



# Southeast Evaluation Association Newsletter

## Join Us For Southeast Evaluation Association's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Workshop

by Dr. Fred Seamon

In a few short months, you will have a tremendous opportunity to participate in [SEA's Annual Workshop](#) in [Tallahassee, Florida](#) on February 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup>. For 26 years SEA has planned, organized, and conducted its Annual Workshop, which has evolved into a much anticipated professional development and networking opportunity. It attracts evaluation professionals, graduate students, and other professionals wanting to learn more about evaluation and related issues. For many who attend each year, the SEA Annual Workshop is a "can't miss" event that is looked forward to with great interest and anticipation.



I attended my first SEA Annual Workshop many years ago and have been an active participant and attendee ever since. For me, attending the Annual Workshop has become my annual ritual and pilgrimage because of what I get from the workshop. I have yet to be disappointed. My sense of value and effectiveness of the Annual Workshop is shared by many other attendees. Workshop evaluations clearly show that attendees find the Annual Workshop a valuable and stimulating experience from which they come away with something they can actually use. Perhaps the highest compliment is that attendees do not view the Annual Workshop as another "feel good" meeting, but as an event where they can actually apply in their own fields what they learned at the Workshop.

The upcoming SEA Annual Workshop is shaping up to be one of the most well-attended in recent memory, based upon current inquiries from individuals interested in attending or presenting. SEA has already received inquiries from states as far away as Texas. The [registration](#) cost for the Annual Workshop (\$75 for members, \$105 for non-members; \$40 for student members; and \$50 for non-member students) is nominal considering the value added, networking opportunities, and quality of presentations. If you must choose between the SEA Annual Workshop and another professional development opportunity, I encourage you to choose the SEA Workshop as you will not be disappointed. Don't wait to hear about it from friends and colleagues—experience it firsthand! ♦

## Southeast Evaluation Association's 26th Annual Workshop Call for Proposals

### Deadline: EXTENDED to January 9th, 2015

SEA invites evaluators of all levels of expertise to submit proposals for presenting and sharing their knowledge at SEA's 2-day 2015 Annual Workshop. SEA accepts evaluation-focused proposals on a variety of topics such as methodology, data analysis, tools, and professional skills (public speaking, client relations, project management, proposal and report writing, etc.), as well as across a variety of fields, including Public Administration and Management, Health Services, Criminal Justice/Juvenile Justice, Social Services, and Education (Early Education, K-12, Higher Education, Lifelong Learning).



Please submit your [proposal application](#) via email with subject line "Attn: SEA Workshop Chair": to [seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org](mailto:seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org) no later than 5:00 p.m. EST on January 9, 2015. ♦

### Upcoming Events

February 23-24, 2015: SEA's Annual Workshop Tallahassee, Florida

Visit [SEA's website](#) frequently to learn the latest!

### Register Now for Southeast Evaluation's 26th Annual Workshop!

- 1) Submit a Workshop [Registration form](#).
- 2) Submit your Workshop [Registration fees](#).
  - \$75 for members and \$105 for non-members
  - \$40 for full-time student members and \$50 for full-time student non-members
- 3) Spread the word!

We look forward to seeing you at SEA's Annual Workshop in 2015! ♦

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# Qualitative Research: From Start to Finish

Book Review by Sean Little

*Qualitative Research: From Start to Finish*  
by Robert K. Yin,  
The Guilford Press, 348 pages  
\$45.43 on Amazon new

Robert Yin designed this book to introduce students to qualitative research, with each chapter to be given as a weekly assignment in a semester-long class. The analysis section has a good, and easy to understand, introduction to coding, but the book does not stop at analysis. Yin discusses the frequently forgotten steps after analysis: interpretation, conclusion, and presentation. While the book may be structured for use in coursework, it would also be useful for a general reader wanting to learn about qualitative research. This book may not be that useful, however, for an experienced qualitative researcher.

The structure of this book facilitates information storage and retrieval. Each chapter begins with an abstract-like summation. "Box" headings and subheadings break-up each chapter, but unlike the "traditional" one-line phrase headings, these "box" headings contain a list of the major points in the following section. Generally each of these major points aligns with each sub-heading. Yin placed vignettes within each chapter to illustrate how some of the major points of the "box" heading would appear in an actual qualitative study. At the end of each chapter Yin recapped the terms, phrases, and concepts from the chapter that the reader should understand after studying the material. After that recap, Yin provided the reader with homework/exercises in which they could use some of the major points. This structure enables the reader to easily identify key points on the first read and each successive re-read. At the end of the book Yin placed a six page glossary of special terms used in qualitative research – a practice that should become more common.

In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the primary research instrument. This instrumentation of the researcher provides the researcher with many opportunities to influence, if not, distort the research. Thus reflexivity becomes a much greater issue in qualitative research than it does in quantitative research.

In qualitative research, the researcher must become present so that people can understand the possible effects of reflexiv-

ity. As the researcher can neither control nor eliminate reflexivity, other factors have to control for it. Transparency allows readers of qualitative research to examine how reflexivity could have affected the research. In addition, Yin emphasized the need to keep a journal, to maintain frequent contact with peers, and to increase validity by discussing reflexivity issues in any report.

Yin distinguishes between three types of preliminary studies: study banks, selected literature reviews, and comprehensive literature reviews. These three types of studies function differently. A study bank functions to familiarize a novice researcher with qualitative research. While a comprehensive literature review functions to familiarize a researcher with the research on a given topic, a selected literature review functions to identify a niche for research purposes.

Surprisingly, Yin argues against conducting a comprehensive literature review in favor of a selective literature review. A comprehensive literature review could overwhelm the novice researcher. As a key element of qualitative research is to allow new concepts to emerge, familiarizing oneself with current concepts could prevent the researcher from noticing new ones. Some qualitative researchers will even begin a study prior to formalizing a design.

The quantitative researcher picks a research design from a set of design templates which the researcher then modifies for their study. Qualitative research lacks such templates; it has a more emergent and iterative nature. For Yin, qualitative research involves parallel processing of the material in different stages of the research and the constant reworking of the material.

Yin identifies qualitative research design with the answers to eight design questions: 1) if and when to develop a fixed research design (prior to starting the study or emerging from the study), 2) whether and how to strengthen validity, 3) whether and how to clarify the data collection units (unit of analysis), 4) whether and how to sample, 5) whether and how to incorporate prior concepts and theories into a study, 6) whether and how to obtain participant feedback, 7) whether and how the findings will be generalizable, and 8) whether and how to prepare a research protocol. When the researcher answers

these questions, a qualitative design emerges.

Yin identifies four types of data collection: interviewing, observing, collecting, and feeling. With each type, the researcher will capture different data: in interviews, the data will concern verbal and body language; in observations, social interactions and activities; in collections, documents, and objects; and in feelings, the coldness/warm of a place, the perceived sense of time, for example.

In qualitative research, the relational interaction between participant and researcher becomes more important than it does in quantitative research. Throughout the text, Yin emphasized the collaborative nature of the relationship between the researcher and participants. Yin argued for frequent contact with colleagues and peers to maintain professional standards.

Yin uses a five stage model for analyzing qualitative data: Compiling, Disassembling, Reassembling, Interpreting, and Concluding. In the compiling phase, the researcher cleans and organizes data, using computer software or classic index cards. Yin labels as disassembling what other researchers label as coding. He also collapsed several levels of coding into this stage. The coded data is then reassembled or organized into arrays, matrices, etc. Coding should bring data to a higher conceptual level.

Few introductory studies emphasize what happens after analysis, but Yin devotes three chapters to interpreting, concluding, and presenting. Interpretations should reflect the entire study not just one or two tables. He lists three types of interpretations: descriptions, descriptions with a call to action, and explanations. Just as coding should raise the data to a higher conceptual level, the conclusion should raise the interpretation to a higher level.

Most interestingly, Yin discusses presenting your findings, both in traditional verbal format, array/matrix format, and in PowerPoint type format. For some people this may be the most useful part of the book. Given Yin's skill in organizing the material in this book, some people may find this section particularly useful.

The field work/data collection section had the most problems. When discussing how to record data, Yin recommended writing

# The President's Message

by Dr. Barbara Gill, SEA President



Dr. Bonnie Swan and Ms. Sheena Horton (Committee Co-Chairs), and Dr. Gary Walby and Dr. Fred Seamon. They have done an outstanding job of identifying program topics, and of organizing and moderating a wide-range of programs that, based on participant feedback, have met the needs of our membership. Workshops and webinars have been held to improve our efficiency as evaluators (document production, Excel tricks and tips), to advance our communications skills (effective presentations using video conferencing software), and to expand our understanding of career possibilities (evaluation careers in the private sector). The Committee also organized a series of professional development sessions that concentrated on qualitative data analysis techniques both for those members with minimal experience in qualitative research and for those with expertise in the qualitative research. A recent well-attended webinar on propensity scores focused on a quantitative aspect of our profession. I also want to recognize the generous presenters who have shared their knowledge and experience with us. They include: Dr. Mark Baird, Mr. Robert Cox, Dr. Gary Walby, Mr. Robert Weissert, Dr. Portia Dinoso, Ms. Shannon Blakey, Dr. Fred Seamon, Ms. Sheena Horton, Dr. Michael Jones, and Dr. M. H. Clark.

As 2014 comes to a close, I thought it might be a good time to reflect back on the [professional development activities](#) that SEA offered this year. I want to recognize the efforts of our program committee –

We will close out the year with a [holiday social](#), which is scheduled for December 11<sup>th</sup> at [The Wine Loft](#) in Tallahassee, Florida. If you live in the Tallahassee area, I encourage you to attend. It is a great opportunity to network with fellow evaluators!

As 2014 comes to an end, we are looking forward to the next [SEA Annual Workshop](#), which will be held on February 23-24, 2015. If you are a member of SEA or an [AEA](#) member in the southeastern region, you should have received a [Workshop announcement and a call for proposals](#). Please consider submitting a proposal. Definitely plan to attend the Workshop. As Dr. Seamon's article in this newsletter attests, last year's Workshop was a great success. Given the planning that is underway, I have even higher expectations for the 2015 Workshop.

Finally, as my term as SEA President comes to an end, I want to thank our Board members for the work they have done throughout the year. They are truly an outstanding group. SEA's [2014 Board members](#) include: Dr. Elizabeth McAuliffe (President Elect), Ms. Jennifer Johnson (Secretary), Mr. David Summers (Treasurer), Dr. Fred Seamon (Past President), Ms. Sheena Horton (Private Sector and Program Committee Co-Chair), Dr. Moya Alfonso (University Sector), Mr. Nathaniel Myers (State Government Sector), Jason Lawrence (Student Sector), Dr. Bonnie Swan (Program Committee Co-Chair) and Dr. Linda Schrader (AEA Liaison). Last but not least, I want to recognize Mr. Sean Little, Dr. Portia Dinoso, and Ms. Sheena Horton who volunteer countless hours to produce this newsletter.

Have a wonderful holiday season! ♦

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in a notebook carried at all times, along with a recorder and camera. Many people have noticed that as their computer use increases, the legibility of their hand writing decreases. Hand written field notes may no longer be a viable option for many people. Even when people can read their hand-written notes, problems remain. In most places writing in a notebook will appear conspicuous, if not suspicious. With the ubiquity of cell phones today, a smart phone with recorder, camera, and a word or text program would be much less conspicuous. I would assume that most field notes will soon be in TXT dialect, a cyber short-hand created by teen-agers.

For most methods of analysis, the notes will have to be entered into a computer. Audio recordings present another problem. Taped

interviews will have to be transcribed at high cost in dollars or time. As commercials on TV sell software that turns voice input into cyber text, technology exists to cut the costs for this task. Any discussion of interviewing as data collection should involve a discussion of software for transcription, which Yin did not do.

As Yin designed this book to be used in a classroom setting, these types of technological gaps are troubling.

Even with the above problems, this book works well as an introduction to qualitative research, especially the forgotten stages beyond analysis. Yin has excellent organization skills, evident in the organization of this book. For people new to or curious about, qualitative research it is well worth a read. ♦

## Get Linked! with Sheena Horton

### LucidChart

LucidChart, a cloud-based application, provides users tools to collaboratively create in real time various diagrams and charts. It also allows users to easily create flow charts and organizational charts. The application can export to various formats and has widely compatibility. A free version is available for basic use of a single user, as well as more advanced account types for single or multiple users.

[www.lucidchart.com](http://www.lucidchart.com)

### Mendeley

Are you buried under references or looking to expand your research and network? Mendeley is a free reference manager and academic social network. You can make your own fully searchable library, cite as you write, and read and annotate your PDFs on any device. You can also publicly or privately share reading lists, references, or full-text articles, or you can create groups to tackle research assignments, share feedback and write papers with your collaborators.

<http://www.mendeley.com/>

### Editable Maps, PowerPoint Templates, and more from PresentationMagazine.com

If you work with maps frequently, the editable maps feature on PresentationMagazine.com's website allows you to choose from dozens of maps of varying detail and specificity to edit for your own needs. This website offers many PowerPoint templates and other presentation outlines to help presenters, either new or experienced. This website also offers various professional development tools for presenting online, and at business meetings, and for speaking in public.

<http://www.presentationmagazine.com/editable-maps>

### Issuu

Issuu is a cloud-based digital publishing website with over 19 million publications and growing. On this website users can create their own publications and browse those creat-

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ed by others. Issuu is an archive, library, and newsstand gathered into one primary location, and offers analytics and social sharing for its users. This online application is free to use, but there are other advanced plan options for users looking to expand their publishing experience and to network.

[www.issuu.com](http://www.issuu.com)

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## SEA Membership Map (As of November 20, 2014)

SEA continues to experience a rapid growth in membership, as well as reaching new member locations throughout the United States. ♦



## Volunteer with SEA!

SEA is a volunteer organization and has a variety of volunteer opportunities available throughout the year, including contributing to the SEA Newsletter, reaching out to members and potential new members, and assisting with program and workshop activities.

If you are interested in volunteering or would like to learn more, you may contact the SEA Coordinator at [seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org](mailto:seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org) or fill out a volunteer interest form on SEA's website at:

<http://www.southeastevaluation.org/volunteer>. ♦

The **Southeast Evaluation Association (SEA)** is a regional affiliate of the American Evaluation Association. We represent evaluators and evaluation-related professionals from the state, university, school system (local) and private sectors. Our members come from a variety of backgrounds: policy analysis, program auditing, teaching, program evaluation, and performance measurement. SEA's annual conference attracts nationally recognized speakers and participants from the entire southeast region. Several agencies use our programs and conferences as low cost training and networking opportunities for their employees.

**Annual membership** (\$30; \$10 for full-time students) offers reduced registration fees for the Annual Conference, Pre-Conference Workshop, Essential Skills Workshop, and the various training sessions held throughout the year. Members also periodically receive a newsletter throughout the year. The newsletter is a great way to keep up with the SEA activities and innovative research in the field of evaluation. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to [email](mailto:email) us. ♦



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### Suggestions

SEA welcomes all ideas for topics for future workshops, brown bag lunches, newsletter articles, and conference sessions. Please contact the SEA Coordinator at [seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org](mailto:seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.org) with your ideas! ♦

### Thank You

We sincerely thank the Newsletter Production Crew for their diligent work in publishing this newsletter. ♦