UK Systems Society

Conference 2009

Tuesday 1st & Wednesday 2nd September 2009

Call for Contributions

Paper submission is open from now until 31 May 2009

Registration opens 1 March 2009

'Systems Research: Lessons from the Past– Progress for the Future'

Keynote speaker:

Prof. Peter Checkland

For more information about the conference, please contact:

Conference Secretariat
conference2009@ukss.org.uk

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The Conference Committee invite contributions from Systems thinkers, whether academic or practitioner. Topics of interest will include, but are not restricted to, the following:

- **Distinctive research into Systems thinking, taking forward the Systems agenda**

- **Examples of Systems practice that inspire further research and development**

- **Highlighting 21st Century problem situations that Systems thinkers could or should address**

- **New methodological approaches that are or could be used to address 21st Century problems**

In a change of format, this conference will be organized to maximise opportunities for discussion of future developments in Systems theory. There will be a number of interactive workshops and plenary sessions organised around relevant themes. Papers are invited relating to the areas outlined above, for peer review (in respect of academic works) or editorial review (in respect of accounts of Systems practice) for a special, 25th anniversary issue of The Systemist journal. Eligibility for publication in this special issue will depend upon at least one of the authors registering for and attending the Conference. Contributing authors will be invited to present a poster setting out their ideas in a special session of the Conference devoted to informal discussion of these posters, providing opportunities for networking.

UK Systems Society

Dealing with real world complexities

Conference 2009

1-2 September 2009

St Anne's College, University of Oxford

Call for Contributions

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The World has recently been awakened by a reminder of something long known: that we ignore the complexities in human systems at our peril. As chaos has invaded global financial markets, many people are now experiencing the painful consequences of treating complex problems as if they were amenable to piecemeal solutions.

More than 40 years have passed since researchers began to set out views of a Systems perspective in which Systems philosophy, theory, methodology and application combine to form Systemic inquiry. During that time, many people have focused our attention on the emergent properties discernible when combinations of individual elements were considered as conceptual 'wholes'. Work by Ackoff, Bateson, Beer, von Bertalanffy, Churchman, Forester and Vickers, to list only a few contributors, gradually formed a coherent core for a mature discipline of 'Systems'.

Drawing upon these foundations, a number of methodologies for systemic analysis have been developed and applied in fields such as engineering, social policy and organizational management. We have seen countless applications of these methodologies over the past 30 years, each of which helped to build our understandings of ways in which systems thinking could be helpful in addressing real world problem situations. Widespread acceptance has been gained in industry, commerce and public life for approaches such as the Soft Systems Methodology, System Dynamics, the Viable Systems Model and Critical System Heuristics.

However, as the 21st century unfolds, we perceive a need for renewed vigour in exploration of Systemic methods of inquiry to address the kinds of situation and challenge posed by large, complex, global and/or virtual organizations of business and government. As Ackoff pointed out, these challenges may take the form of 'messes', comprising many interconnected problems that may themselves be composed of many, simpler puzzles. For a manager, one of the greatest pitfalls is to mistake a mess for a puzzle and fail to make efforts to unravel its (possibly hidden) complexities. Yet this is exactly the phenomenon we have seen exemplified in the 'credit crunch'.

Now, more than ever, Systems thinkers must work with renewed vigour to promote and develop Systemic thinking. Much good work is done every day by individuals and groups in academic and practical settings in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. We need now to celebrate this work, to band together and share our thinking, and to proclaim to the World that our ideas are the way forward out of current problems and into a future where complexity is embraced rather than feared. This celebration is the focus for this year's Conference!

Key Dates:

Deadline for paper submission	31 May 2009
Feedback to authors	23 June 2009
Registration opens	1 March 2009
Early bird period ends	30 June 2009
Publication of Special Issue	November 2009

Fees:

	Early bird	Standard
Member	£250	£300
Non-member	£295	£345
Students/unwaged	£175	£195

(including one night's bed & breakfast at St Anne's College, lunches and Conference dinner)

St Anne's College is situated in the heart of the University town of Oxford, conveniently place for rail and coach links and within walking distance of the City Centre. It is situated in 5 acres of pleasant grounds. Accommodation is in modern, en-suite rooms with tea and coffee making facilities. All conference sessions are in rooms adjacent to the accommodation.

For more information about the conference, to submit a paper or to book a place, please contact:

Conference Secretariat
conference2009@ukss.org.uk

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