The IMTA History

The following history of IMTA was presented by Dr Marty Wislowski at the 50th jubilee conference in Amsterdam (2008)

As we celebrate this 50th Annual Conference of the International Military Testing Association, it would be fun as well as informative to look back at the beginnings of the organization and then travel through time. How has IMTA evolved over the years from its modest beginnings as an organization addressing enlisted job proficiency evaluation to its current status as a significant venue for discussing testing, occupational analysis, training technology, human factors, leadership, manpower trends, and organizational behavior? Who were some of the individuals who shaped the growth and direction of the IMTA? What have been some IMTA contributions to national research and operational programs? Are there examples of cooperative research undertakings where we have shared technology and knowledge across nations? Finally, on a personal note, I will offer some reflections on my more than 40 years of IMTA association.

First awareness

I started working for the Bureau of Naval Personnel in August 1963, after four years at the Army Research Institute as a bench researcher. In November 1963, Charles Macaluso and Casimer Winiewicz from the Naval Examining Center at Great Lakes appeared unannounced in my tiny office. They both spoke loudly to me about this organization, the Military Testing Association (MTA), which they said I should join. Their opinion was that I could make a name for myself in the MTA. I was somewhat intimidated by them, and after they left I spoke to my boss. He said he was not impressed by the organization and did not encourage me to attend the conferences. So for three years I did not go, until I was promoted in 1967 and was able to make my own decision. I traveled to Toronto for the first conference to be held outside the U.S., and this started my love affair with the MTA. Other work requirements caused me to miss some conferences in the early years of my career, but I am proud to have attended all the conferences since 1977 in 32 consecutive years. By the way, both Macaluso and Winiewicz were founding members of the MTA; they were excited about the organization, and they continued productive involvement for many years.

MTA evolution

The MTA evolved quickly after its start in 1959 as a three-day conference of some 60 representatives of the U. S. military services to discuss areas of common interest in the field of enlisted job proficiency evaluation. Dr. Jimmy Mitchell, one of the organization’s greatest supporters over the years, provided interesting background and challenging thoughts in his paper at the Edinburgh conference in 2000, just before his untimely death (Mitchell, 2000). I will try to supplement his overview from my personal experience.

By 1962 the term â€œtestingâ€ in the MTAâ€™s name had greatly expanded to include medical and foreign language testing, and testing other than achievement and paper and pencil testing. It was also the year that the Harry Green Award was established to honor U. S. Navy Captain Harry Greer, commanding officer of the U. S. Naval Examining Center and the MTAâ€™s founder. Captain Greer continued to play an active role in the conferences for many years before and after his retirement. The next year, the MTA Steering Committee was created. By the 7th Annual Conference, at the U.S. Air Force Personnel Research Laboratory in San Antonio in 1965, the official by-laws were established and the conference theme was expanded to â€œthe impact of automation techniques on personnel evaluationâ€ and a sub-theme of â€œpsychological testing and the invasion of privacy.â€ The significance of these early years is that the MTA had become an attractive venue for the research community to present findings and share information. The more intimate and comfortable nature of its conferences provided for more intensive exchange than was possible in larger settings, such as the American Psychological Association and other professional society meetings.

The 1969 conference was hosted by the U. S. Coast Guard on Governors Island with a splendid view across New York City harbor. There was a banquet speech that year by Dr. R. L. Birdwhistell of the Eastern Pennsylvania Psychiatric Institute on â€œMan and Communicationsâ€ (Birdwhistell, 1969). The Steering Committee decided to eliminate banquet speeches for a while after the response by attendees.

The MTA was growing in the number of attendees, the diversity and professionalism of presentations, and the general stature accorded the organization. A metric of this growth was the international interest generated among attendees and nations seeking formal status within the MTA. As Mitchell points out, by 1972 Canada, Australia, Great Britain, and the Federal Republic of Germany were members of the Steering Committee (Mitchell, 2000).²

In 1972 I moved from the Washington, DC, area to the Navy Personnel Research and Development Center (NPRDC) in San Diego. My ability to participate in the MTA increased, and by 1974 NPRDC was an active member of the Steering Committee.

IMTA as an international organization

MTA programs have mirrored the technical and political developments of their day. An early and continuing area of interest, occupational analysis, was spearheaded by the Air Force and a longstanding contributor, Dr. Raymond Onristal. The program that was developed, Comprehensive Occupational Data Analysis Programs (CODAP), was adopted by other military services and nations. The MTA has been the site of continuous dissemination of information on CODAP, and this has resulted in exchanges of researchers across countries.

The â€œComputer Revolutionâ€ of the 1960s caused an explosion in training technologies leading to advances in computer-based and computer-managed training. MTA conferences were replete with training technology and practice symposia. This emphasis on the computer related to training is seen today in distance learning.

The thrust to replace paper and pencil tests with computer adaptive testing (CAT) was initiated in the 1970s and strongly supported by Dr. Steve Sellman in our Office of the Secretary of Defense. A joint-service program to develop CAT instruments was chaired by my own laboratory at NPRDC, and there were frequent discussions of CAT at MTA conferences. CAT research shared among country representatives at MTA conferences led to highly productive exchange visits and, consequently, to the more rapid introduction of this testing technology across many nations.

Other areas that have been discussed extensively over the years include leadership, aviator selection, military personnel health, officer selection, assessment centers, altitude surveys, and sexual harassment. More recently, the political changes brought about by the end of the Cold War, as well as configurations and natural disasters in Eastern Europe, Asia, and the Middle East have led to the emergence of newer research topics such as peacekeeping, the war on terrorism, and the tsunami relief mission.

During the first 25 years, MTA conferences were held only in the U.S. and Canada. A breakthrough occurred at the 26th Annual Conference held in Munich, which turned out to be the biggest up to that time in terms both of the number of participants (about 280) and of the variety of scientific presentations. Contributors came from Austria, Belgium, Canada, France, Israel, the Netherlands, Spain, the United Kingdom, the U.S., and the Federal Republic of Germany. This dispelled previous trepidation over how many people would attend a conference in Europe. Nevertheless, there was a gap of 10 years before the organization now called the International Military Testing Association (IMTA) returned to Europe, this time in Rotterdam, hosted by its European members (Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom). During the 14 years since that conference in 1994, IMTA has been hosted four times in the
There have been two joint IMTA/NATO conferences. In 1999, the Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) hosted a conference in Monterey, CA, that was unique in many ways. FranJôjos Lescreve had suggested that we hold the conference in conjunction with a NATO Human Factors and Medicine Panel Workshop on Officer Selection. This marriage was so successful that our meeting rooms were overflowing, and we had to make emergency arrangements with nearby hotels to house the 256 delegates representing 31 countries. The banquet night at the Monterey Bay Aquarium also was a special event.

The 2004 conference in Brussels also was a joint venture with the NATO Research Task Group on Recruiting and Retention of Military Personnel. It was a successful conference jointly sponsored by Belgium and France with more than 240 attendees.

Dr. Raymond Waldkoeffer is known to many of you as a long-time contributor to IMTA and a person who wanted to find a more permanent structure. Jimmy Mitchell documented the numerous attempts at changing the MTA’s name through the 17th IMTA conference. The issue was brought up again in 2002, but no action was taken. Most subsequent action was taken. Most important, the historic continuity value of the current title is most important. The name IMTA is, and I wish this was the end of the story. The issue was brought up again in 2002, but no action was taken. Most important, the historic continuity value of the current title is most important. After 15 years in San Diego, I took a job in 1987 with the Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) in Monterey, California, and we were accepted into the MTA that year. At the same time, the Steering Committee also approved creating a relationship with the journal Military Psychology that I was starting for Division 19 (Military Psychology) of the American Psychological Association.

The first issue of Military Psychology was published in 1989, and it has benefitted enormously from the international contributions and stimulus provided by MTA.

IMTA events-of-nature moments

IMTA conferences have not been without their unusual events. NPRDC hosted a successful conference in 1979 that was held in a picturesque setting on Mission Bay in San Diego. The weather was beautiful, as it usually is, and acting as Chairman, I had just called the Steering Committee meeting to order. As the room started to shake, and the chandeliers were swaying, a few of the delegates started to move toward the door or under the conference table. This was the first and only MTA earthquake. For seasoned California residents, it was not much of an earthquake. Considered only moderate at 6.5 on the Richter scale, with the epicenter some distance away. The movement didn’t last long, and as we resumed our Steering Committee meeting shortly afterward, we agreed that the earthquake provided for good conversation and lasting memories. We also treated delegates to a banquet on the beach, preceded by a boat ride around Mission Bay on a sternwheeler, the Bahia Belle, but without an earthquake accompaniment.

Another event of nature occurred in 1998 just before the IMTA conference in Pensacola, Florida. Some of you may remember the Category 2 hurricane that destroyed property and closed at least one of the convention hotels. Things were patched together quickly, rooms were switched and, although it was pretty damp, it was a good conference nevertheless.

Individual contributions

IMTA has been notable for the many individuals who have made contributions over its 50 years. Some of these folks have been formally recognized as Harry Greer Award designers. Others have been equally influential but not accorded that public recognition. I have fond memories of my interactions with all of these dedicated people. Jimmy Mitchell recognized the loss when individuals who have been instrumental to IMTA success retire. He recommended that anyIMTA membership needs to be broadened to include other nations and to keep interested individuals involved even after they leave military service.

IBTA

What is the genesis of the IBTA? FranJôjos Lescreve has promoted Belgian beer as the best in the world. The challenge was taken up in 1999 by Ian Johnston of Australia, who was our Harry Greer Award recipient last year. At our conference in Monterey, we obtained a room from the conference hotel and set up a careful double-blind experiment, so to speak. I was nominated as one of the tasters, and I reported my findings discreetly, because I did not want to anger either of my friends. The results have not been published. And so a new tradition was started. Its chapters covered areas that were being researched extensively at the time and discussed at MTA conferences: Enlisted Selection and Classification: Advances in Testing: Personnel Classification/Assignment Models; Computerized Vocational Guidance Systems; Officer Aptitude Selection Measures; Avatar Selection; and Evaluating.

Reflections

I would like to close with a few remarks for consideration by the audience and the Steering Committee.

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IMTA publications

Publishing the proceedings of our conferences became a contentious issue when the sheer number of pages threatened to cause problems for the host nation and delayed publication, sometimes by up to a year. We made many fixes such as limiting page size, making sure presenters provided their papers at the conference, and using this Web-based technology that allows us to publish proceedings electronically and make all of them available on-line. I have a complete set of all published IMTA proceedings that I used and jealously guarded for years, and now they are unnecessary.

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IMTA Structure

Should IMTA change its mission and structure? There have been proposals over the years to expand IMTA beyond what it is. Ray Waldkoeffer made many suggestions to generate a more permanent structure. Jimmy Mitchell suggested a permanent staff and extensive outreach to other agencies in order to have greater influence. The issue of a permanent position on the Steering Committee to ensure continuity from year to year was discussed but rejected in 2002.

I agree with the Steering Committee decision, and I think that IMTA should continue to evolve as it has been doing, both in the internationalization of the organization and in the expansion of our website. The testimonials to IMTA's success as a means to improve personnel assessment procedures and in promoting cooperation in the exchange of these procedures are the moves by countries to join IMTA - something that they have enthusiastically embraced.
IMTA in increasing numbers. We have become a premier organization for rapidly disseminating research findings. We do not publish a refereed journal that can take a year or two to publish results. We are not a NATO working group that focuses on a specific issue and makes recommendations. We are a community of individuals with diverse interests and our conferences provide a forum for discovering what others are doing.

**IMTA website**

We should continue to expand our excellent website to provide for even greater dissemination of information. We have available, through the website, the capability for anyone to easily become educated concerning IMTA, and to review papers and presentations at all IMTA conferences.

The website is a valuable asset to the Steering Committee. For example, in the past it was difficult for the Steering Committee to be certain which organizations were still participating as active members. To address this, a measure was passed stipulating that conference minutes should contain information on how many consecutive years an organization did not participate and that after three years nonparticipating organizations would be dropped, unless there were extenuating circumstances. This is an excellent idea, and host countries have been providing summaries of this information in the minutes.

Finally, I would suggest that a list of major recent decisions made by the Steering Committee either be documented on the website or be made available by the host nation to Steering Committee attendees prior to the conference. This would further the goals of the organization and reduce the tendency to revisit issues that have previously been addressed.

Our organization has done very well over its first 50 years. I say we continue along the same path, and look forward to the challenges the future brings to IMTA.

**References**


Now you do! Let’s take a trip down memory lane so you can see just how much Virginia-Highland has changed over the years! Recognize the Midtown Place Shopping Center on Ponce de Leon Avenue? Would you believe me if I told you this popular shopping center used to be a lake? Hope this trip down memory lane taught you a little something about the rich history of Atlanta and the Virginia-Highland neighborhood! slider. Post navigation. Various – Down Memory Lane. Label: Reader’s Digest – RDS 6150 RDS 6152-RDS 6160. Series: Down Memory Lane â€” Format: 10 Â— Vinyl, LP, Compilation Box Set. As Lollipops And Roses. Thanks For The Memory - Nostalgia From The Movies. A Trip Down Memory Lane. Share. Download this song. Yeah, I went like that “a couple” of times in this song :p Kind of like some sort of flashback of good memories or your awesome older songs, but there is still something that kinda.. Ruins it just a little bit, I don’t really know what it is.. Nothing wrong with the song, or the fact that it’s a remix of the older songs or that I love them all, but there is something about this song :p Kind of like some sort of flashback of good memories or your awesome older songs, but there is still something that kinda.. Ruins it just a little bit, I don’t really know what it is.. Nothing wrong with the song, or the fact that it’s a remix of the older songs or that I love them all, but there is something about this song :p Oh well, perhaps it’s just something wrong with my guts, as my ears are listening and loving this :} I feel like giving this a nine just because I feel like giving.