Center for the Study of Information and Religion

2014 Conference on Information and Religion
Paper / Poster Proposal

All proposals must be submitted on this form and emailed as an attachment to csir@kent.edu.
Incomplete forms will not be considered.

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Note: The selection committee will determine most appropriate format based on information provided in proposal and conference schedule.

Note: The “Primary Author” will be main contact for this proposal and will be responsible for sharing information with additional authors. Please use the spaces at the end of this form to indicate additional authors, if appropriate.
Please tell us how you heard about this conference; check as many as apply:

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Proposal

Title of Presentation
Wisdom, Knowledge, Understanding and Spirituality – Regrounding the Knowledge Pyramid

Presentation Summary (approx. 100 words)
This presentation builds upon the growing consensus to rethink the DIKW pyramid and to replace it with a more accurate model that represents the true source of knowledge – people. It also proposes that a new research area be considered in the field of knowledge sciences, specifically one that addresses the relationship of knowledge and wisdom, drawing from work in religious studies. The paper highlights important factors that are missing from the knowledge sciences discussion – understanding, learning, and spirituality.

Research Problem and Research Methods (approx. 250 words)
In his 2010 blog, David Weinberger, Director of Harvard’s Innovation Lab, accurately described the origins and popularization of the DIKW (Data-Information-Knowledge-Wisdom) pyramid. The pyramid was first described by T.S. Eliot in his poem, The Rock. In 1989, it gained popularity in a reference by Russell Ackoff (International Society for General Systems Research). Weinberger correctly describes the promotion of the DIKW concept as a desperate attempt to justify the high dollar investments that were made in information systems in the 1990s. While the DIKW pyramid served an economic goal in the 1990s, it came at a high opportunity cost – the side-tracking of further explorations of the relationships of knowledge, wisdom, spirituality and understanding. A brief review of the past 20 years of knowledge sciences research suggests there are few references to these topics. This research reconnects wisdom, knowledge, spirituality and understanding drawing from the wealth of work in religious studies and Biblical references in particular. This research is anchored in the recent recognition of the role of spirituality, morals, ethics in the 21st knowledge society. This is a view that is well received in Asia, where knowledge sciences are understood to include the spiritual side and knowledge resides in people and results from understanding. It also adds to the growing consensus that it is time to refocus our thinking away from the DIKW pyramid and towards a more complete view people, the source of knowledge, and of a more complete knowledge life cycle.

Anticipated Results and Significance to Research at the Intersection of Religion and Information (approx. 250 words)
Foundational authors, Nonaka and Takeuchi, correctly recognized the role of spirituality in gaining understanding and attaining wisdom. With the pivot of knowledge management (the practice) to technology in the 1990’s, though, this recognition was lost.
In religious studies we see attainment of knowledge and wisdom without any references to “information” or “data”. Clearly, over millennia, data and information have not been prerequisites for attaining knowledge. From the technology perspective, where structured and encoded data may through interpretation produce information, the attainment of “wisdom” too often takes the form of humor and jokes. The lack of treatment of wisdom in the knowledge sciences discipline is significant and obvious. We believe that by characterizing the treatment of wisdom in religious studies and connecting it to the treatment of knowledge in knowledge sciences, we will be opening a new line of inquiry in both disciplines. This new line of inquiry is critical to the healthy development of a knowledge society in the 21st century. At the same time, we hope to expand the discussion in the field of religion and information to include the broader concept of knowledge.

Statement of Author’s Credentials (approx. 100 words)

Dr. Bedford has a strong educational background in knowledge sciences, intellectual history, and a long history of experience and practice in the field of knowledge management. As a member of the original World Bank knowledge management team in 1996, she has a deep understanding of the origin and use of the DIKW pyramid. She is also part of an ongoing dialog within the discipline of why it is time to retire this representation. Dr. Bedford has a positive history of presenting research at CSIR Conferences, and values the opportunity to explore new boundaries between these two fields. Previous CSIR research has generated new ways of looking at topics and also produced practical results that were repurposed for use in intellectual capital research. The feedback we receive from CSIR participants has proved valuable to our work and thinking.

Statement of Intent

By submitting this proposal, I indicate my intention to deliver my presentation at the 2014 Conference on Information and Religion if selected. (Primary author should sign and date below.)

Denise A. D. Bedford  Nov. 30, 2013

Signature (may be typed)  Denise A. D. Bedford  Date: Nov. 30, 2013

Please provide information on additional authors/presenters in the boxes below.

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