



Southeast Evaluation Association Newsletter

P.O. Box 10125 ❖ Tallahassee, FL 32302

February 2009

President: Susan McNamara

Secretary: Constance Berquist

Treasurer: Jennifer Johnson

Jonathan Walters, Keynote Speaker, SEA 21

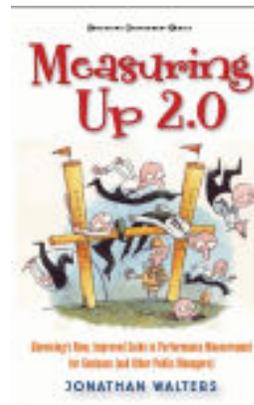
By Sean Little

If you search for info on Jonathan Walters in Wikipedia, you will find info on a 25 year old soccer player. If you look on Amazon.com, you will find an author of two books on Performance Measurement and an author of a book on Theravada Buddhism. While a discussion of the relationship of Theravada Buddhism or English football to evaluation might be interesting or at least different, the keynote speaker at the 21st Annual SEA Conference has been a major mover in the field of performance measurement for many years. Walters defines performance measurement as shifting data collection from the measurement of activities to the measurement of results – one of the less obtuse definitions within applied social science.



His two books on Amazon.Com are *Measuring Up: Governing's Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses (And Other Public Managers)*, published in 1998, and *Measuring Up 2.0: Governing's New, Improved Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses (and Other Public Managers)*, published in 2007. The 1998 book is an easy quick read, perfect to give to a stakeholder in need of a crash course in performance measurement. In 2007, Jonathan Walters updated his 1998 book (Measuring Up 2.0). Note, while *Measuring Up 2.0* lists for \$229.31 on Amazon.com, you can order it for \$24.95 at <http://www.governing.com/books/mu2.htm>, as of January 15, 2009.

Those of us who work for the State of Florida may be particularly interested in his study, "Life After Civil Service Reform: The Texas, Georgia, and Florida Experiences," published as part of the *Human Capital Series* in October 2002.



By the time you read this, Walters' new book *Good Press, Bad Press, De-Pressed* will be released. Written for public officials, it is a guide to dealing with the media in all its forms. It will be available through the following website: <http://www.governing.com/books.htm>.

Walters is a senior correspondent for the magazine, *Governing* – a journal serving public servants with a circulation of 85,000. Articles from this journal may be accessed on the website (<http://www.governing.com>). Major news media such as *The New York Times*, *Fortune*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *60 Minutes* regularly cite this journal.

The Congressional Quarterly publishes *Governing*.

Measuring Up 2.0: Governing's New, Improved Guide to Performance Measurement for Geniuses (and Other Public Managers)

From, Chapter 1. "Star"-Happy

"When the first edition of *Measuring Up* came out, the lead anecdote was all about Long Beach, California, and what a mess it was crimewise... Evildoers (the local and regional kind, not the international variety) were running amok... Long Beach would begin to fight crime by closely tracking and analyzing crime statistics, patterns, and trends virtually on a daily basis... an increase of a certain type of offense in a certain part of town at a certain time of day."

Retrieved from <http://www.governing.com/books/mu2ch1.htm>, on January 25, 2009.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



By Susan R. McNamara

By the time you read this, the US will have a new President and a new Congress. There is a possibility of change for the better and the need to address many challenges. One of the goals of SEA is to enhance all of our skills. Considering the multiple problems in society, there will be a great need for them.

On February 23-24, 2009, we will have SEA's 21st Annual Conference. The topic is "The Wolf at the Door: Adding Value in Lean

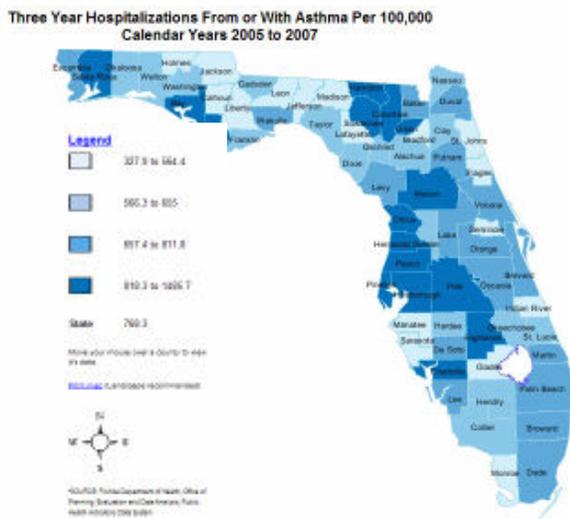
Times" with our keynote speaker Jonathan Walters. I think all of us can find some value in this subject in these difficult times. Session topics include "Tools and Ideas for Prioritizing in Lean Times," "Motivating Your Staff When Your Wallet is Empty," "Evaluation of Contracted Social Service Programs," and "Collaborative Evaluations." There will even be an "Emerging Issues" lunch where you can discuss with your peers the issues facing us in education, criminal justice, health, social services, and local government. Please see the last page of this newsletter for more information.

We hope to see you at the 21st Annual Conference on February 23-24 in Tallahassee, Florida!

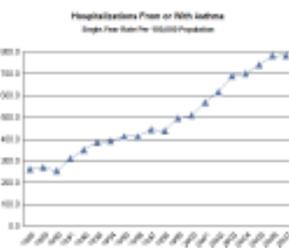
LEARNING ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRACKING

By Mary Kay Falconer

After rescheduling this brown bag lunch session due to Tropical Storm Fay, SEA members met on September 19 at the Southwood Office Complex to learn about Florida's environmental health indicators in a new public health tracking network. Dr. Greg Kearney, environmental epidemiologist for the program in the Division of Environmental Health in the Florida Department of Health, presented several key features of the new network. He explained that the program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and involves the participation of health departments and universities in several states.



The objective is to link health and environmental data in order to better understand the relationships between environment and health. Some of the health conditions of interest that were mentioned during the session were asthma, several types of cancers, several birth defects, and several types of developmental disabilities. Because the tracking system is a geographic information system (GIS), it is possible to map the indicators by geographic units, such as counties and census tracts.



During the session, there was discussion about how other state agencies and local governments could add their environmental data to this network. It was also recognized that this will be a very useful tool for researchers in public health as well as those interested in monitoring the quality of the environment in their neighborhoods.

The website for this environmental public health tracking program is in the Florida Charts series and the URL is <http://www.floridacharts.com/charts/epht.aspx?Domain='05'>. Questions regarding the network can be referred to Greg Kearney at greg_kearney@doh.state.fl.us or Rebecca Thomas at Rebecca_Thomas@doh.state.fl.us. We would like to thank the Division of Environmental Health for sharing this network with SEA.

ESSENTIAL SKILLS SERIES DRAWS DIVERSE AUDIENCE

By Kathy McGuire and Betty Serow

Professionals from the Carolinas, Florida, Georgia and Louisiana attended the 2008 Essential Skills Training Sessions held from October 27 - 29 in Tallahassee. The 51 attendees represented universities, government agencies, community-based organizations and the private sector. Attendees included both new evaluation/program professionals and experienced researchers and managers who wanted to freshen their knowledge.

The three-day series addressed evaluation topics from A(countability) to Z(-scores), including an overall introduction to evaluation terminology, logic models, evaluation planning, program monitoring, process and outcome evaluation, data collection and analysis, cost/result analysis, communicating findings, and enhancing utilization.

SEA members developed and provided the training, building on early work done in collaboration with the Canadian Evaluation Society. The instructors included Fran Berry and Tamara Bertrand Jones of FSU, Betty Serow, Meghan Kennedy, and Donna West of the Florida Department of Health, Mary Kay Falconer of the Ounce of Prevention Fund of Florida, and Gary VanLandingham, Byron Brown, Kathleen DelMonte, Nancy Dufoe, and Steve Harkreader of OPPAGA.

SEA generally offers the Essential Skills series every other year. For further information on the series, or to be put on a contact list for future sessions, please contact Bernadette Howard at seacoordinator@southeastevaluation.com.

FUTURE BROWN BAG LUNCH DISCUSSIONS

By Mary Kay Falconer

We hope to schedule more SEA brown bag lunch sessions after the conference. Check the SEA website (<http://www.southeastevaluation.com>) for current information. If you want to volunteer to put together a brown bag lunch discussion or if you have suggestions for one, please contact Tamara Bertrand at TBertrand@admin.fsu.edu or Mary Kay Falconer at mfalconer@ounce.org.



THANKS TO THE NEWSLETTER STAFF

Many thanks for getting this newsletter out are due to the diligent work of the Newsletter Production Crew:

Sean Little, Erstwhile Editor

Mary Kay Falconer, Betty Serow and Sean Little, Contributing Authors

Bernadette Howard and Susan McNamara, Production Managers
Christopher Sullivan, Desktop Publishing

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIDGE SMITH, FOUNDER OF THE EVALUATORS' INSTITUTE

By Sean Little

In 1995-96 Dr. Midge Smith asked other nationally recognized evaluators to help with a process to increase both the number of evaluators and the quality of their/our work. This resulted in the founding of The Evaluators' Institute (TEI) where internationally known evaluators teach in-depth professional development courses on various aspects of evaluation in San Francisco (January), Chicago (April) and Washington DC (July). The Institute offers four certificates (Certificate in Evaluation Practice, Certificate in Advanced Evaluation Practices, Certificate in Quantitative Evaluation Methods, and the Master Evaluator Certificate). For information on the certificate programs and the professional development courses please visit their website (<http://tei.gwu.edu/>). [Full disclosure, I have been taking courses at the Evaluators' Institute since 2002. The Institute has provided much of my formal evaluation training.]



Recently, the Institute became part of George Washington University (GWU). This may be a good time to introduce some of our readers to The Evaluators' Institute (TEI), its accomplishments, and its future.

SL: Can you describe your goals and motivations in setting up the Institute back in 1995-1996?

MS: First a little history: Beginning in 1989, and for about seven years, I was editor of *Evaluation Practice* (EP), the journal of the American Evaluation Association (AEA). (EP is the forerunner of the current *American Journal of Evaluation*.) Under my editorship, EP went from being an informal newsletter to a refereed journal that was widely indexed. During my tenure as Editor, I became increasingly concerned about the quality of work that was coming in from the field as manuscripts. I felt that those studies were often not following good methods and I also felt that clients and other users were not being properly served.

As a result of this concern, I called twenty of the top leaders in evaluation and said to them, I think we have to do something. Amazingly (to me!) they all agreed. I think it was somewhere around 15 or so of them who actually worked with me over a six-month period to figure out what we could do to improve the quality of evaluation work. We went "around and around" talking about what evaluators needed to know, and how they might be willing and able to learn. We came up with the model of The Evaluators' Institute. We knew practitioners could not take a lot of time away from their work. So we set up the classes to run 1 to 3 days each. We knew we couldn't teach everything at any one time. So we looked at evaluation as a set of chunks of knowledge and hoped that evaluators would keep coming back, pick off another topic each year and, over time, increase their individual repertoire of skills. We also thought that having learners come together from

many different program areas, from varied geographical locations, representing many different types of organizations and levels of responsibility, sharing their knowledge about what worked and did not [work] — that the environment of serious students taking classes because they wanted to, not because they were told they had to — that this would add a dimension that would enhance the classroom learning.

Just after we agreed on the model for TEI and before we planned our first program, I told these leaders who worked with me on the conception of TEI that it wouldn't work unless they agreed to do the teaching. And, I don't think anyone turned me down when I asked them to teach individual classes. So, starting with this impressive group meant that we started out with the best. This tradition—of hiring the best teachers—has continued through 2008...and I hope will continue into the future.

My friends in Cooperative Extension Services (CES) around the country will be proud, I hope, to know that what I learned working in CES influenced TEI and the new Center for Evaluation Effectiveness at GWU. First, the model of TEI—with multiple short-term courses offered over a period of time with more than one choice per day—actually was influenced by programs I had helped put together at the University of Maryland for the CES home and family program. And, the new Center for Evaluation Effectiveness at GWU is a variation of the successful agricultural model that has been copied all over the world where research, teaching and extension are brought together to solve agricultural and related problems.

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is one of three divisions in Colleges of Agriculture in Land Grant Institutions throughout the U.S. and its territories. (The other divisions deal with agricultural research, and academic instruction.) In most states, there is a CES office in each local county that presents nonformal educational programs to the public based on assess-

Our new Center has TEI at the hub to influence research, formal instruction, extension, and service. TEI must influence the research that is undertaken, i.e., what is needed to be known—and like the agricultural model—can then make sure the new knowledge is immediately made available to practitioners. TEI can influence what is taught in the new degree program and make it possible for the academic students to get some of their learning in TEI classes where they rub shoulders with practitioners and get access to the wide array of evaluation leaders—the teachers of TEI courses—that no one university could ever hope to make available to its students.

SL: Prior to setting up the Institute, one of your main areas of interest was evaluability assessment. Is there any relationship between your evaluability assessment work and your work at The Evaluators' Institute (TEI)?

MS: Gosh, I had never thought about that! I think, maybe, that the research I led to clarify and advance a methodology for conducting evaluability assessment...this research was conducted in 5 or 6 states...heightened my interest in having good tools that could be practically applied to learning about how programs work.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIDGE SMITH (CONTINUED)



So ultimately, the work to expand evaluability assessment methods and to communicate methods to other evaluators such as my book (Smith, M., 1989, *Evaluability Assessment*. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers) were precursors to the Institute.

SL: Did you always have the goal of providing certificates for the Institute as well as training?

MS: I'm glad you asked this question about the certificate program being an early goal. My answer is "yes" but not in the same format as the certificate program has turned out to be. My original objective for TEI was to have evaluators be exposed to a broad repertoire of theories and methods of evaluation—and as I said earlier, to learn from the giants in the field. One model to do this was/is TEI. A second model that I developed in 1995 was patterned after the Harvard Business Institute. I wrote to Harvard to get as many details as possible on how the Harvard Institute was run and I used that to put together a week-long, very intensive program (all day and into the evening for 6 days!) that would end with the "graduates" receiving a "diploma" or "certificate" in evaluation. This model was well enough developed to include the course titles and most of the teachers and some of the books that students would have to read while in the class. But, this program has, as yet to be implemented. TEI became successful, pretty much overnight, so there was no time to get to anything else.

But, what didn't go away was the objective to have an individual be exposed to a broad repertoire of methods and knowledge. My strategy for implementation of this concept was to constantly add new courses to the curriculum of TEI, with each filling a gap in a comprehensive array of needed knowledge.

In January of 2004, we added a course on evaluation models and theories and this course filled the last major gap in content that (I thought) was needed to say that the content of evaluation was pretty well covered by all the TEI courses. In March of 2004, I sent a draft of a certificate program to two members of TEI's Executive Committee. They agreed in principle to the idea and those two faculty and I worked together to get a draft that subsequently received input from evaluation leaders representing three countries and 16 different organizations. We (I and TEI Executive Committee) would get input from a couple and then review and revise and then send the new draft to a couple more. This process continued for a couple of months. We finished in time to advertise the new Certificate Program for Professional Evaluators just prior to TEI's July 2004 program in Washington, DC. Four short years later, ca. 500 candidates are working toward certificates and about two dozen have completed one or more certificates.

The certificate program was set up to provide the successful candidate the Master Evaluator Certificate (MEC). This is equivalent to two semesters of academic credit, each with 15 semester hours of coursework, plus the successful candidate would com-

plete a portfolio of experiences showing he/she was qualified to practice evaluation. (One semester hour of academic coursework is equivalent in class time to two days of TEI coursework.) Reviewers of this model said we would lose some candidates because they would not commit themselves at the start, to this much study. So, we divided the Master Evaluator Certificate (MEC) coursework into two groupings of courses with the first representing the absolute essential content for a practitioner and the second permitting the learner to study topics in depth. The first set of courses is the Certificate in Evaluation Practice, and the second set of courses is the Advanced Certificate in Evaluation Practices.

Another certificate came about as a result of the increased interest in quantitative methods—several of you are aware of the Department of Education's emphasis in quantitative methods—but interest in quantitative methods was growing in other areas as well. So, we added the Certificate in Quantitative Evaluation Methods (CQEM). This latter certificate—CQEM—is made up of courses included in the two certificates making up the Master program, which means a person can complete the CQEM without taking additional coursework beyond the Master Evaluator Certificate, assuming that this individual chooses almost all electives from among the quantitative courses.

SL: What has been your biggest frustration/challenge with the Institute?

MS: To be honest, there have been many challenges. (1) One continuing challenge has been to try to keep TEI current—and hopefully ahead of the curve—on evaluation content. Fortunately, I had a good faculty that unselfishly offered their expertise to make this happen.

(2) Another challenge was financial: Every year—especially for the first 7-9 years—it was a personal risk to guarantee up front the thousands of dollars that was necessary to secure contracts with hotels for sleeping rooms (imagine \$199 per night for 400 rooms.) and also to keep an income flow for other costs, like printing brochures, paying faculty, etc. We were always lucky in that we never had a losing year, even though often there was not much profit, e.g., in year one, we made \$2.35. The past two or three years, however, TEI held its own financially and reached a point to where additional staff could be hired. But, you know, I never really worried because I felt that, as long as I had people behind me like our terrific faculty, then how could it fail?

(3) Another "challenge" was to find competent and committed administrative staff. Between 1996 and 2002, I hired external organizations to handle the registrations. (I was a professor at the University of Maryland at the time.) The external organizations were never satisfactory because at the front end, inquirers never got to me for answers about courses and teachers, and at the back end, there was not sufficient follow up to get invoices paid. In 2002 I brought everything under one roof in Lewes, DE, and had a number of different individuals who helped with the non-program aspects of running the Institute. I had several individuals to work with me who were terrific and then was lucky to find Patricia Gibler in 2004 or 2005.

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIDGE SMITH (CONTINUED)



SL: *What would you say has been your greatest accomplishment with the Institute?*

MS: You know Sean, if you asked me all of these questions next week and the week after that, you might get slightly different answers each time—except on this one question. Here I would be consistent. The greatest accomplishment has been to find evaluation leaders who are also really terrific teachers and to have them agree to continue to teach with us over and over. I have constantly been humbled to have these wonderful folks agree to return again and again.

SL: *In the courses that I've taken through the Institute, I've been really impressed by the international attendance. How have you done your international outreach? Have you come across any cultural conflicts?*

MS: (1) The best outreach for TEI has always been word of mouth: someone comes to a class then returns home and reports to colleagues. The next year more from the same organization choose to come. (2) Faculty traveling outside the U.S. talk about and recommend TEI. People who hear them talk, check us out, and, usually would write to me. One or two would choose to come. They would go home and tell their colleagues and more would come the next year. This process was repeated over and over. (3) Listserves have certainly helped, for example, AEA's EvalTalk. These are usually international in scope, so some [people] learned about us, that would not have [learned] in any other way. (4) We purchased mailing lists from different organizations/publications that had foreign members, e.g., AEA, AERA, ASA, APPAM, and so on. I usually chose a different organization or subunit within the organization to contact for each new program. (5) I knew leaders of some of the international associations and they would sometimes permit us to put a notice on their webpages. (6) As a faculty member at the University of Maryland, I worked with grad students from other countries and they carried messages to their homes about opportunities in the U.S. These are the methods that come to mind the most readily.

On your question of cultural conflicts...I wouldn't say we had conflicts of which I was much aware. There was always the concern about food for breakfast and morning and afternoon breaks...but as long as we had a variety, no one ever complained too much. I was always concerned about language difficulties for those who came from other countries, and I sometimes recommended that individuals not come. There was no way we could provide language interpreters because we often had so many countries represented. For example, in July 2007 we had participants from 25 countries! I usually contacted persons from other countries and had discussions about their command of English and to see if they had any other concerns that we should know about. Most folks were very gracious and tried to not make too many demands.

SL: *This might be difficult to answer without offending those not mentioned, but can you describe some of your favorite teachers? If you don't want to name names, can you tell us what qualities makes a good teacher at the Institute?*

MS: If I named good teachers, this would be a long answer! But, let me tell you I always thought that the most important thing I did in the Institute was to try to have good teachers.

What qualities are important for TEI teachers? There are two parts to this question: one is criteria for selection and the second is criteria for continuation. There were four criteria for selection: be well known in the field—preferably internationally; widely respected; and receive good recommendations from members of the TEI advisory committee and/or from others in the field of whom I might inquire. Sometimes I would come up with the name of a potential teacher or a TEI faculty member would suggest someone or an individual would recommend him- or herself. I would then call others to ask what they thought of the recommended person. For example, I might observe someone make a presentation at AEA and like what I saw in terms of command of the subject, answering audience questions, etc. Then I would seek to learn as much as I could about the individual (e.g., by reviewing publications) before calling my advisory members. If several of us were in agreement, then the 4th criterion would come into play—the candidate would produce a proposal for the class that covered a sufficient breadth and depth of the topic under consideration and show varied techniques for presenting the content and for participant involvement. Proposal development might end after one draft or after several.

Once a person was selected, then the usual criteria come into play. We don't need to go over all of these. But, in addition to such things as presenting current information, managing class time well, etc., the TEI teachers have to be able to present their subjects to show practical applications and be especially good at dealing with a wide variety of knowledge on the part of class members. TEI participants come from every conceivable subject area and work environment and level of evaluation knowledge. (I think this is one of the greatest challenges for TEI teachers.) Then there is participant evaluation, and participants evaluate in several ways: 1) they choose to come or not—thus the need for the teacher to be widely known and respected sufficiently to interest a number of students; 2) participants give good or poor ratings of what happened in the classroom, i.e., quality of the teaching from their individual perspectives about what makes a good teacher, relevance of the content, and very important, the utility of the content. (We almost always received 85% or greater response rates from participants. If we did not, I would e-mail or make telephone calls to participants to receive more input. A low response rate from students was usually an indication that not all was well.)

And then there were my own observations: in-class and out-of-class. When a teacher was new or when the class was on a new topic, I always made in-class observations. I could not be present all the time because of other responsibilities but I made it a point to be present enough to make some judgments about the quality of a

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIDGE SMITH (CONTINUED)



teacher's performance. Sometimes I would be physically present in the class. Sometimes I would stand outside and listen. (I did more of the latter if I thought my presence might make the teacher nervous or be interruptive to the classroom process.)

Another part of my observations was whether or not the teachers demonstrated empathy for the students, did they show that they cared that students

learned. This is not easily quantifiable but I looked for how tolerant the teachers seemed to be to what one might call a "dumb" question asked in class; did they hang around after class and give students time for individual questions; did they spend time at breakfast and breaks interacting with students; and after a program was over, were they receptive to an occasional follow up question that might come by way of e-mail directly to the teacher or else to me that I would forward to the teacher.

The first group of teachers who taught in 1996 was made up mostly of those individuals who worked with me in defining the Institute. All of them met the criteria for selection, e.g., they were well known and respected in the field of evaluation, and they cared that the profession is improved. So, we started off on a really strong front with our teachers and I think that trend continued.

SL: Now that the transition is complete, George Washington University (GWU) will issue the certificates. From a student's perspective, a known university's involvement carries greater weight than a free standing institute. What motivated you to donate the Institute to GWU? What were your goals?

MS: GWU and another prestigious university each offered me a handsome sum of money for the Institute, but I chose instead to "give" the Institute to GWU. While I did not make any money on the transition, I did want leverage on some other issues. I made the gift because I wanted to create something bigger than the Institute—an entity that could affect not just the teaching and practice of evaluation by practitioners, but also research into the topic of evaluation and the instruction of those pursuing academic degrees.

In return for the gift of TEI, GWU agreed to set up a new Center for Evaluation Effectiveness that would have a reach around the world to bring the best minds together to think about—and do—what needs to be done to increase what is known about programs and the evaluation process and how to draw valid and reliable conclusions about program effectiveness, and then to translate that into practical implications for practice. We already have the model to get that information out there quickly, i.e. through the programs of The Evaluators' Institute (TEI).

Frankly, I would not have turned TEI over to a university if not for the candidates working on certificates. The single most important reason for the gift was to provide security for TEI participants. TEI might not be around 15 years from now—even though I think it

will—but GWU will be. Having certificates come from GWU adds a different kind of prestige—TEI is known and respected in evaluation circles around the world and GWU has the reputation in academic circles. I can imagine that a TEI certificate holder might apply for a job as an internal evaluator in an organization and be interviewed by the vice president who has no knowledge or experience in evaluation. The VP might never have heard of TEI, so without the university affiliation a lot of explaining might be needed to convey the importance of one's Master Evaluator Certificate from The Evaluators' Institute. Whereas no explanation might be needed when one can add that the Master Evaluator Certificate (MEC) was granted by the university.

A second reason for the "gift" was the agreement by GWU to establish a Center for Evaluation Effectiveness – as I explained at the introduction to these qualities.

SL: What changes can people expect in The Evaluators' Institute (TEI)?

MS: I hope there won't be many because I think the model was/is one that works for practicing evaluators to allow them to learn at their own pace and to learn from the top leaders in the field. No one university could ever hope to offer the range of subject matter

Midge Smith Center for Evaluation Effectiveness

covered in TEI and no university could ever afford to hire that range of teachers. It is simply impossible for an individual to secure the kind of learning offered by TEI from any other venue.

SL: What do you see in the future for The Evaluators' Institute (TEI)?

MS: Obviously, I want a continued focus on participant interests and needs as number one in importance; secondly, a continued focus on high quality teaching with a diversified faculty. That has to mean a continuation of hiring teachers from outside any one university's faculty. I think a third wish for the future of TEI is that it not spread itself too thin by taking on too many additional locales. I did a study once on how innovation occurs and what causes innovative endeavors to fail. Trying to do too much for too many was often what led to failure.

SL: What will your role be in The Evaluators' Institute (TEI) now? Who will now be 'running' the Institute?

Dr. Ann Doucette was named Director of TEI as of September 1st of this year. My last day of employment was September 30th, 2008.

SL: How can people find out more about the The Evaluators' Institute (TEI)?

Go to the TEI webpage (<http://tei.gwu.edu>) and/or write to the Director: Dr. Ann Doucette at Doucette@gwu.edu.

SL: Would you like to say anything about the state of Evaluability Assessment today?

INTERVIEW WITH DR. MIDGE SMITH (CONTINUED)



Evaluability Assessment. Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers) that was developed from research in five different states, each one focusing on a different program area. The bottom line is that I think EA is one of the most powerful evaluation tools that an evaluator can have, IF the process is implemented properly. TEI now has a 2-day course on the subject taught by Dr. Deborah Rog.

SL: Do you have anything else you would like the readers of the Southeast Evaluation Association Newsletter to know about the Institute or the evaluation field in general?

MS: My short answer is that I believe in the work that evaluators do. It seems to me that we are in a position to have tremendous impact on people's lives because we provide data on programs, that help determine if they are continued, or not; and, if continued, the direction the programs take. Because of that we should take our work very seriously; we should strive to be really knowledgeable, to collect good data for decision making, to be as unbiased as we can in the entire evaluation process. I believe evaluators should not be advocates for one cause or another because once you take a side or choose a position or desire an outcome, then you lose your ability to select data that support all sides and you lose your ability to draw conclusions that might have negative impact on a program's future.

In closing I want to say that I am very grateful to the more than 3000 different individuals who trusted me and the other TEI faculty with their learning. It was a trust that I and the others [in TEI] did not and do not take lightly.

I must be the wealthiest person in the world when you measure wealth by the number of friends one has...for I have so many as a result of people I have met through the Institute.

Thanks to all of you. . . and thank you, Sean, for giving me this opportunity to talk about TEI.

SL: Thank you for giving the readers of this newsletter more information about The Evaluators' Institute.

MS: Sean, my answers have been so long to other questions that maybe the best thing here is to refer your readers to a review of evaluability assessment (EA) that I wrote for the *Encyclopedia of Evaluation* (Mathison, S. ed., *Encyclopedia of Evaluation*, Sage, 2004, pp. 136-139). I also have a book on the subject (Smith, M., 1989,

BOOK REVIEW

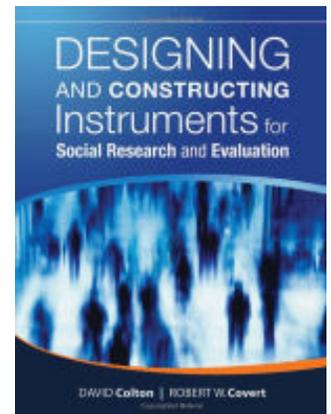
Colton, D. & Covert, R.W. (2007), *Designing and Constructing Instruments for Social Research and Evaluation*. John Wiley & Sons; San Francisco.

By Sean Little

The value of some books lies in developing a new way of understanding a problem or issue. These books tend to be very theoretical and have to be read in a linear manner. The value of other books lies in bringing a lot of information on a particular subject together within two covers. Concrete and technical, these books lend themselves to index "surfing", particularly when confronted by a challenge. Colton and Covert's book belongs in the latter category.

Colton and Covert provide a systematic way to go about creating an instrument with enough variation for easy adoption to any project. They propose an eight stage process for instrument development:

- 1) identify in writing the purpose and focus of the instrument,
- 2) obtain feedback from stakeholders to clarify the purpose and focus,
- 3) identify methodology and type of instrument that best achieves the purpose,
- 4) formulate items/questions,
- 5) develop and pre-test draft items with content experts, stakeholders, and potential respondents,
- 6) revise the instrument based on feedback,
- 7) pilot test and revise, and
- 8) administer the instrument and analyze results.



They discuss each of these eight stages in detail. The production of a written focus and purpose justifies the project, specifies the constructs to be used, and clarifies to oneself and to others just what this instrument is supposed to do. The authors present numerous techniques for generating the various aspects of a construct.

This book deals less with psychometrics than with visual organization and the actual construction of the instrument. The authors propose that each instrument should contain six distinct components: 1) the title, 2) the introduction, 3) directions, 4) items/questions/prompts, 5) demographic questions, and 6) an optional closing section.

Throughout the book, the authors compare instrument construction to painting, emphasizing the creative and artistic aspects of instrument design, challenging the idea of instrument design as mechanistic.

I found two discussions particularly informative: 1) how to construct the response options and 2) techniques to develop items for particular aspects of constructs. I will be pulling this book off the shelf the next time I have to design an instrument.

PS In case the name David Colton sounds familiar, he is a frequent contributor to EVALTALK.



21ST ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Wolf Is at the Door; Adding Value in Lean Times

with

Keynote Speaker &
Workshop Presenter:

Jonathan Walters

Pre-Conference Workshop
February 23, 2009

Conference
February 23-24, 2009

TALLAHASSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
tallahassee, florida

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP

“Evaluators as Allies”

Monday, February 23, 2009
8:30 – 11:30 am

Tallahassee Community College

Jonathan Walters

Mr. Walters will lead a half-day, participatory workshop on how evaluators and policy analysts can help managers use evaluation results in lean budget times to improve and retain quality programs.

Jonathan Walters is a senior correspondent for *Governing Magazine*. He has covered state and local public policy for more than 20 years for publications ranging from the *Washington Post* to *USA Today*. His focus is on public sector management and administration, with an emphasis on change management and results-based government. He is the author of several books on government metrics and evaluation.

REGISTRATION

For more detailed information on conference sessions, and to register for the conference and pre-conference workshop, please visit our website at

www.southeastevaluation.com

Our site accepts PayPal payment for conference and pre-conference fees, as well as SEA annual dues. Join SEA for \$30 for 2009 and receive discounts on workshop and conference fees.

REGISTRATION FEES

Pre-Conference Workshop:

Registration and Payment by February 6

\$50 SEA members
\$80 non-members
\$75 SEA members
\$105 non-members

Conference:

Registration and Payment by February 6

\$100 SEA members
\$130 non-members
\$25 students

After Friday, February 8, 2009

\$125 SEA members
\$155 non-members
\$30 students

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Monday, February 23, 2009

[Tallahassee Community College](#)

8:30 - 11:30 Pre-Conference Workshop
(Limit 40 participants)

Beginning of the 21st Annual Conference

11:45 -12:45 Annual Business Meeting Lunch

12:45 -1:30 Jonathan Walters, Keynote Speaker

1:45 - 4:30 Conference Breakout Sessions

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

[Tallahassee Community College](#)

8:30 - 11:30 Conference Breakout Sessions

11:45 - 1:15 Emerging Issues Lunch

1:30 - 4:30 Conference Breakout Sessions