

Laurence D. RICHARDS

Laurence D. Richards, Professor Emeritus of Management and Informatics at Indiana University East, continues to write on ideas in second-order cybernetics, policy support systems, social transformation and design, and the relations between art and technology in society. He has used his 32 years in higher education administration as a research arena for trying out some of these ideas. In his first book on Constraint Theory, he proposed that, in addressing problems and issues in complex systems involving many participants, desires be treated as constraints rather than as goals. In research for NASA, he developed an approach for formulating policy on new space transportation systems when we know that technologies and political priorities will have changed in ways impossible to predict by the time a new system can be made operational. He has also proposed that (1) cybernetics be treated as a way of thinking about ways of thinking, making the way of thinking a choice rather than defaulting to the prevailing way, and (2) the cybernetician be treated as a craftsman in and with time. He is particularly interested in non-hierarchical forms of social organization and the knowledge structures that support them and in the shift in the formulation of the human attribute we call consciousness that seems necessary to accommodate a fully participative and dialogic society.

Richards received his undergraduate degree in Electrical Engineering from the University of Maine, a master's degree in Aeronautical Systems from the University of West Florida, a Master of Business Administration from Mississippi State University, and his Ph.D. in Operations Research from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. He is a past President of the American Society for Cybernetics (ASC) and of the American Society for Engineering Management (ASEM). He has also been awarded the ASC Norbert Wiener Medal and elected an ASEM Fellow. His administrative assignments have included Founding Chair of the Department of Engineering Management at Old Dominion University, Founding Dean of the School of Management and Aviation Science and Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs at Bridgewater State University, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Interim Chancellor at Indiana University East and Interim Vice Chancellor and Dean of Indiana University – Purdue University Columbus (IUPUC).