

**The AIA Issues Database:
Building the Culture of the Architects' Professional Society – 150 Years of The
American Institute of Architects**

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Introduction:

The American Institute of Architects turned 150 years old in 2007 making it one of the oldest continuously functioning professional societies in the country. Some twenty years and a civil war, for example, lie between the founding of the AIA (1857) and the American Bar Association (1878). The American Medical Association (1847) predates the AIA but only by a few years. As venerable and storied an organization as the AIA is, its history has largely been overlooked both internally and by historians.¹ The Institute's significant contributions to the architectural profession, the built environment, the construction industry, and the culture of professionalism are, for the most part, unexplored. The occasion of the sesquicentennial of the founding of the AIA provided an opportune moment to produce a work which addresses this lacuna.

Past Projects:

As the sesquicentennial anniversary suggested an examination of the history of the Institute, so too have prior milestones inspired others. In 1907, as the AIA celebrated 50 years, the scholarly and highly effective secretary of the Institute, Glenn Brown, wrote an essay entitled "The American Institute of Architects, 1857-1907; Historical Sketch." Albeit hagiographic, Brown's piece was a fitting tribute to the founding generation of the Institute and the second generation, including Brown himself, who had built the AIA into a nationally prominent professional society.

In 1957 the American Institute of Architects celebrated the centennial of its founding. For that occasion Henry M. Saylor, FAIA, long-time editor of the *Journal of the AIA*, penned *The AIA's First 100 Years*. While energetically and engagingly written, Saylor's book is anecdotal and highly personal. The author himself admits that it was a rushed job: "In preparing the Centennial celebration, it was belatedly realized that in the first century of its life The Institute had been too busy with many things to look backward over the years and record something of the hopes, activities and achievements...."

An anniversary of a different type inspired the Institute to commission the book *The Architect at Mid Century*. As the name suggests, the scope of this project was larger than the history of the professional society itself. The work traced the development of the architectural profession, education, and practice in the United States through the mid nineteen fifties. Several years in the making, Turpin C. Bannister, FAIA, head of architecture at the University of Illinois, acted as amanuensis for a small task force which

¹ Scholar Mary N. Woods has written in her *From Craft to Profession* that the AIA "has attracted only passing notice in the histories of American architecture," p. 33.

produced the tome. A companion work entitled *Creating the Human Environment* looked to the future of the design profession and the building industry. Gerald M. McCue, FAIA, chairman of the Committee for the Study of the Future of the Profession, and William R. Ewald, Jr., of the Midwest Research Institute authored this book. While this two-volume set is a comprehensive picture of the profession at the time, it offers only the basic history of the AIA, as the story of the development of the Institute was only a small element in the overall scope of the project.

The next two efforts at chronicling smaller parts of the history of the AIA were led by the Institute's College of Fellows. On the occasion of its 30th anniversary in 1982, the College of Fellows commissioned Thomas Holleman to write *The American Institute of Architects College of Fellows* which is a fine extended essay on the activities of the College. Around the same time, the College of Fellows wanted to produce a work on the Gold Medal in conjunction with 125th anniversary of the Institute and the 75th anniversary of the Gold Medal. They enlisted the eminent architectural historian Richard Guy Wilson to lead the project, and the result was the solid, scholarly, and informative *The AIA Gold Medal*. While invaluable, the book represents only a thin slice of the history of the AIA, not even comprehensive of the Institute's awards program, as the Gold Medal is just one of many awards offered by the AIA.

The Current Project:

When initially conceiving a book that would celebrate the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the AIA, it was thought that efforts like *The First 100 Years* and *The Architect at Mid Century* could be relied upon to cover the history of the early years of the Institute, but as the research began it became clear that no previous account concentrated in a sustained manner on the most important historical issues faced by the Institute and its leadership. It was concluded that, while all of these earlier efforts could inform a new project, what was needed was a broader history of the Institute which encompassed the entire 150 years of its existence and focused on the significant and reoccurring issues that influenced its development. Working with the thesis that "if an issue were of critical importance it would find its voice in the annual meetings," the proceedings of the annual AIA conventions became a primary research resource. In short this thesis established the discipline on which the sesquicentennial history would be developed. What was envisioned is not a typical chronological history of events, but a series of essays tracing the development and influence of these issues, investigating and ordering ideas to form an intellectual history of the Institute. The organizing structure to "the list of issues" is the objects of the Institute as they were originally conceived, periodically reconceived, and understood and interpreted by AIA leadership in strategic planning efforts. It is important to note that the issues central to the project are alive and active, for the most part, within the Institute today. We are not digging through a cemetery of dead issues, but dealing with the lineage of issues that are alive and active.

The AIA Issues Database:

Through this research, The AIA Issues Database has been created of some 3,000 entries. Each entry cites the year, the issue, the proceedings reference, and contains a brief statement of the issue as presented to the Convention. Using the database it is possible to

track issues from the earliest days of the Institute and understand how the issues have developed and have affected or been affected by the professional society and the profession. As originally conceived, the database was going to provide the substantive basis for a traditional hard cover book, and it was assumed that the database would remain as an archival tool of the Institute. The hard cover book project for which research was begun in 1997 was substantially altered and folded into the AIA150 program in 2006 as an e-book and e-database that would be delivered through the newly developed eKnowledge program. The AIA Issues Database and introductory essay are part of that program making available to AIA component leadership an invaluable tool to trace and profile issues of interest to the membership at the Chapter, State, and National level. The introduction to the database profiles the history of primary issues that have shaped the professional society. It is our fervent hope that the database will become the legacy of this project and that the Board will mandate that it be kept up to date as the minutes of the Convention and AIA Board meetings are prepared. With minimal commitment, it can remain a living tool for research to inform future discussions and actions on issues of consequence and to help develop the AIA leadership. It can become an institutional memory and prevent the Institute from falling into institutional amnesia.

Objects of the Institute

The objects of the Institute provide the basic organizing structure of The AIA Issues Database so a brief historical overview of them is warranted.

First, a note on the term “objects.” The word, increasingly archaic in this sense, can be understood as goals or objectives. The quirks of antique language, however, should not get in the way of our understanding. The objects of the Institute express the missions of the organization and, as they have developed and been refined over time, reflect with a kind of timeless validity, the aspirations of the leadership of the professional society over the past 150 years.

Although the objects of the Institute have changed throughout the course of history, the process has been additive. That is, subsequent generations of professionals have not so much rewritten the objects of the Institute as they have added newer objects on top of older ones. As vision has been layered on top of vision, today’s objects are a kind of fossil record of the historical aspirations of leaders of the professional society. The purpose of this study is to unearth this record. In many ways, the story of the growth and development of the AIA’s objects, and their perennial reinterpretation, is the story of the history of the organization.

The first constitution of the AIA as penned by Richard Upjohn and company in 1857 stated the objects of the organization briefly: “The object of this Institute is to promote the scientific and practical perfection of its members and elevate the standing of the Profession.” These early visionaries were not working in a vacuum. The mid-nineteenth century was a fertile period of professionalization and, not surprisingly, the original objects of the Institute reflected the structure of other contemporaneous efforts to organize professional societies within the construction industry. For example, the constitution of the ill-fated American Institution of Architects, drafted in 1836 under the leadership of Thomas U. Walter of Philadelphia, had as its “essential object” “the general promotion of knowledge in architectural science in the United States of America.” The

constitution of the American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects, organized November 5, 1852, stated that “Its objects shall be: The professional improvement of its members, the encouragement of social intercourse among men of practical science, the advancement of Engineering in its several branches, and of Architecture, and the establishment of a central point of reference and union for its members.”²

As evidence that the founders of the AIA were tinkering with the goals of the young organization as they went along, within one year of the founding they had added the word “artistic” to the phrase “promote the scientific and practical perfection of its members,” thus creating the triumvirate of ennobling adjectives “artistic, scientific, and practical” that still stands as part of the AIA’s constitution. These objects reflect Vitruvius Pollio’s dictum that structures must display firmness, utility, and delight, ancient wisdom that the founders of the Institute no doubt injected into their mission statement. That same year the members also added to the objects “to facilitate . . . intercourse and good fellowship.” This would become after the Civil War “to unite in fellowship,” a phrase which has also stood the test of time and is still included in the AIA constitution.

By 1867 the word “perfection” had been changed to “efficiency” (a democratizing move), creating the historic core objects: “to unite in fellowship the architects of this continent, and to combine their efforts, so as to promote the artistic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession. The means of accomplishing this end shall be; regular meetings of the members, for the discussion of subjects of professional importance; the reading of essays; lectures upon topics of general interest; a school for the education of Architects; exhibitions of architectural drawings; a library; a collection of designs and models; and any other means calculated to promote the objects of the Institute.” 1914 saw the addition of “to make the profession of ever increasing service to society.” In 1936 members added “to advance education in architecture and in the arts and sciences allied therewith.” The last major addition to the objects came in 1946. It was “to coordinate the building industry and the profession of architecture to insure the advancement of the living standards of our people through their improved environment.”

The objects of the AIA as of 2006 now read: “The objects of The American Institute of Architects shall be to organize and unite in fellowship the members of the architectural profession of the United States of America; to promote the aesthetic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession; to advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice; to coordinate the building industry and the profession of architecture to insure the advancement of the living standards of people through their improved environment; and to make the profession of ever-increasing service to society.”

Essentially unchanged for sixty years, the AIA’s objects continue to express the diverse missions of the professional society as it pursues its core values and seeks to serve its stakeholders and the public. These objects have been taken as the framework on which this e-book and the issues of its database are organized. The current list of issues is

² The American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects was called by that name until 1869 when “and Architects” was dropped from the name, presumably because of the growth of the AIA following the Civil War.

attached as a reference. Quite appropriately, some issues will be found under more than one object.

- **To organize and unite in fellowship the members of the architectural profession of the United States of America:**

Under this object the issues dealing with organization, structure, and governance of the Institute will be found. The formation of chapters and the maturing of the policy of a national organization with independent local organizations resulting in regional and state organizations are treated here. The founding of specialized organizations to fulfill special needs of the profession, e.g. the College of Fellows and the American Architectural Foundation, is part of the response to this object. Ethics and conduct became a condition of membership. Beginning in the early years of the Institute, international relations was recognized as important to the Institute's mission. Here will be found diversity and the interests of women and minorities, issues that were recognized, some would argue, belatedly, by the Institute's leadership.

- **To promote the aesthetic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession:**

Here will be found the issues that relate to the Institute's advocacy of its policies and the body of knowledge of the profession. This is the point of entry for the public and government and includes the issue of *education of the public* that has been a priority of the AIA from its founding.

- **To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice:**

Generation and dissemination of the body of knowledge of the architectural profession and related issues will be found here under headings *Education of Architects*, *Training of Architects*, and *Architectural Practice*. One of the great strengths of the professional society has been and is its ability to aggregate the experience of its members and after reaching consensus, issue advisory recommendations and standards. Issues related to these activities will be found here.

- **To coordinate the building industry and profession of architecture to insure the advancement of the living standards of people through their improved environment:**

Issues related to the generation and dissemination of the construction industry knowledge base and relations with other segments of the construction industry will be found under this object.

- **To make the profession of ever-increasing service to society:**

The issues of this object relate to Vitruvius' dictum "Delight" and represent the efforts of the Institute to hear and serve its public and society.

‘In the beginning...’

The occasion of the 150th anniversary of the American Institute of Architects provided a particularly good opportunity to look back upon the founding of the organization to the historical context of its creation and to explore those issues which compelled architects of the mid-19th-century to form an Institute. What was their purpose? How did they view their profession and the role an architect’s association would play in advancing that vision? These are complex questions, as the American Institute of Architects was not the creation of a single person, nor was there one founding moment. Some today largely credit New York church architect Richard Upjohn with the establishment of the AIA. It was in his office that the leading architects of New York City initially gathered in 1857 to form the organization, and he was elected the first president. Others see Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., architect Thomas U. Walter as the real force behind an architect’s professional association in the United States. Walter had created the failed American Institution of Architects in 1837 (twenty years before architects met in Upjohn’s office for a similar purpose). Walter also coined the name the “American Institute of Architects” and served as the organization’s second president. Still others have argued that Richard Morris Hunt, the AIA’s third president, has a legitimate claim as “founder” of the organization. In forming the AIA, American architects looked across the Atlantic to similar efforts being undertaken in Europe, and Hunt, who was the first American architect educated at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts and who had spent nearly half his life in Europe, embodied the sophistication and respect that the profession had in Europe. Hunt’s biographer Paul R. Baker has written that “Hunt played a leading role in developing the structure and in formulating the activities” of the new AIA and that through the organization and in other ways he did “as much as any other single person to improve the status” of architects in the United States. There were others too who were influential at the beginning but whose names have long been forgotten. Architect Edward Gardiner, for example, brought a unique perspective and experience to the founding of the AIA because he was instrumental in the creation of another precursor organization - the American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects (1852) – for which he served as founding vice president. This experience led to his appointment to the AIA committee responsible for drafting the organization’s first constitution and bylaws. It was likely Gardiner, and not the better known Upjohn, Walter or Hunt, who conceived the first formal purpose and constitutional structure of the AIA

Although an organization similar to the AIA would have developed in America had these particular men and several others not been involved in its creation, it is difficult to conceive the foundational moment of the organization, and its subsequent early development, without these critical figures. The AIA that they created through force of personality, conviction, intellect, and just plain hard work was a collective manifestation of their ideals and beliefs about the practice of architecture and was as much a creative contribution to their profession (and professionalism in general) as the other significant legacies these men left in pursuing other aspects of their careers. To say that in establishing a national association these architects invented the modern profession of architecture is an overstatement. The forces of modernization were acting upon the field whether anybody liked it or not. Industrialization, urbanization, unionization, reform movements, and the rise of the corporation were changing the very fabric of society and the economy. Technology was making the physical world smaller while dramatically increasing the available information about everything. Particularly daunting for architects was the fact that the traditional, premodern universe of the craftsman was

shrinking – a critical issue for a profession whose overwhelming majority of practitioners received their earliest training in craft apprenticeships. As factories successfully competed for labor, the apprenticeship system fast began to disappear and would be all but gone from larger American cities by the late nineteenth century. The question of how the profession would reproduce itself was just one of many critical issues architects faced in the rapidly modernizing world of the nineteenth century. Collective thought and action would be required to re-imagine the practice of architecture in a changing world.

The move by American architects to join together in association was not a unique response to the historic economic and social shifts of the 19th century. Like others in different professional fields, architects sought to harness the collective knowledge, political power, and cultural cache of their best practitioners in order that they might shape the future of their profession. This movement occurred not only in America but across the industrializing world. The Institute of Portuguese Architects, The Architectural Institute of Scotland, The Royal Institute of Architects of Ireland, The Architect's Union of Berlin, The Austrian Engineers and Architects' Union, The Architects' and Engineers' Union Hanover, The Architects' and Engineers' Union of Breslau, The Central Society of Architects of Paris, and The Society of the Propagation of Architecture in the Netherlands were some of the like organizations that the AIA's Secretary of Foreign Correspondence, Henry Augustus Sims, was in contact with as early as 1870. What architects understood on both sides of the Atlantic was that isolated achievements coming out of discrete architects' offices, no matter how meritorious, would not alone ensure a vibrant future for the profession. Beautiful buildings dotted here and there throughout cities of the western world would not be testament enough to the value of the profession nor to the legitimacy of its claims as the arbiter of good taste and judgment in matters of construction. More than ever what was needed were practitioners and a public who understood on a deep, nearly philosophical, level what architecture was and what it could be.

Thomas U. Walter, the AIA's second president, and founder in 1837 of a precursor to the AIA – the American Institution of Architects, perhaps best understood and articulated the context in which architecture was being practiced in mid-19th-century United States. Historian Jhennifer A. Amundson has written that Walter was the first American to articulate a “formal architectural theory.” In lectures that he prepared for his teaching at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute, he described the global conditions facing the modern practitioner. Advancement in printing technologies, the art of engraving, the new field of photography and the steam engine were making the world's architectural knowledge available to the practitioner and to the public as never before. These new technologies were, according to Walter, “producing an intercourse between nations which must eventually resolve mankind into one great family.” No nation's architecture, he felt, could in the present day be said “to possess a decidedly distinctive character,” and no nation would “ever again practice a mode of building peculiar to itself.”

If the technologies of the industrial revolution were making the mid-nineteenth century a time of great global exchange in the practice of architecture, Walter also saw the peril they might bring. In a world where any kind of architecture could be had, and the increasing flow of information and people meant that ordinary people were exposed to any number of architectural styles, who would be the broker of good taste and sound judgment when it came to designing buildings. The problem was particularly acute in a democratic society like the United States where public taste was celebrated and populist

ideologues sometimes questioned the role of experts and professionals. Walter's answer to this problem was to seek to intellectualize his profession, to create a distinguished class of architects who would elevate society through their knowledge of - and selection from - the best of historic and modern building forms.

Walter's beliefs in this regard were infused in the founding documents of his American Institution of Architects. The organization had as its sole stated objective the "promotion of knowledge in architectural science." By "science" he meant that the practice of architecture should be steeped in an objective and reasoned set of principles that could be advanced, debated, and taught within the context of a professional association or other architect-led institutions. Such principles, he felt, also needed to be communicated to the public in a simplified form in order that architecture might better achieve what Walter understood as its promise as a civilizing and enlightening cultural force. Walter explained in one of his lectures:

In this country more than any other, the progress and influence of architecture depend on the estimation in which it is held by the people. Here we have no nobles rolling in unbounded wealth – no Despot to wield the public treasure at his will; the people are the nobility ... Knowledge of architecture should be diffused in all classes of society.... Such a cultivation of the Public taste would tend to irradiate the social Firmament, to purify, expand, and ennoble the public mind, to soften and humanize the sensibilities, to elevate the standard of civilization, to adorn and dignify the national character; and to perpetuate the memory of noble and patriotic deeds.

For Walter, architecture, while increasingly a globally interconnected pursuit, held a unique promise for America because of her democratic traditions, and it was through organizations like a professional association that this promise could be made manifest. Buildings alone would not by themselves communicate to the public who architects were and what they did. The average citizen needed to be taught some of the basic underpinnings of "architectural science," and the profession needed institutions dedicated to this purpose.

While Walter was the most forward looking intellectual among architects of the mid-nineteenth century and the leading thinker about, and proponent of, a national professional organization, historical circumstances were such that he was not present at the creation of the AIA. The AIA was born in 1857 in the New York City offices of the country's leading church architect Richard Upjohn. And it was Upjohn who would be the acknowledged leader of this particular effort to establish a national architects' professional association. Walter, however, was invited, and attended, the second meeting of the AIA where, although the constitution and bylaws of the new organization had already been drafted, he exerted a considerable influence as a revered member of the profession and then current architect of the Capitol.

Walter would not become a regular attendee at the New York meetings of the AIA. That he traveled from his home in Washington, D.C., to New York, however, for the organization's second gathering - with the founding documents of his earlier Institution in hand - indicates the importance he attached to the effort and that he wanted to influence the direction of the nascent organization. He lectured during the second meeting of the

AIA, holding forth on his views on the state of the profession, the need for public education in architecture, and the current design and construction activities on the Capitol building. That he rarely made his way back up to New York again to participate in early AIA activities may have been his way of deferring to Upjohn, as the small organization probably could not have comfortably accommodated two highly accomplished men with such deep desires to lead the profession.

For only having attended one initial meeting, Walter's influence on the new organization was significant. The most obvious indication of his impact was his actually having named the 1857 organization the "American Institute of Architects." No one in attendance during the first meeting of what would later come to be the AIA, including Upjohn, had the vision or at least the force of conviction to articulate that they were creating a national organization. They originally called themselves the New York Society of Architects, and the initial draft of their constitution stated that members would be "those doing business in New York or adjoining cities." Other architects could only join as visiting members. At the organization's second meeting, Walter suggested the name American Institute of Architects (after the defunct organization he founded), and he successfully moved that the article allowing only New York area architects as members be eliminated from the constitution. In this way, Walter was instrumental in steering the new organization toward a national orientation.

Beyond the question of geographical scope, were potentially much more difficult issues like what would be the new organization's purpose – its objectives, its mission. Walter had committed his earlier Institution to the "promotion of knowledge in architectural science." Upjohn and the others who were ultimately responsible for the first AIA constitution came up with a different objective: the promotion of "the scientific and practical perfection of its members." The distinctions between the two objects are subtle but important, and they suggest a differing philosophy about the role a professional organization of architects would play in society. Walter's failed organization put architectural knowledge at its center, while Upjohn's new AIA put member architects at its center. Of course, Walter's conception of an architectural institution included service to the profession, and the AIA would be in part a knowledge organization. It was a matter of emphasis. By committing itself primarily to science and reason as related to architecture, Walter oriented his Institution more to the larger social and political world. Walter's Institution was committed to an idea, and that idea, he felt, would not only benefit established architects but the public as well as those in the profession or aspirants to the profession who needed further training. Upjohn's model, focused as it was on members, would create a more insular organization, particularly at the beginning. But it proved the successful model, as it better tapped the self-interest that was at the heart of the association movement. While Walter attempted to organize architects around a way of thinking about the profession that he felt was best suited for the modern world – "architectural science," Upjohn merely asked members to be committed to their own "perfection" and to that of their fellow members.

That Walter may have influenced Upjohn's thinking on the question of the purpose of an architect's professional organization is indicated in a speech Upjohn gave at the third gathering of the AIA on May 5th, 1857. By this time Upjohn had conferred with Walter, listened to his ideas about an institute of architects and about the importance of educating the public, and he would have had the opportunity to review the documents relating to the founding of the American Institution of Architects. During his formal talk, Upjohn

referred to the objectives as laid out in the new AIA constitution and reinforced them with comments such as: “When we are most engaged in advancing as joint members of our Institute, its welfare, we are likewise equally engaged in promoting our own, and that of each person comprising it. This is the point upon which much of our usefulness depends, and from which our success will be gathered.” However, he sounded more like Walter when he said during another part of the speech that architects should be “united for the one common cause, the development of Art and Science, as they are more immediately connected with Architecture.” He also spoke of the importance of “elevating the taste” of Americans, if not for Walter’s lofty purposes of advancing “civilization,” than for the removal of “the many restrictions now imposed upon us through the prevalent ignorance of the public mind on almost every subject connected with our profession.”

Essentially, the new AIA constitution and Upjohn’s speech clarifying the goals and mission of the organization already were demonstrating the power of the opportunity for collective thought and debate that an architects’ association provided. This can be seen in how far Upjohn and others forming the AIA had come in just a handful of meetings in being able to articulate the purpose of the new organization. When Frederick A. Peterson, former Prussian military officer turned architect, asked the assembled at the first meeting of the AIA the most basic of questions about their intentions: “what is the purpose of forming a society of architects,” the answers were vague. Upjohn merely said that they could hold regular meetings and discuss things directly or indirectly relating to architecture. This wasn’t so much a purpose as a method of proceeding. After all, a formal association wasn’t required for architects to gather and discuss issues. Jacob Wrey Mould provided perhaps the most satisfying, if brief, answer to the question, saying an association of architects would “give stability and dignity to the profession which it had abroad” but not in America. When given time, however, the constitutional committee came up with a thoughtful purpose, a kernel which still remains (150 years later) in the AIA constitution: the aforementioned to “promote the scientific and practical perfection of its members.” It is not known for certain where this particular language came from but its focus is similar to one of the original objectives of the American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects which, in 1852, dedicated itself in part to “the professional improvement of its members.” This language would have been available to the men who founded the AIA through the person of Edward Gardiner who was founding Vice President of the American Society of Civil Engineers and Architects and who also was a founding member of the AIA. Additionally, Gardiner served on the committee that drew up the first constitution for the AIA; so it is not surprising that the structure of the two organizations would bare some similarities. The choice of “practical perfection” over A.S.C.E. & A.’s “professional improvement” suggests the extent to which the AIA saw itself as the organization made up of the best and brightest who needed not necessarily to “improve,” but certainly could continue to work towards “perfection.”

Although the AIA as manifested in its original constitution was the work of a collective, Upjohn was a central guiding personality behind the organization. Everyone who was at the first meeting of the AIA was there because of their association with him, including his son, his son-in-law, his assistant, and men who worked in the same revival style of which he was the acknowledged leader. From early on, he carefully guarded the AIA against elements of the architectural profession whom he felt were unsuitable, although the criteria for membership was not at first made explicit. Frederick Peterson wanted to notify all the architects in New York of the existence of the newly formed AIA, and he

warned during the first meeting that “were we to form an association of architects without previously letting our intention be generally known, we would create much jealousy and thereby do more harm than good to the profession.” Joseph C. Wells thought such a notice might be helpful, but that it should not go out to those whom merely “styled themselves architects.” Upjohn didn’t see why further membership need be solicited. To his way of thinking the group was “already sufficiently numerous” to commence activities. Although opposed to a general call for membership, he did agree to invite to subsequent meetings those “whom we might think advisable.” In a response to the desires of Upjohn, Richard Morris Hunt proposed that “distinguished members of the profession” should receive an invitation to membership if they were approved by a 2/3 majority vote of the original members. This motion passed, and thus ensured that no one who wasn’t known and popular with Upjohn’s group would be allowed to join.

Upjohn sought to limit membership perhaps partly out of lack of confidence in his ability to direct a national organization of architects through force of argument and reason. As accomplished as Upjohn was, he never apprenticed in the office of another architect. His training, unlike all the other men who gathered in his office to form the AIA, was entirely artisanal. He had learned drafting as an indentured servant to a cabinet maker in England, and he was, to a degree greater than anyone else who first met in his office to form a national association, a self-taught architect. And, as is true of many unschooled, but naturally gifted people, he was not necessarily a great articulator or teacher of his method. With the exceptions of his son, Richard M. Upjohn, and his son-in-law, Charles Babcock, he did not train significant successors out of his office. And even the training of the younger Upjohn and Babcock resembled more an effort to pass on a family business than it did a system of professional training and development within his office, as both men eventually received ownership shares in Upjohn’s practice. Babcock, who would go on to establish Cornell’s School of Architecture, was an early critic of office training, and he likely drew upon his own experiences in Upjohn’s office in deriving his opinion. He touched on the subject at one of the first meetings of the AIA:

A youth in training rarely learns more than drawing and construction from his master; all that appertains to the principles of the Art, all that can influence his taste, all his knowledge of the history and styles of architecture, he must obtain through study in his leisure hours, and that without guidance or direction. With naturally an acute mind he will triumph over difficulties, but the result is too apt to be a taste bound by a formalism which he can never shake off. [This was not] ... the fault of the architect; he was too much absorbed in his professional work to attend thoroughly to the education of students.

Irrespective of his abilities or his desires to articulate theories about the practice of architecture, Upjohn did have a grasp of the issues facing the profession, having practiced it for decades. (He was, for example, quite vocal in his opposition to architectural competitions.) Even more importantly, he had the famous name and the intimate connections among local architects that would be critical in breathing life into, and then sustaining over time, a professional association. Upjohn’s instinct was clearly to keep the association small and to limit membership to those people with whom he was directly acquainted. This instinct may have initially served the Institute in that the shaping of its purposes and policies could be done protected from a larger environment of interests.

But this insularity would eventually have to be overcome for the organization to serve a larger purpose in a modernizing an increasingly complex and bureaucratic society.

In the 1837 national organization, the American Institution of Architects, organized by Walter, there was to be a test by which young or unknown architects could demonstrate the knowledge and skills required for membership. Such men could then be molded by association with some of the best architects in the profession. Upjohn clearly had no intention of introducing such objective criteria for membership. His AIA was to be an association of hand-picked elites of the profession. The effect of this restrictive membership policy was such that by 1870, after 13 years of Upjohn's leadership, only 140 of the 2,000 architects in the United States (or seven percent) were AIA members. To be fair the Civil War had intervened, but these numbers still suggest that penetration into the profession as a whole was not a priority for Upjohn. Upjohn's AIA was, to a large degree, of the best, for the best and by the best that the architectural profession had to offer.

If the early AIA was something of an "exclusive gentlemen's club," as historian Mary Woods has called it, this had much to do with the personality of its first leader. In some ways Upjohn, who had been a charter member of the Mechanic' Association in New Bedford in 1833, was replicating in the new AIA the culture of collective uplift that was a part of the artisanal world and of mechanics' institutes. However, in other ways, his AIA reflected the more restrictive and elitist culture of fraternal organizations of the time, through which middle-class men sought status and distinction. Collective interchange for the collective good of all members would be the basis of Upjohn's AIA. But membership would be restrictive; one nearly had to be anointed to join. This kept bonds among the men tight and relations between them nearly familial. At a time of great division within the country, it is likely that the very insular nature of the organization allowed it to survive the Civil War. How the AIA would come to serve a larger, more democratic membership was a question to be answered later.

In his address to the AIA Convention of 1867 Richard Upjohn reported on a number of issues that had contributed to the founding of the Institute in 1857. This was the first Annual Convention following the Civil War. He highlighted evidence of the importance of the following nine issues:

- Education of Architects
- AIA Chapters
- Building Law (Codes and Standards)
- Charges (Fees) of Architects – Professional Practice
- Competitions
- Education of the Public
- International Relations
- Practice of Architecture
- Publications

As a demonstration of the power and utility of the database, these issues are profiled to trace their one hundred fifty year development and an essay on the issue "Education of Architects" demonstrates the utility of the profile.

Education of Architects:

The report of the AIA Committee on Education was presented to the 1876 Convention by William Robert Ware. It included a proposal recommending that, because there were no architecture schools in the United States, the AIA should establish a polytechnic institute of architecture. The report then presented a detailed four year 'Course of Study.' The Convention approved the report and its recommendations. As a result of this effort by the Education Committee, AIA policy on education came into being and ultimately influenced the establishment of the first schools of architecture at the Institute of Technology in Boston (later Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in 1868, at Cornell in 1871 and at the University of Illinois in 1873. This policy initiative was a direct response to the Object "To advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice. Education of architects continues a major interest of the profession and the Institute as witnessed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching report authored by Ernest L. Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang entitled *Building Community, A new future for Architectural Education and Practice*.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Example of Essay Begun with Database Profile:

The following brief essay on the issue of education was developed largely through initial reliance on the results of database profiling.

Education of Architects – The Grand Central School of Architecture

Of all the issues that inspired the founding of the American Institute of Architects, perhaps none was as pressing or important as the education and training of architects. The organization's founders felt that the most expedient path to the improvement of architecture in America, and to elevating the esteem in which the profession was held by the public, was to improve education. The limitations of the traditional paths into the profession, particularly craft apprenticeships and office training, increasingly were evident to many. Architectural training needed its own independent institutions as it had in many countries in Europe or, failing that, needed to be moved into the university system where other professionals - lawyers, engineers, physicians, the clergy - were already being trained.

At the time of the founding of the AIA, there was little doubt as to the superiority of European architecture education over American especially that offered by the French Ecole des Beaux-Arts and the polytechnic institutes of German-speaking Europe. New York architects of the mid-nineteenth century who formed the initial core of the AIA were largely a group of European émigrés of British and German backgrounds. Several of these men were educated in European institutions, and not surprisingly, they recalled their experiences in these schools when thinking about how architectural education should be organized in America. Among the men who founded the AIA, arguably the two most influential on the question of architectural education were the Prague-born, Austria-educated Leopold Eidlitz and the American-born, French-educated Richard Morris Hunt. Eidlitz and Hunt, two of the leading American architects of the mid-nineteenth century, embodied the fairly distinct traditions of architectural training in Europe – one Germanic, the other French. To paint the differences between the two

traditions with the broadest brush: the Germanic polytechnics offered an education that emphasized the practicalities of construction and building engineering, the French approach focused on history, design, and art-oriented instruction. In modernizing architecture education in America, architects would ultimately borrow from both of these traditions as well as the British system which was marked by early attempts to integrate architecture training into the university curriculum.

Eidlitz, the prime proponent of the polytechnic approach, was educated at the Vienna Polytechnic Institute and shortly thereafter (around 1843) immigrated to America where he joined Richard Upjohn's large office in New York at the time it was engaged in the design and construction of Trinity Church. Eidlitz would have a long professional association with Upjohn, and it was Upjohn who invited him to participate in the founding meeting of the AIA. While Eidlitz proffered opinions on many of the professional issues with which the new organization grappled, it was clear that he had a particular interest in education and would take an early leadership role in this area. It was upon his motion in January of 1860 that the AIA first created a committee that had as its objective the establishment of a "library and a college for the education of architects." What work, if any, this committee accomplished is unclear, and the coming of the American Civil War inevitably would halt its efforts altogether. When the issue resurfaced in 1867, Eidlitz was appointed chair of the newly reconstituted Committee on Education. And it was he who was largely responsible for the fairly extensive plan presented to the membership at the Institute's first annual convention that recommended the AIA establish a "grand central school of architecture." Not surprisingly, the proposal favored the practical (polytechnic) approach which Eidlitz had trained under and which he felt would best serve the profession.

Richard Morris Hunt, the man who first popularized Beaux-Arts style training in the United States, had a unique educational background among the founders of the AIA as the first American architect to attend the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Only in his twenties when the Institute was formed, Hunt had little practical construction experience, but he was already seen as a leader within the profession because of his family's social standing and his association with the Ecole. Around the time of the founding of the AIA, Hunt began to train students out of his studio in New York, relying on the modes of instruction he learned in Paris. He had a strong belief in the French system with its emphasis on drawing exercises and design competitions. He commanded his students to "draw, draw, sketch, sketch, sketch," insisting that "if you can't draw anything else, draw your boots, it doesn't matter, it will ultimately give you a control of your pencil so that you can the more rapidly express on paper your thoughts in designing." Near the end of his career, on the occasion of his being honored by the Royal Institute of British Architects, he told the audience he "owed everything" to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Despite his interest and background, Hunt - perhaps in deference to the elder Eidlitz - never served on the AIA's Committee on Education. His influence, however, did not go unfelt, as one of his students and foremost protégés, Robert Ware, sat on the committee and would become its chair in 1871. It would be through Ware that Hunt's ideas about architectural education were most successfully manifested both in the professional society and in the academy.

While Eidlitz and Hunt had the impressive European pedigrees, it was Ware, an architect without any appreciable international training, who would become the leading figure in American architectural education in nineteenth century. He received a general liberal arts

education at Harvard University and then went on to serve an apprenticeship in Hunt's office. Ware considered Hunt his lifelong mentor, and it was through him that he was first exposed to the techniques of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Upon leaving Hunt's studio, Ware opened an office in Boston with fellow Harvard graduate and fellow Hunt protégé, Henry Van Brunt, where they began to win important commissions and train architects. Ware's reputation grew quickly, and the newly created Massachusetts Institute of Technology approached him about forming a school of architecture. Ware accepted the offer, becoming the first American professor of architecture and leaving his practice in the hands of Van Brunt.

Likely because of his new position at M.I.T., the AIA Board placed Ware on the Institute's education committee in 1867. Ware, however, had little to do with authoring the proposal for a "grand central school of architecture," as when the committee produced its recommendations, he was in Europe on a study tour to develop further his ideas about the structure of the new M.I.T. program. Hunt too was abroad during most of 1867, touring the Paris Exposition among other things. This left Eidlitz, more or less, unchecked to author the AIA's education proposal as he saw fit.

MIT's hiring of Ware predated the AIA's reconvening of its education committee by at least a year and, in part, may have spurred the AIA to action, as there was a feeling on the part of Eidlitz and other members that the Institute, and not universities, should manage and control architecture education. Placing architecture training within a university setting was something the British had been experimenting with but was not done in other parts of Europe. AIA members felt practicing architects might lose control of the training and development of aspiring professionals to university administrators. Eidlitz was especially adamant on this point. He insisted that architecture would be best taught in a school "under the immediate supervision of the Institute, among whose members would be ... the most competent professors." Richard Upjohn was less concerned than Eidlitz that practitioners would be unable to make their influence felt if architecture training were moved into the university. Over the objection of Eidlitz and others, he suggested that the AIA support establishing a school of architecture at Columbia College in New York.

Under Eidlitz's education plan, practicing architects were to hold all the administrative power. He envisioned that the AIA would secure land in upstate New York for the school, raise all the money for its endowment, and provide the instructors. Students would travel from around the country to receive training. While the course of study that Eidlitz laid out drew upon both the French and Germanic traditions, it favored the polytechnic curriculum that he had trained under in Vienna. That is a curriculum based on immersion into the more technical aspects of the profession and emphasizing "hands on" learning in laboratories and workshops.

Eidlitz's sympathy for a polytechnic approach was not merely a matter of his understandable tendency to favor the educational system under which he was trained. His pedagogical beliefs were also inline with his deeply held philosophical notions about the nature of the creation of art and architecture. He shared with Thomas U. Walter and other contemporaries a belief that architecture needed to lean more toward the technical and scientific. For him, early technical training and a career engaged with contemporary technical developments was the path to better architects as well as an effective way to achieve a contemporary architecture fitting for its era. He was opposed to architecture

based on “taste.” A preoccupation with “taste,” Eidlitz felt, kept architects tied to the past, looking only to historical precedent to develop an aesthetic sense. In contrast, Richard Morris Hunt and others associated with the Ecole were quite comfortable with the notion that training should cultivate “taste” within an aspiring architect (indeed, this was a tenet of the Ecole pedagogy).

Ultimately, the fate of Edilitz’s plan did not hinge on philosophical or pedagogical debates within the profession, although they did play a role. At the time, some AIA members felt the “grand central school” plan was too ambitious a project for the small and still relatively new Institute to carry out. Moreover, many were skeptical that one central school could serve the entire country. This might have been a more realistic arrangement in smaller European countries but not in a country as vast as the United States. Yet, the scope of the effort and the issue of the location were elements of the plan that might have been adjusted given time. What ultimately doomed Edilitz’s plan more than anything else was the successful establishment, under the Morrill Act of 1862, of land grant colleges which had as part of their central mission providing training in agriculture and mechanical arts.

Arguably, there was no more significant ingredient to the remarkable advancements that architectural education made in the United State during the last half of the nineteenth century than passage of the Morrill Act which granted states large tracts of federal land upon which to build and which could also be sold to finance colleges dedicated to agriculture and the mechanical arts. These new institutions became natural homes for departments of architecture. In fact, the first three collegiate schools of architecture in America were all located in land-grant colleges founded under the Morrill Act: MIT, Cornell and the University of Illinois. As similar colleges began to spring up throughout the country, architecture departments grew up in this virgin soil, and Eidlitz’s plan for a “grand central school” became obsolete. AIA’s Committee on Education, which was initially tasked with figuring out how to build a school, became a venue for bringing together the increasing number of heads of architecture programs. Indeed, the education committee provided the central venue for information exchange among architects in the academy until the founding of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture in 1912.

Eidlitz resigned in disappointment from the AIA shortly after it became clear that the organization would not support his proposal. Eidlitz biographer, Kenneth Franklin Jacobs, suggests that George Post, another of Hunt’s protégés, delayed what might have been a vote of approval for the plan by moving successfully that Eidlitz’s report be printed and sent to every member for input before taking a final vote. This effectively gave Ware and Hunt more time (another year) to move their educational agenda forward within the professional society.

If it were not for the Morrill Act, one could imagine a very different kind of architecture education taking hold in the United States, perhaps even the development of a central school administered by practitioners as Eidlitz proposed. The huge public investment in vocational training that the Morrill Act represented, however, made Eidlitz’s plan obsolete nearly before he put it to paper. Ware and Hunt understood that the future of architecture education lay within the burgeoning American university system while Eidlitz resisted this inevitability. Although his plan died, Eidlitz’s pedagogical beliefs lived on, and the question of the balance between technical and artistic training would be

long standing within the profession. Time would also reveal that Eidlitz was right to worry about practitioners losing influence to career educators once architecture training became ensconced in the university.

AIA Chapters:

Citations from The AIA Issues Database for 1867 indicate that the organization and governance of the fledgling Institute was an issue very much on the minds of the founding leadership. Richard Upjohn cited the radical change in the organization of the AIA as a result of “constitutional provision for chapters in affiliation with the general and national objects of the Institute, while yet, for local affairs, under the government of their own laws.” In the language of the Objects of the Institute; “unite in fellowship the architects of this continent, and to combine their efforts, so as to promote the artistic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession.” The leadership of the AIA agreed that establishment of independent chapters of a national organization was in the best interest of practicing architects in the centers of population that were distant from New York City where the AIA was founded and made its headquarters. This pattern of organization met the need for independence of action at the local level coordinated by the national organization for the mutual benefit of the profession and to prevent actions contrary to established policies that could weaken the profession and prejudice its interests. It served well as the model for the developing profession and its professional society and continues to serve, with modifications, to this day.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Building Law (Codes and Standards):

The Committee on Examinations established to review New York buildings for the Superintendent of Building launched the AIA into the issues of building laws and codes and standards. In his address to the 1867 Convention Upjohn mentioned the work of the Committee in securing the successive amendments to the “Building Law” and the benefits that resulted from this work. The work of the Committee was eventually reassigned to the New York Chapter, but the underlying issues of building laws and codes and standards had been launched within the professional society and the value of architects’ participation in the issue was clear. Some or all of the activities responding to this issue relate the following Objects of the Institute: 1) promoting the aesthetic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession, 2) advancing the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice, and 3) coordinating the building industry and profession of architecture to insure the advancement of the living standards of people through their improved environment.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Charges (Fees) of Architects – Professional Practice:

Publication of the "Professional Practice and Charges of Architects" adopted and published by the RIBA in 1862 was requested by the Board of Trustees of the AIA in

May, 1867. The publication was undertaken by the Committee on Library and Publications and was distributed to AIA members as applicable to practice in the United States with the hope that it would contribute to a uniform method of practice and charges among the members of the profession. This effort “to advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training and practice” dealt with an issue that remains a pivotal one. In the early 1970’s the courts determined that the professions were subject to the anti-trust laws and all of the US professions went through periods of transition to find their ways through thorny issues to compliance with the law.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

International Relations:

Upjohn noted the importance of international relations to the exchange of information between the professional societies of countries. He cited exchanges of papers, reports, and proceedings with the Royal Society of Portuguese Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects as enhancing fellowship as well as knowledge. As communication and transportation systems have developed architecture has become a global undertaking and remains a vital issue for both the Institute and its members, the object of which is “to organize and unite in fellowship the members of the architectural profession...”

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Competitions:

Upjohn addresses the “evils of competitions” as generally organized at the time and suggested ways in which these evils could be rectified:

1. Limit the number of architects invited to participate to no fewer than five nor more than ten,
2. Include architects on the jury to select a winning entrée,
3. Pay each of the competitors a sum to cover their expenses in entering the competition, and
4. Standardize the requirements for documents to be submitted.

Competitions and their organization and administration remain a hot-button issue for architects. In spite of an international competition code developed and administered by the Union Internationale des Architectes (UIA) for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), architectural competitions are not universally accepted as the best way to select an architect. The issue is full of tensions but in an effort “to advance the science and art of planning and building by advancing the standards of architectural education, training, and practice” the Institute continues to advise its members and the public on the issue.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Education of the Public:

In his closing address to the 1876 Convention Arthur Gilman suggests that it is the bane of all of the arts that they are so dependent upon the degree of taste or sensibility among the members of the community. He calls upon the Institute and its members to undertake the “gradual education of the public taste in all that relates to our complicated and fascinating art.” And he suggests that if the Institute succeeds in this effort, those who are untrained or of limited talent will be eliminated to the ultimate benefit of the public. The issue continues to be addressed in succeeding Conventions and reflects the intent of the Object ‘To promote the aesthetic, scientific and practical efficiency of the profession.’”

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Practice of Architecture:

All of the issues taken together reflected the abiding interest of AIA leadership in the practice of architecture. The objective was “to promote the scientific and practical perfection of its members and elevate the standing of the Profession.”

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Publications:

The Committee on Library and Publications was responsible for the publications collection as well as plans for future publications and acquisitions. This activity was crucial to the exchange and debate of professional issues and information. The ongoing interest in this issue has led to the AIA Website program, part of the e-knowledge system being developed by the AIA. These efforts of the Institute to promote exchange and access to information on professional issues respond to all of the Objects of the Institute and are central to the purpose of the professional society.

(Link to The AIA Issues Profile)

Conclusions:

Our thesis for this project was “if an issue were of critical importance it would find its voice in the annual meetings.” We believe that the thesis was justified and that it held up well through the early changes in the governance of the Institute and until late twentieth century. From its founding the Institute has been a democratic organization empowering its members to govern it. As the governance evolved the members gradually gave more responsibilities and power to the Board. As the Board took on more power there was a concomitant pressure exerted by the membership to make the Board more representative of the members’ geographic distribution. As a result, 1) the size of the Board was increased; 2) the annual report of the Board became formalized to reflect its decisions and

actions taken; and 3) fewer direct decisions were made by the Convention. By accepting the report of the Board the Convention ratified the Board's actions. That action continues to be made by a Convention made up of delegates from the chapters and regions of the Institute whose numbers are determined by the number of members in each Chapter – still a very democratic system.

To maintain and improve the issues database it is recommended that the proceedings of the Board should be reviewed and the issues decisions made should be added to the database, thus preserving and extending the institutional memory of the AIA.

A number of people who have used the database are very enthusiastic about its usefulness in tracking and profiling issues. We hope you too will find it a useful tool in your research of AIA issues. As the database is launched and made available to a larger group of users including AIA members, AIA component staff members, and the general public it is hoped that it will prove so valuable in researching and understanding these issues that it will be supported and expanded by both the Institute and its users.

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