

The 10th International Conference on Gaming and Risk Taking, held in Montreal in 1997, made an indelible impression upon my professional development. In the late 1990s, I was a clinical psychology graduate student at the University of Nevada Reno struggling to find a dissertation topic. I focused my efforts on better understanding a clinical population that I found intriguing; problem gamblers. My faculty advisor was not a problem gambling specialist, nor were there any faculty in the Psychology Department with particular interest in problem gambling, so I was referred to Dr. Bill Eadington, a Professor in the School of Business and Director of the Institute for the Study of Gambling & Commercial Gaming. At the time, I thought the suggestion to ask an economics professor to mentor me on the topic of problem gambling was ludicrous; as it turned out, this suggestion was a precious gift.

The wise professor used our discipline difference as a teaching asset. Couched as a means to better understand my worldview, Professor Eadington asked me to write a paper explaining my conceptualization of problem gambling.

At the suggestion of Dr. Eadington, I attended my first gambling conference and presented this theoretical paper exploring experiential avoidance as a functional process of problem gambling. I was in awe of this conference. Not only was there a depth and

breadth of topics and expertise, but it was lively and fun. Like Dr. Eadington, the conference attendees were collegial and extraordinarily supportive of students. I recall Roger Horbay walking up to me after my talk and referring to me a genius; 15 years and dozens of presentations later, I have not re-experienced post-talk accolades of this magnitude.

I have attended every International Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking since my first and have never been disappointed. In addition to being a conference participant, I had the opportunity to briefly work alongside Bill Eadington and Judy Cornelius with conference organizing and editing conference proceedings. From this perspective, I came to appreciate all the hard work, talent, and commitment it takes to successfully organize a world-class conference. Bill and Judy's conference, as affectionately referred to by veterans in the field, has rightly earned itself an excellent reputation. As the venerable conference host, Dr. Eadington is in

his element whether at the podium or gliding between colleagues during networking breaks. In the background, Judy Cornelius would masterfully orchestrate conference logistics.

I view Bill and Judy's conference as the premier research conference on gambling, and I leave each conference with a wealth of new information. The conference offers opportunities to explore ideas and empirical findings from a variety of academic disciplines including mathematics, law, economics, hospitality, gaming technology, public policy, psychology, sociology, and business. It is an event marked with discoveries and connections.

I am eagerly looking forward to the 15th International Conference on Gaming and Risk Taking in Las Vegas. A forerunner of this conference helped launch my career and I consider my participation with these conferences a vital part of my ongoing professional

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development. It is here where friends and colleagues meet, collaborations form, knowledge is shared and expanded, and the ideals, legacies, and individuals that embody the International Conference on Gaming and Risk Taking are celebrated.

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