

CURRENT INSTITUTE PROJECTS

- Tacoma-Pierce County Community Partnership (Peter Scholtes, Mike Tveite)
- Network of Deming Associations (Margaret Morgan)
- The Deming Electronic Network (Jim Clauson)
- Newsletter (Doug Bedell, March Jacques)
- Deming Papers Research Scholarships (The Board)
- Deming Library of Congress Collection (The Board)
- Conference Strategy (Kim Melton)
- Video Recording and Archiving (Jim Naughton)
- Paperweights (Jim Naughton)



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The W. Edwards Deming Institute®
with aim to foster understanding of
The Deming System of Profound Knowledge™

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Deming Places To Go

Conferences, currently in April and October, remain the heart of the Deming Institute's activities. The conferences offer possibilities to advance knowledge and share insights. They are gathering places for people with different levels of experience who are interested in learning about issues raised by Dr. Deming's philosophy and in sharing insights from their life and career journeys.

In doing long range conference planning, the Institute's Design Council recognizes it is serving a variety of participants. Three "types" of conferences appear to be emerging: the general conference, the focused conference and the outreach conference.

General conferences have applicability across many groups. Focused conferences feature in-depth exploration of a topic. Outreach conferences can be aimed at people not previously involved in Deming gatherings in a specific industry or community—such as next April's conference in Tacoma, Washington. The Design Council has more work to do in fleshing out these distinctions. But it's already clear that the aim of Deming conferences is to bring together people who can move the understanding and applicability of Dr. Deming's teachings to new places. (See the accompanying diagram for a

working concept of the approach to conference planning.)

There are always stimulating speakers at Deming Institute conferences. Visionaries like Dr. H. Thomas Johnson, of Portland State University, who argued at last October's meeting that the rhythms of natural systems, not mechanistic technical approaches, underlie the most fundamental and satisfying approach to quality. Or a philosopher like Dr. John Edelman, of Nazareth College in Rochester, N.Y., who advised at last April's conference that it's wise to be cautious about the advice of so-called ethical experts.

Dr. Edelman contended that morality is a matter of living rightly, not merely of learning precepts. "There is no manual for the living of a life, as there is for wiring a house," Dr. Edelman said. "I'm not denying there are ethical maxims or principals, but there is no material to work on that is independent of who you are. No hammer, nails and lumber. You have to know where you are in your life before you can know what living rightly will look like."

"To have a moral problem is to recognize a responsibility for doing something—to care about living rightly, and not merely follow a set of rules or techniques.

"To be too willing to follow the advice of another uncritically can lead to moral failure, to acceding to the preferences of those in charge. In ethics there just are no shortcuts."

Members of the conference audience responded to Dr. Edelman by suggesting that it is important in a business setting to create an environment in which people are not put in moral dilemmas. But he noted in response that we're not always clear about what such a setting would be like and how we would function in it. "We don't have those conversations," Dr. Edelman said.

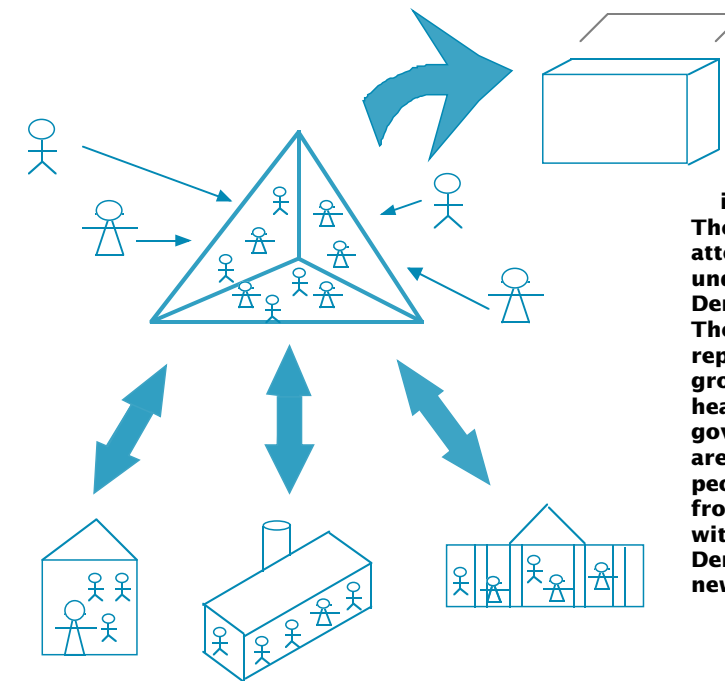


John Edelman

DEMING INTERACTION

Deming Interaction is the newsletter of The W. Edwards Deming Institute.® The Institute's aim is to foster understanding of The Deming System of Profound Knowledge™ to advance commerce, prosperity and peace. We welcome participation. Participation in the Institute means that we share Dr. Deming's vision of a better world. We participate because we strive, with joy, to carry on the work that he began. We seek to conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with his high moral and ethical standards, professional and personal integrity, and commitment to lifelong learning. We do this solely from our dedication to the philosophy and values of Dr. Deming and our belief that, together, we can and will make a difference in the quality of life for everyone.

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Here's a working concept of interactions in the Deming Institute. There's a group of "regular attendees" with their current understanding of Dr. Deming's work (tetrahedron). The groups at the bottom represent potential outreach groups in education or health care, industry and government. The "regulars" are influenced by newer people and also get insights from the outreach bodies—all with the aim of moving Dr. Deming's philosophy to a new level of understanding.

- Mike Tveite

The audience was reminded of Dr. Deming's teachings on operationally verifiable versus "true" values and on the need for theory to learn and to improve.

In a conference breakout group, Nida Backaitis discussed Dr. Deming's intellectual origins. While he was known primarily as a statistician, he received his PhD in mathematical physics from Yale University in 1928, at the time of a huge paradigm shift from the static principles

of Newtonian physics to the dynamic relationships of quantum mechanics.

The quantum view, like Dr. Deming's outlook, was that the world is not a perfect machine but a dynamic, evolving one featuring interdependence and requiring cooperation. Such are the stimulating insights offered at a Deming Institute conference. The Design Council is seeking to provide many such moments.



April Tacoma Conference Firming Up

Plans are firming up for next April's Deming Institute conference and community symposium in the partnership community of Tacoma/Pierce County, Washington.

Meetings are being held with local experts and others involved in the demonstration issue of family violence. The project is adapting a model for rapid improvement developed by Dr. Donald Berwick, Tom Nolan and the Institute for Healthcare Improvement in Boston. Instead of focusing on an industry like health care, the model is being given a community focus and called the Community Improvement Model.

In a collaborative spirit, the Symposium on April 16 will feature a number of approaches to community change, including the Deming Institute/Tacoma/Pierce County partnership. The Deming Institute's Spring Conference will follow on April 17-18. Russell Ackoff is slated to keynote the symposium, and there will be breakout groups of people involved in community applications.

The Deming Institute's partnership with Tacoma/Pierce County began in 1996. Its aim has been to apply Dr. Deming's philosophy and the "Plan, Do, Study, Act" approach in a community setting and to learn from the experience. Two key participants, Peter Scholtes from the Institute and Genelle Birk, from the Tacoma City Manager's Office, have returned to the project after illnesses.

'The only communicable meaning of any word, prescription, instruction, specification, measure, attribute, regulation, law, system, edict is the record of what happens on application of a specified operation or test.'

W. Edwards Deming
in "Out of the Crisis"

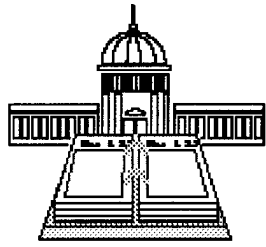


Notes paper the walls during a breakout session at the April Deming Institute conference.



- Bill Bedell

A sturdy pontoon boat named the 'W.E. Deming' serves to skim the waters of the Port of Milwaukee. James J. Konczal, Port Operations Supervisor, says the boat was built with some of Dr. Deming's principles in mind, and named accordingly.



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DEMING INTERACTION



W. Edwards Deming®

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The W. Edwards Deming Institute™

Encounter in the Library

Researchers can be introduced to W. Edwards Deming through his papers in the Madison Building of the Library of Congress. To access the Deming collection, scholars must have a serious purpose with an intent to publish—and the time and patience to sort through 58,000 items in 166 boxes and folders that take up 70 feet of shelf space at the Library.

There are letters and notes to leading statisticians, leaders of industry and many others.

William C. Towns, of the University of Kansas, is a serious student of Dr. Deming's intellectual roots. He spent two-and-a-half weeks on two visits, in 1996 and 1997, investigating Dr. Deming's grounding in the 19th century American philosophy of pragmatism.

Towns was looking for a direct link between Dr. Deming and Charles Sanders Peirce the co-founder, with William James, of pragmatism as a movement in philosophy. Because Dr. Deming is a founder of the quality movement in the United States, making such a connection would confirm the intellectual lineage of quality, making it more deeply rooted than a mere fad or technique.

Elusive Evidence

There is considerable evidence that Dr. Deming was influenced by the pragmatists. But Towns has not yet found the tie between Deming and Peirce he was looking for. Nonetheless, he encountered Dr. Deming “as one of the few universal men; I was amazed at his humanity. You can almost catch the cadence of his voice.”

Like all the collections at the Library of Congress, the Deming materials are invaluable and irreplaceable. To sit down with them, there are, first, procedures—metal detectors and guards who politely

take all of your valuables, even pencils and pens, and put them in a locker.

“They don't want anyone to mark any of the documents,” Towns says. “The most efficient way of conducting



research is to have a laptop computer and enter information into it. You can also use a tape recorder. When I was there, there was a background hum

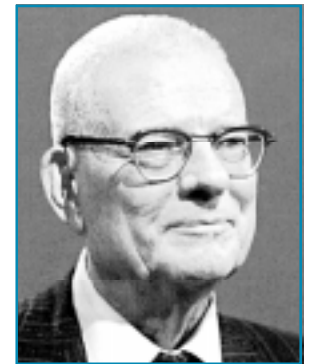
from 10 or 12 researchers murmuring into their recorders.”

Towns had a grant from the W. Edwards Deming Institute that helped with his expenses during his time at the Library of Congress. The Institute presented the Deming materials to the Library of Congress in 1994, a year after Dr. Deming's death, and holds the copyright on them. Guidance on accessing the papers can be gotten by calling the Manuscript Reading Room at (202) 707-5387.

Towns presented insights he garnered in his research to the Deming Institute's October, 1997, conference in a fascinating paper titled, “Deming as Pragmatist”

“Philosophy helps us understand how we learn and how meaning becomes attached to objects, concepts and, most fundamentally, language,” Towns wrote. “As such, philosophy was of the utmost interest to W. Edwards Deming and the philosophy of pragmatism became the lens through which Deming chose to view his work.”

An electronic catalogue of the Deming papers can be found at gopher://marvel.loc.gov/11/research/reading.rooms/manuscripts/fa/fal/d/deming. ▽



courtesy MIT/CAES

“There is no substitute for teamwork and good leaders of teams to bring consistency of effort, along with knowledge..”

— W. Edwards Deming
in “Out of the Crisis”

INSIDE Deming Interaction

Calendar,	4
Conference Concepts..	2
Tacoma Update.	3
Four-Day Seminar.	4

