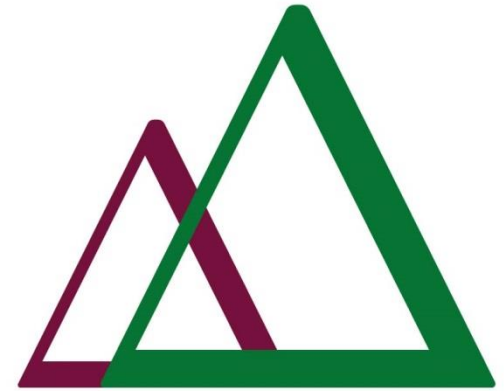# The Difference That Makes a Difference 2015
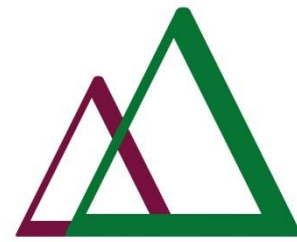
δtmδ 2015

Information and values: ethics, spirituality and religion

Magnus Ramage
The Open University, UK
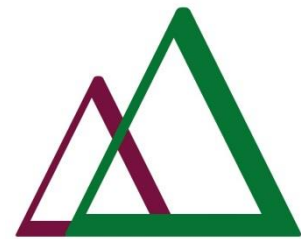
Approach of workshops

- Information central to a very wide range of disciplines, **but** understood differently in each
- Aim to create dialogue between perspectives from different disciplines
- Title from Bateson's definition of information
    - emphasis on meaning, understanding and perspective; no attempt to say one approach is 'right'
- Bottom-up understanding of information: looking for 'family resemblances' (Wittgenstein)
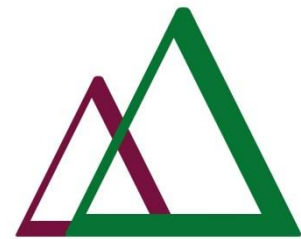
Three previous workshops

- All in Milton Keynes, UK
- **2007**: Historical and systems perspective; Information handling; 'Hard' information
- **2011**: What is information; Understanding with information; Engaging with information; The impact of information
- **2013**: Information and Space; Information and Time; Information and Identity; What is information; Information and Art
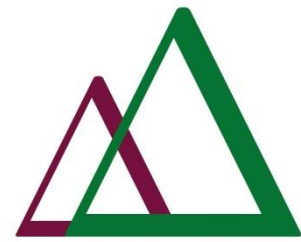
Disciplines and outputs

- Disciplines at workshops: info systems, organisational theory, info science, telecoms, logic, semiotics, quantum theory, art, philosophy, biology, ecology, communications, sociology, race theory, design, architecture, music, genetics, cultural studies (etc.)
- Outputs: edited book; special issue of *tripleC*; special issue of *Kybernetes*
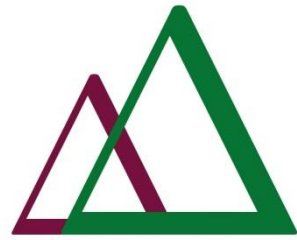
Goals of this workshop

1. To look at religion, spirituality, ethics & values through an informational lens

2. To understand more about information through considering its ethics and spiritual dimensions
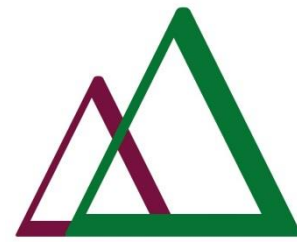
Information-values tension

- Information sometimes seen as value-free
- We contend that this is not so – that values and information exist in a tension which is resolved in ethics, spirituality and religion
- Inspiration from Churchman's *Enemies of the Systems Approach*
  - dialectic between 'hard' systems & its 'enemies'
  - morality, politics, religion and aesthetics

Chapman-Borgmann model

- Borgmann (1999): information *about* reality, information *for* reality, information *as* reality
- Chapman (2014)
    - Information *about* religion: use of information-thinking to understand religion (scientific)
    - Information *for* religion: use of information as a tool of religion (practitioner)
    - Information *as* religion: world-view or grand-narrative, a coherent worldview explaining fundamental questions of life (e.g. Deutsch, Floridi, Vedral, Kurzweil)