sources of, causes for, and ways to address conflict. With Cathy Costantino, her 1996 book provided a unique and influential resource for a field that has continued to grow. The field would benefit from broadening the academic literature that informs systems for managing conflict. Zooming out to the organization's nested institutional contexts, the work of Elinor Ostrom in political science and political economy provides the tools of institutional analysis for DSD. She also laid the groundwork for thinking about DSD in relation to governance, not only at the local but also at the state, regional, national, and international levels. By applying a more comprehensive analytic framework to DSD, conflict resolvers with DSD skills and expertise are poised to make important differences in emerging global systems for addressing conflict upstream in policy development, midstream in its implementation, and downstream in enforcement.

The Future of Conflict Management Systems
David B. Lipsky
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Abstract
This article acknowledges Chris Merchant's contribution to the development of the concept of a conflict management system (CMS). It discusses the relationship between a CMS and a closely related concept, an integrated conflict management system (ICMS), which is a more comprehensive or integrated approach to conflict management. The article reports on surveys of Fortune 1000 corporations that show that the implementation of a CMS in these corporations rose from 17 percent in 1997 to about 30 percent in 2011.
Chris Merchant expressed optimism about the future of conflict management systems. Although her vision of the future of conflict management systems has not yet been fulfilled, one can hope that if these systems provide not only organizational efficiency but also workplace justice, her optimism will one day be justified.