

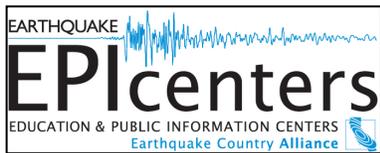
Evaluation Activities: Field Notes (2)

As a Health Promotion and Disease Prevention major at the University of Southern California, I never thought I would find myself avoiding the splatter of mud volcanoes, walking through a trench of the San Andreas Fault, identifying faults around the city of Los Angeles, or wandering through collections of fossils at the La Brea Tar Pits. My experiences on the all-intern field trip would be the first of many throughout the summer with the Southern California Earthquake Center. As a SCEC SURE intern, I found myself entering the world of earthquakes—a new vocabulary, community, and experience.



The Earthquake Country Alliance Earthquake Education and Public Information Centers (ECA EPIcenters) share a commitment to encouraging earthquake preparedness through demonstrated leadership in risk-reduction and earthquake education. Formed in 2008 as a result of an effort to broaden participation in the Great Southern California ShakeOut, the EPIcenter network now consists of over 55 free-choice learning institutions throughout California and elsewhere. These free-choice learning institutions include museums, science and technology centers, libraries, organizations, colleges and universities, and parks and outdoor areas. This summer, I worked with Dr. Robert de Groot, Statewide Coordinator of the EPIcenter network and Education Program Manager at the Southern California Earthquake Center, to develop a method to determine the impact of the EPIcenter network.

In the span of our lifetime, most of our time is spent in informal learning environments. Informal science learning environments can range from a museum exhibit, to a family dinner conversation, to a recreational activity. For my research internship at SCEC, I conducted a literature review on informal science learning and evaluation methods, collaborated with other interns to develop educational materials, interviewed several members of the EPIcenter network, and created logic models to determine the impact of the EPIcenter network on its members and the communities served by its members. Because of the diversity of informal learning environments and free-choice learning institutions of the EPIcenter network, it is very difficult to measure the overall impact of the EPIcenter network.



I chose to visit and interview several representatives of EPIcenter institutions: the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, the Highland Sam J. Racadio Library and Environmental Learning Center, the San Bernardino County Museum, Kidspace Children's Museum and the California Science Center, representing four types of free-choice learning institutions. I enjoyed learning about each institution's mission, vision, programs, and exhibitions in addition to their participation in the EPIcenter network. My visits and interviews also helped me understand how the mission of the EPIcenter network could support each institution's individual missions.

Through the Great California ShakeOut and other activities and meetings, I hope to continue my involvement in the EPIcenter network. My experience as a SCEC SURE 2010 intern increased my knowledge of earthquakes, encouraged me to explore different approaches to research questions, and allowed me to interact with other interns and members of the EPIcenter

network. In the future, I hope to continue my research with the EPIcenter network, build on the literature review, continue to visit and interview members, and pursue a more complete understanding and measure of the impact of the EPIcenter network.