Creating Your Road Map

Katherine Williams, Assoc. AIA, Forward Director for 2006, extols the benefits of having a plan.

"Whether your next goal is getting into grad school, completing the ARE, or planning fall activities for your local AIA chapter, it is always best to have a plan of attack."

Feedback

Mike Davis responds to and continues the discussion on outsourcing.

"I am gaining valuable experience in every area of the architectural profession and feel very confident in the knowledge I have gained. If we (or large firms we work with) outsourced drafting then I would have less work and people in our firm would have to go to other cities to find jobs that would otherwise be available."

ARCHCareers.org

Joe Benesh, Assoc. AIA, and former RAD, gives an introduction to the soon available online career guide, ARCHCareers.org.

"What we hope to accomplish with the site is the distillation of the vast range of available information relevant to career planning and professional development into a usable guide that provides answers, insight, and illumination on where information may best be collected, be it on our site or otherwise."

The Challenge of Diversity

Kathryn Tyler Prigmore, FAIA, tackles the subject of diversity with the challenge that the Institute remains vigilant about increasing diversity in architecture education and the profession as a whole.

"...so little has been researched and documented about non-Western contributions. Even more disparaging is that so much is being lost due to the passage of time and the lack of emphasis on recording the contributions of diverse populations to the built environments because it is not considered necessary to the viability of our profession."

Getting it and Giving it Up: A Legacy Story

Louis Smith, AIA, reveals how his early exposure to construction led him into architecture and helped "fuel his perseverance" despite the fact that he did not have access to an actual architect until college.

"... neither of my parents nor I knew what questions we should be asking or even that there were questions to ask and people to ask it of regarding architecture. We did not know what we didn't know."
Continuation of a Legacy
Cash Moter, Assoc. AIA, describes his journey into architecture as the third generation in his family to enter the profession. "Having grown up around an architect’s office provided no advantages for sketching hand carved blocks held behind your back, or creating boxes for light studies... I continued working hard, trusting that at some point I would get to do what I thought was ‘architecture.’ You see at the time, I had no idea what I didn’t know."

Murrye Bernard, Assoc. AIA reviews a book written to guide architects throughout their career.

It is a ‘must read’ for soon to be graduates, interns in their first few years of practice, and those who haven’t taken the ARE and find themselves in a "perpetual state of internship", as well as those perusing non traditional careers.

Selecting Excellence—Report from an Honor Award Jury
Amira Joelson, Assoc. AIA, discusses her experience serving on the AIA 2005 Institute Honor Awards Jury.

"This part of the process was fascinating. Some projects stood out immediately—loved by all. Others had strong defenders and strong opposers. Luckily as discussions intensified our moods remained positive and civilized and everyone’s opinion was heard and respected."

A Legal Perspective
Casius Pealer, Assoc. AIA highlights a case in Colorado in which a state board filed an order against a man for describing himself as an architect.

The actual legal truth is that state licensing boards generally regulate the practice of architecture, ... the state board has no power to limit your speech. "Architect" is not a dirty word.

Exposure: Making the Most Out of Your Internship Experience
Tany Catarov shares her method of becoming a well-rounded architect by getting the most out of your firm.

Tany Catarov, winner of this issue’s essay contest, shares her method of becoming a well-rounded architect by taking advantage of all her firm has to offer.
Creating Your Roadmap

By Katherine Williams, Assoc. AIA, Forward Director 2006

"If you fail to plan, you plan to fail."

As we all take a break for summer to relax on beaches or at pools, it is a good time to start charting a course to our next goal. Whether your next goal is getting into grad school, completing the ARE, or planning fall activities for your local AIA chapter, it is always best to have a plan of attack.

The only way we know whether we are excelling is if we have set a goal and have steps to achieve that goal. As we complete each of those steps, we come closer to achieving the goal. Part of getting to our goal lies in being flexible. As new paths present themselves or old ones come to a dead end, we have to be willing to change gears. In this issue, we take a look at this journey we call architecture. We hope the articles give you some guidance on pursuing excellence and creating value for yourselves, the profession, the Institute, and the public. Having a plan, means we always have the goal in sight and can judge new opportunities by whether they help us achieve the goal or will hinder us.

The NAC is currently pursuing several initiatives with long-term goals in mind. The Knowledge Committee is working on a new Web site to guide architecture professionals along their careers. In Noise from the Top, Joe Benesh, a former RAD, previews the new ARCHCareers.org Web site. This revamped tool will help aspiring architects decide whether they want to pursue this profession and early career professionals navigate their journey. We also look at hard-copy tools. In Path to Licensure, Murrye Bernard reviews The Survival Guide to Architectural Internship and Career Development.

As people think about their goals, they need to know how their work is contributing to the achievement of their goals. They want value from their firms and their work. The AIA is currently developing criteria for a Teaching Firms designation. In Inside the Office, the winner of this quarter’s essay contest, Tany Catarov, describes how she is assertively gaining more benefits for those just starting their careers at her firm.

For many Associates, licensure is a goal that is always on the horizon. The NAC is currently addressing the timing of this pursuit. Additionally, NCARB just voted to allow ARE candidates to take the exam concurrently with IDP. Details still have to be worked out, and each state board still has to take action. Cash Moter and Louis Smith chronicle their journey to becoming architects in Point/Counterpoint. Moter is the third generation in his family to enter the profession, and Smith had almost no contact with an architect before attending college.

In our Special Topic section, Kathryn Prigmore highlights how a diverse body can help the Institute excel and become more valued. In Outside the Office, Amira Joelson gives us an inside look at the AIA Institute Honor Awards jury process. Last, Michael Davis responds to our article on outsourcing in Feedback.

So as you think about your next goal or the steps to achieving a goal you have already set, remember “All you need is the plan, the road map, and the courage to press on to your destination.” Earl Nightingale
Katherine Williams, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP, recently began her position as Rose Fellow and architectural designer at Visitacion Valley CDC in San Francisco. She previously worked at Moseley Architects’ Richmond, Va., office. She graduated magna cum laude with a BArch from Howard University’s College of Engineering, Architecture and Computer Sciences. She is preparing for the Architect’s Registration Exam when she is not playing Chutes & Ladders with her daughter.
Response to "Our Shrinking World"

I am writing in response to the letter written by Tyler K. Kirk in response to "Our Shrinking World"

My first question would be how large is your firm and how much of your revenue is dependent on drafting? I am familiar with some large firms and know that their bottom line would not be affected as greatly as ours by outsourcing. Jobs with these firms are not dependent on this aspect of their architectural services. I would guess that you (Tyler Kirk) work for such a firm. I would like to point out that not all firms are large and located in a large city where jobs are readily available nor do they have the capability to stretch out to clients’ worldwide.

I am an intern architect and work in a firm that is located in a mid-size city. I do not have first-hand experience with outsourcing but I do know the people in our firm who would not have a job if drafting work were outsourced. Our firm offers architectural, engineering, and interior design services as a way to provide a quality service and attract clients. Approximately 20 percent of our work and income is playing the “drafsperson role” for a large firm when they have work in the area. If these firms decided to outsource this work, then we would lose that revenue and in effect some employees would lose their jobs. It is hard enough to find quality people and attract them to our firm; if the work was not available and there was no job security, it would make this task even harder. Our firm also plays the “drafsperson role” for every client that we have. As an intern (soon to be taking the accreditation exam) I have to play every role in the process, from attracting the client to draftsman to supervisor. I am gaining valuable experience in every area of the architectural profession and feel very confident in the knowledge I have gained. If we (or large firms we work with) outsourced drafting then I would have less work and people in our firm would have to go to other cities to find jobs that would otherwise be available.

I understand your point of view but do not agree and do not support outsourcing. I think everyone has to remember that every job that is outsourced is a job that is taken away from someone else. I have read other opinions on the topic and still fail to see how this is not a simple matter of [cost vs. profit].

Michael Davis, Associate AIA
Graduate Architect
Submit a Best Practice

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The face of internship has changed dramatically in recent years. The journey appears increasingly complex and foreboding to recent graduates and intern architects seeking to move from apprentice. This initial intimidation often has had a direct and dramatic effect on not only how they view the process of becoming an architect, but also how they choose to interface with their chosen profession.

Who better to address this problem than a group of emerging professionals? The National Associates Committee, in conjunction with the American Institute of Architecture Students is in the process of creating a Web site to illustrate and illuminate the dynamic landscape of the architectural profession.

ARCHCareers.org, currently under development, will be serve as a fresh, online, free source of information for this purpose. Seeking to illuminate the process and distill the vast amount of information related to professional growth and development, ARCHCareers.org is divided into the following major components:

**General Resources**—Information on the mission and vision of the site, as well as the goals and a quick how-to on using the site. The goal is to have information that is readily accessible, updated frequently, and in usable formats.

**Architectural Education**—Information on how to prepare, from high school to college. Issues such as degree nomenclature and accreditation will be explained in detail, as well as links to sites with more specific information will be included. The end result will be a guide designed to build the end user's knowledge base and help them make an informed decision about their education, and use it as a springboard for career planning.

**The Internship Experience**—Introduce the internship experience from beginning to end, including the transition from academic to professional environments. Compare the expectations of the emerging professional with the realities of the daily work environment through case study and analysis. Explore ways of successfully transitioning into the pragmatic work while maintaining the creative sensibility of the academic design environment.

**Licensure: Define the Increments of Architectural Licensure**—The steps from IDP to ARE. Clarify the supplemental education section and the value of participation in CES seminars and IDP credit that can be gained. Outline alternate certifications and their importance: LEED AP, CDT, and the like. Provide information on the Emerging Professional’s Companion and its use as a supplementary education tool.

**Career Planning**—Suggest personal planning techniques for time administration, licensure development techniques, and case-based examples of successful professional goals setting. Provide options for professional development and practice. Create a resource where interns can look for assistance in following their career path. Document reference materials for further study of proactive or intern-based career development. Assemble career planning worksheets for students and interns; a strategic planning primer to assist emerging professionals in their search for the right fit for them in the short and long term and assist in the ease of transition between academic and firm culture, with a specific case-based examples of why this approach could help.

The site will also contain a list of resources for the user as well as a link to a professional to address any unanswered questions the user may have had following a visit to the site.

ARCHCareers.org
by Joe Benesh, Assoc. AIA

July 27, 2006

**In This Issue**

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This edition of Forward is sponsored by Kaplan AEC Education.

**NAC Contacts & Links**

Your Voice

NAC Mission

Contact your Regional Associates Director

Feedback
What we hope to accomplish with the site is the distillation of the vast range of available information relevant to career planning and professional development into a usable guide that provides answers, insight, and illumination on where information may best be collected, be it on our site or otherwise.

Up until now, we feel interns have faced a laborious task in collecting and assembling information in the areas listed above, and ARCHCareers.org seeks to demystify the process. In the spirit of collaboration, we seek to assist our peers in their passage, be it in a traditional career path or otherwise. In the spirit of community, we seek to provide answers to questions we asked in our journey; we hope to help those who follow. And in the spirit of innovation, we seek to establish an information-delivery method that is free, relevant, and accessible to anyone, anywhere, at any time—student, intern, or seasoned professional.

Roll out of the Web site is expected in early fall, 2006. Official details will follow. For further information, please contact Jeremy Burge, AIA/NAC 2006 Knowledge Director.

Joe Benesh served on the National Associates Committee as Regional Associates Director—Illinois in 2004 and 2005. He also served as State Associate Director—Illinois in 2005. Joe was the founding chairperson of the Northeast Illinois Chapter Young Architect’s Group. He lives in Miami, Fla., with his wife of 7 years, Jennifer, and his 4-year-old daughter, Kyliana. Joe works for Miami-based Zyscovich, Inc., in its education group.
The Challenge of Diversity
by Kathryn Tyler Prigmore, FAIA

Architecture is a service profession. Whether we choose a career serving the greater good or whether we serve a single corporate client, we need to understand what our clients want, what our clients’ sensitivities are, and where their priorities lie. This premise binds us to the legal and other professions.

In 2003, 125 years after its founding (in 1878), the American Bar Association (ABA) welcomed its first African American president, Dennis Archer, to its helm. A year later it welcomed its second, Robert J. Grey, Jr. Americans of many persuasions had knowledge of Mr. Archer’s outstanding achievements as a lawyer, judge, and mayor of Detroit before his election as head of the ABA. Roberta Cooper Ramo was elected the first woman ABA president in 1995.

Susan Maxman led the AIA in 1993 as its first woman president, and 13 years later current President Kate Schwennsen stepped up to lead the AIA. In 2008, the Institute will finally welcome Marshall Purnell, FAIA, as its first African American president, some 151 years after it founding (1857). Looking at the composition of the AIA Board of Directors, the odds are not favorable for another African American, or even another woman to assume the AIA helm within the next few years. Not many outside of our ranks will have knowledge of these events.

The ABA presidencies were significant milestones in the history of America because they marked full acceptance of disenfranchised groups by the legacy of America’s founding fathers. The three AIA presidencies are also significant events in America’s history because, from many perspectives, our profession is one of the last holdouts of the past when white males of western European descent were regarded as the keepers of culture and tradition. As with many parallels within the professions, when you compare architects to lawyers, we seem to come out of the gate early but have been slow to finish.

Today nearly every American probably knows the name of two African American and two women lawyers even if they never had the opportunity to seek the services of one. All one has to do is look to the rosters of the Supreme Court justices. Nearly every American man or woman, every person of color, every gay, lesbian, or bisexual person, and every person with a disability can, if they so choose, procure the services of a lawyer of the same ethnicity, gender orientation, social class, or physical limitation.

Few Americans know the name of even one architect even though what we do has a direct impact on every one of their lives. If they do it is more likely to be a fictional character such as Howard Roark, Wilbur Post, or Mike Brady than a real architect such as Frank Lloyd Wright or Thomas Jefferson. Nearly every American woman, every person of color, every gay, lesbian, or bisexual person, and every individual with a disability would be hard pressed to find an architect who looks like them without taking extraordinary steps to do so. As with many parallels within the professions, when you compare architects to lawyers, we come out of the gate early but are often slow to finish.

The AIA is a federation of AIA components in which the main work of the Institute takes place at the local level. The national organization provides a forum for the sharing of ideas among components and for spreading knowledge of the profession to the greater community. Diversity within the components is essential to sustaining membership and to developing future regional and national leaders. More importantly, component diversity is essential to developing architecture and architecture firms because the AIA is the primary source of post-licensure education and development opportunities.
The AIA also represents the profession to the outside world to the point that the AIA after a name is perceived as the standard for designating licensure, whereas using RA, the abbreviation for the legal status individuals accept upon licensure as a registered architect, is little understood within the general community. AIA National is so successful at this charge that we sometimes forget that we are really a grassroots organization.

Through a purposeful change in policies and programs at the national and local levels, the AIA’s and the collateral organizations’ focus (AIA, AIAS, ACSA, NCARB, and NAAB) has turned toward diversifying membership and programs. For example, one of NCARB’s initiatives most recently instituted a policy that allows architects with less experience than the normal pool of ARE question writers (Governor-appointed state architecture registration board members) to address age difference between the ARE question writers and the examination candidates.

The world we practice in is becoming more diverse. Businesses are actively strategizing to respond to this diversity, which means our client base is quickly expanding in diversity, especially for those who practice in the corporate or institutional arenas. The increasing wealth of minority populations and of minority institutions is contributing to the expansion of the private sector client base as well. Firms need to develop their own strategies for presenting a diverse group of counterparts to their clients in order to succeed in this competitive market.

In discussions amongst ourselves, architects tend to idealize architecture by talking about the discipline, or the art, rather than the profession, or the business of designing for the built environment. Our academic institutions are great contributors to this mindset—and rightly so—for without this foundation, we have no more understanding than a non-architect about what we purport do and why we do it.

The greater the exposure of an architect to diverse ideas and experiences, the greater potential for the architect to respond to diverse client needs. Diverse exposure increases one’s capacity to explore new avenues while solving problems, designing, and investigating new technologies.

Unfortunately, we have all been trained, even those who attended minority institutions, primarily, if not wholly, in western European culture and traditions. The NAAB Conditions for Accreditation, as purposeful as it is, cannot overcome the lack of broad exposure to the world’s traditions in the built environment without intentional interventions on the part of the leaders and faculty and students in the programs.

What we learn and incorporate into our practices is limited by restricted access to resources. Sadly, even if every architecture program acquired all of the available materials on non-Western contributions to the built environment they would still be sorely lacking in depth and comprehensiveness because so little has been researched and documented about non-Western contributions. Even more disparaging is that so much is being lost due to the passage of time and the lack of emphasis on recording the contributions of diverse populations to the built environments because it is not considered necessary to the viability of our profession.

Public reaction to the devastation in Mississippi and Louisiana highlighted the mindset of our country and our profession. Who was asked to sit at the table to plan the reconstruction? Where are the LSMWDBVs (local, small, minority, women, disadvantaged, veteran businesses) who have successfully practiced in the region for decades? Where are they in the planning for the reconstruction? What areas are being focused on for reconstruction and revitalization? Those communities at the middle and lower rungs of the economic ladder—those who embody the much sought-after traditions of the region—are not at the table. The ironic thing is that much of what was lost has a European, though economically undesirable (in laymen’s terms —“lower class”), foundation.

Over the past 30 years the AIA has made several attempts to diversify the composition of the Institute. The Black Power movement and the women’s movement, although denigrated in many forums, were the catalysts for encouraging change. In the 1970s, the steps were small and affected only a limited number of disenfranchised groups, primarily women and African Americans in a few major metropolitan areas. In the 1980s, the Institute made a more deliberate attempt to diversify the membership by sponsoring the Diversity Conferences. The Diversity Committee and other programs imbedded with in the Institute attempt to continue this legacy.

Business and cultural institutions have embraced diversity as the “movement” for the beginning of the 21st century. Even American political institutions are on the bandwagon. It is fitting that the AIA once again take on the challenge. Perhaps this time we can infuse the profession with the vision that embracing diversity will better our lives, better our clients, better our projects, and lead us closer to achieving that elusive goal most of us set out to achieve when we first entered this profession—bettering humanity.

Note from the author: I write this article as an African American woman architect from a modest
middle-class background who has lived primarily in a major metropolitan area on the east coast. I do not presume to speak for the experiences of other under-represented groups because it is impossible for someone outside of those experiences to do so. The views expressed do not represent the perspective of HDR Inc., of the AIA/DC Board of Directors, nor of the AIA National Ethics Council, which I currently chair.

Click on the following for further resources—
AIA Diversity Web page
NAAB Conditions for Accreditation
Purnell Elected 2008 President—an *AIArchitect This Week* article

**Kathryn Tyler Prigmore, FAIA, is the 2006 Chair of the AIA National Ethics Council. She practices architecture with HDR Architecture & Engineering in Alexandria, Va., and is a former Associate Dean of the Howard University School of Architecture and Design. She has chaired the Virginia licensing board, the NCARB Committee on Examination, and is a member of the National Organization of Minority Architects, and the Society of Building Science Educators.**
Getting It and Giving It Up: A Legacy Story

By Louis B. Smith, Jr., AIA

Getting to the Beginning

I am an architect mostly because my grandfather was a plasterer. He was an excellent plasterer and a compassionate soul willing to take a nine-year-old boy to work with him on a small residential job. He explained to me that, “The smartest person on the job is the architect.” He thus excited my ego and ignited my passion. He knew little about how one became an architect. He had never gone to college. Though my parents went to college, neither studied architecture nor became an architect. That is the extent of my direct architectural legacy.

The indirect legacy, which I share with many non-architects and architects alike, is what fueled my perseverance on my 29-year journey to registration from that brief introduction. It was not the contact with architects but with architecture that fueled my quest. The cathedral in Montreal and Detroit, The U.S Pavilion at Expo 67 (disliked but thought it ingenious), homes, hotels, and parks were all part of my experience base that let me know there was value to design and a role for the architect. None of these could help me become an architect. They could only remind me of why I wanted to be one in the first place.

The discussion of legacy presumes some key advantages to having a relative or friend of the family that is a practicing architect. There are advantages—increased opportunity for exposure to activities in the profession, access to an architect’s office and architects, people who can provide guidance on the process of becoming an architect. Not least is the prospect of being able to work in an office simply because of the relationship and not because of any particular talent. This last is important not because untalented people should be preferred over talented ones. Rather, it is in being hired while not talented that allows talent to express itself and develop. This last is more important even than the opportunity to earn wages while learning.

Like everyone else, I did the best with what I had. I chose to attend a large vocational high school so I could study architecture then instead of later. The demands of a large school prevented my counselor from having the time to really guide me along the course I had chosen. Nor did she appear to be very knowledgeable about the profession.

Some will say that perhaps I was not bright enough or talented enough for all this. Only the best should become architects. Yet I was bright enough to enter the 10th grade at 13 years old with a nearly perfect GPA. My final high school design project was presented on professional video tape equipment complete with soundtrack. (What was innovative technology for 1976 is crude by today’s standards.) Most of my architectural education seemed to focus on my shortcomings with little acknowledgement of any resources or value I brought to the process.

Probability and Statistics

Now some will say that these difficulties are brought about because I am an African American, and the profession largely is not. There may be some truth in that. The statistical reality that less than 3% of the profession—even today—is African American, suggests that African Americans are more likely to have “legacy issues” than European American men. They are less likely to have relatives who are architects, less likely to associate with architects, and less likely to be guided and directed by architects at a young age. And yet the laws of probability will say that there are African Americans who have had legacy benefits and still do even now. Women, Asians, and Hispanics are among the other groups that share similar legacy issues.

My guidance issues might be a result of some personal deficiency. Until our society has managed to eliminate racism, I and other people of color will never be able to separate the two. Simple statements that, “I am not a racist.” Or, “You know I respect you…” have never instilled
confidence in me toward the speaker. As an African American those kinds of statements always seem hollow compared to the obvious displays of cultural ignorance and prejudice I experience. Don't get me started.

Family Duty
Now some will say all those shortcomings in the process were my parent's responsibility. So let's examine their role in this story. My mother was college educated and became a practicing pharmacist. My father was not college educated. He, like many other African American men of his generation, served in the military as a way to escape poor job prospects. He then parlayed that experience into a number of civil service posts. In addition, he worked second jobs for most of the time I was growing up in order to help make ends meet. I remember how my brother and I would accompany him to the service station on weekends to wash windshields while he pumped gas.

There are two points to this part of the story. The first is that I was not poor. My family was solidly middle class and worked hard to get there. All but one of my five siblings completed college. Everyone in my immediate family grew up working—often more than one job. In college, I often held down three part-time jobs while attending class. Being hard working was not enough to smooth the way.

The second point is that neither of my parents nor I knew what questions we should be asking or even that there were questions to ask and people to ask it of regarding architecture. We did not know what we didn't know. The legacy of scoping information is critical to being able to chart a course and know what the value of one path versus another may be. Simply being from an educated family was not enough either.

Without Legacy
I never met an architect until after I started college. Even then, those architects I knew were professors, who (at least in my undergraduate program in the late 70s) remained distant. I had never visited an architect’s office and felt very intimidated at the prospect. Since no one suggested this was a good thing to do, I managed to follow their non-instruction closely. By my second year of college (still needing cash) I had visited a number of architect’s offices seeking summer or part time jobs. When I eventually did find a position with what is now SmithGroup, it was in an engineering section.

The education I received was more than adequate. My grades in college were pretty solid in most areas. I even gathered a humanities degree to go along with my BA-Ch. I was then (and am now) at a loss as to what personal failing I had that caused people with lower GPAs and less experience to obtain positions in architecture firms while I did not. (The Probability & Statistics section above discusses one possibility. My wife suggests that I might be a bit intimidating. I have never considered broad capability to be intimidating. I can’t see my own attitudes apart from my intent and cultural framework, so I won’t discuss those here.)

My ability to break into the mainstream of the profession has been limited. I have worked mostly in a variety of quasi-public and public development positions. The practical and political experience I gained was valuable—even on the NCARB exam.

So What?
Legacy is not the price of a successful destiny. By itself, it assures no one's future or fortune. I can tell you of several cases of architect's offspring who refuse to become architects. Their legacy benefits go unclaimed. I became an architect without overt legacy benefits. My path has been different, but the journey has been rewarding. I make it a point, when I have the opportunity, to speak to students of both genders and any background and share my vision of the power of architecture with them. That is one legacy gift I wish to leave behind.

Propagating Legacy Benefits
In the end, legacy is not just about what you are given but what you give. And the benefits are not always to the privileged. Sometimes the benefits go to those who are willing to receive. Part of my legacy is to leave behind work that inspires people I may never meet. That is a legacy I have joyfully received and am grateful for. I have more legacies to create and share. I hope each of us leaves a rich legacy to the world of inspired souls of every kind. When you can, however you can, help someone become an architect—especially if they are not just like you.
Louis B. Smith, Jr., AIA, has been active in the AIA since 1998; from then to now he has been vice president, president and past president of the Huron Valley Chapter. He also serves as vice-chair on the National Advisory Group for the Small Project Practitioners Knowledge Committee. He has written extensively for the SPP Journal. He has also written for and been published in Architectural Record magazine. He has made presentations on diversity in architecture and other topics at both Build Boston and the National AIA Convention. As a practitioner he spent several years managing projects for the Michigan Department of Transportation across the state. Since leaving Michigan he has pursued his own practice, focusing on small projects. Before registration, a good portion of his career was spent working for and leading several housing and neighborhood redevelopment projects in Detroit. He has taught at the high school and community college level and continues to encourage the development of students whenever possible.
Continuation of a Legacy
by Cassius Moter

My Beginning
As a young professional working to become a licensed architect, I came into it from a rather unique perspective. I am the third generation from my family to work in this field. My grandfather joined Joseph and Joseph Architects in the mid-1950s after finishing college on the GI bill. The firm was well established by that point, in its second generation of the Joseph family. Two brothers, Alfred and Oscar Joseph, established the firm in 1908. Alfred’s son grew up to take the reigns in the late 1930s. The name was never changed because of the legacy left by the Josephs. We have clients today that we have been working for since the 1920s.

From all of this you would think I was herded into becoming an architect. But that wasn’t the case at all. I think most architects know that it is not a career for someone who doesn’t love it. It wasn’t until junior year of high school that I thought about becoming an architect. I grew up going to the office and hearing about the office at the dinner table, but it was a while till I really understood what architects do. I knew the terms; "drafting room", "contractor", "specs", "floor plan", but it wasn’t until I took a high school drafting course that the light came on. That was when I started to think I knew what an architect did. Little did I know I was just scratching the surface.

The earliest I can remember being around the office was after my grandfather was retired. But I can remember going with my father to my grandparents’ house in the evenings with a set of drawings or documents to ask my grandfather’s advice. At the time I had no idea what they were talking about nor did I care. I would try to listen and follow the conversation but as an elementary schooler my grandmother’s ice cream soon stole my attention. Looking back, what I learned from those visits was not about architecture but the importance of mentors, about learning from those who came before you. I was lucky enough to have a built-in mentor to guide me through the process. I had someone who understood the frustrations involved in the journey of becoming an architect. Someone who had made it through the beginning years and still had a passion for it.

The College Years
My first day at Clemson University was a little bit of a shock. I was lucky enough to have been guided to take some drafting courses in high school and had played around with AutoCAD at home. So, of course, I knew what architecture was all about; studio was going to be no big deal. Little did I know these tools would be of little use in freshman studio. Having grown up around an architect’s office provided no advantages for sketching hand-carved blocks held behind your back, or creating boxes for light studies. I was a little confused to say the least.

My confusion at the time lead to frustration, I couldn’t figure out why we were doing these things. These lessons seemed to have nothing to do with what I thought architecture was all about. But I did the exercises hiding my frustration from my professors, while complaining to my parents. But like any good mentor, my father would listen to my complaints and tell me to work hard and these exercises would be useful later on. So I continued working hard, trusting that at some point I would get to do what I thought was “architecture.” You see at the time, I had no idea what I didn’t know.

As my college career progressed, the seemingly irrelevant exercises slowly became relevant. I now realize I had to learn what to do with the tools I had brought to school. Knowing the tools of the trade alone won’t create a great design. Architecture is about pulling from past experiences, your own and other’s, and incorporating the lessons you have learned.
Continuation of a Legacy

I was lucky; my previous knowledge of the business of architecture helped me make the connection between my academic career and professional career. I might have had less of a shock than some of my colleagues after entering the professional world. But then again I still had no idea what I didn’t know.

I remember coming home after my first couple of weeks of full-time work and being dumbfounded by how much I still had to learn. College can only teach you so much. Of course that is why we have an internship. As much as we complain about it, we need that time to pull all the pieces together.

Looking Back
This is what is great about this field of work; it is so broad that you can never know everything there is to know. With each project and client comes new challenges. You never know what past lessons will teach you or how new projects will aide you in the future. The only advantage we can have is to learn from those who came before us. There is too much to know to start from scratch each time. This is why I would recommend to anyone in architecture to find a mentor, someone to complain to, and who will remind you that our seemingly irrelevant experiences will be relevant someday.

Cassius Moter received a Bachelor of Science in Design from Clemson University in 2002, where he studied at the Charles E. Daniel Center in Genoa, Italy. He completed his MArch from the University of Tennessee in 2004. While at UT, Cassius worked in the Green Vision Studio, assisting with a Green Urban Plan for Chattanooga and the Urban Rainwater Research Project. He currently resides in Louisville, works for Joseph and Joseph Architects, and is active in the Central Kentucky Chapter of the AIA.

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I was standing in line waiting to board a plane on a chilly October day in 2004, anticipating the weekend ahead. The plane would take me from New York to the city nearest the first project that I had been assigned to review as a juror for the AIA 2005 Institute Honor Awards. I was to visit a few projects in multiple states and return home in two days. I was very excited. I was one of eight jury members dispersed around the country in search of architectural excellence.

According to the AIA call for entries, each year since 1949 AIA has celebrated outstanding architecture through the Honor Awards program, which recognizes achievements for a broad range of architectural activity to elevate the general quality of architectural practice, establish a standard of excellence against which all architects can measure performance, and inform the public of the breadth and value of architectural practice. All architects licensed in the United States are eligible to submit entries, regardless of project size, budget, style, or building type. Entries are welcomed and encouraged from both established and new practitioners and from small firms and large. Both new buildings and renovations/restorations are eligible. Projects may be located anywhere in the world. The 2005 Institute Honor Awards program had three divisions: architecture, interior architecture, and regional and urban design. I served on the architecture division jury.

Sipping my tomato juice and chewing honey-coated peanuts, I thought about the previous months and the events that had brought me to this exciting mission. It all started when I responded to an e-mail message sent by Jeremy Edmunds to AIA Associates searching for volunteers to help at the AIANYS Associates Committee. As a volunteer I was asked to head communication efforts including editing an e-mail-based newsletter, which I developed and named Zoom-In. A few months later I responded to another of Jeremy’s e-mails calling for applications to serve on the 2005 Honor Award Jury. After sending in my application, I waited for a few months before getting the news that I had been selected as a juror.

The process soon started with an invitation to come to Washington, D.C., for a weekend. This would be the first weekend of two, with travel to project sites in between. As I arrived at the AIA offices on 1735 New York Avenue, a few of the jury members were already seated at a conference table centered in a large hall and surrounded by long curved desks piled with binders–more than 400 entries awaited our review.

Robin Lee, Hon. AIA, director, and Kelly Pickard, coordinator for the Honors and Awards Department, explained rules and procedures and introduced the jurors, who came from all parts of the country: Our chair was Thomas W. Ventulett, FAIA, from Atlanta. Four additional members were Fellows of the Institute: Frank Harmon, FAIA, from Raleigh; Brenda Levin, FAIA, from Los Angeles; Vivian Loftness, FAIA, from Pittsburgh; and Joseph M. Valerio, FAIA, from Chicago. Thomas M. Phifer, AIA, and myself, the National Associates representative, both came from New York City; Danielle S. Wilkens, AIAS, AIA Students’ Representative came from Springfield, Va.; and Susan Lipka from The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston served as a client representative. The jury members’ backgrounds were as diverse as their hometowns and included specialties such as sustainable architecture and preservation. Some of the members had served on juries before, and many of them had won various design competitions and awards. I felt honored to participate and learn from all the jury members.

Robin Lee and Kelly Pickard explained the process of reviewing the entries. Each of us would review all the entries and give each a yes, no, or maybe vote. When we were done, Robin and Kelly would count those with the most yes votes. We would then discuss all those first-round entries and choose 20 to 30 entries that we would visit over the next couple of months. Robin went on to
explain that we were not obliged to “cover” all program types or even balance the number of projects across program types. Each entry was to be judged for the success with which the project had met its own individual requirements. In addition to voting for projects deserving a 2005 Honor Award, we were asked to choose from a separate group of entries, a project that deserves the AIA Twenty-five Year Award. This award, recognizing architectural design of enduring significance, is conferred on a project that has stood the test of time for 25 to 35 years.

It took a whole day to review more than 400 entries. It was fun and interesting to see so many projects—it was also tiring. I viewed each entry very carefully. Having entered competitions myself I knew how much love and effort were invested in each entry, and it was painful to reject them. However, it had to be done. Realizing that by the end of the day we needed to filter the entries down to a manageable number for discussion the next day motivated the jury members to be very earnest, and we became bolder as the day went by.

The next morning, after a brisk walk from the hotel to the Institute, we were refreshed and ready for a day of discussions. On the table were those entries selected by the jurors for a group discussion that would pare them down to those entries that we would visit—the short-listed projects. This part of the process was fascinating. Some projects stood out immediately—loved by all. Others had strong defenders and strong opposers. Luckily, as discussions intensified, our moods remained positive and civilized, and everyone’s opinion was heard and respected.

Knowing that our choices were not yet final allowed us to be as inclusive as possible. By the end of the day, we had a list of projects that would be visited before our next meeting in Washington in November. Each of us needed to visit about three projects. On our way out Robin reminded us that all jury discussions and field visits were confidential. Not an easy task, while my best friends knew not to ask—others cajoled, begged and even threatened to be insulted by my reticence.

Visiting a project and experiencing the architecture is an essential part of the selection process. For me this was also an unusual opportunity to explore buildings that I otherwise would never have had an opportunity to see. While the applicants were kept in the dark about our visits, the owners/users were informed and were extremely helpful with information about the projects and their own experience of them as users.

For our meeting at the Institute in November, each of us prepared a report and a presentation of the projects we visited. The presentations added context, images, and richness of information that were not part of the applicants’ presentation. We all did our best to be the eyes and ears for the rest of the jury. Equipped with this new knowledge, we now went into our final round of intensified discussions—the result of which would be the list of finalists. With reminders about the time limits, we completed our final list knowing that we did our best to choose the most deserving projects of those presented. The final task of the 2005 jury as a group was to write text that explained our selections. When we had completed that, our work was done.

Our jury chair, Tom Ventulett, guided us through the process with wisdom and kindness and summarized our collective thoughts in saying that “The projects selected by the jury to receive Honor Awards for Architecture in 2005 reflect the great diversity of the over 400 entries. The recipient projects varied dramatically in program, complexity, scale, site, and typology. Yet each presented a sensitive and inventive response to its distinct location and special program. Whether a barn or a great urban library, a house or a beautiful church, a small sauna or a unique museum created within a burned out shell of an old flour mill, each illustrated a spirit and ingenuity that inspires both the user and the viewer.”

I often think back on this wonderful and inspiring experience, and in doing so, I miss that total immersion in the search for architectural excellence.

**For more information, click on the following—**

**2005 Twenty-five Year Award**

**2005 Institute Honor Awards for Architecture Recipients**
Amira Joelson is a graduate of the MArch program at the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation at Columbia University. She received a study fellowship by the American Association of University Women and upon graduation the Lucille Smyser Lowenfish Memorial Design Prize for best studio project. She also has an Interior Design degree from Parsons School of Design and a masters degree in communications. She came to architecture from a successful career in applied social research. Since her graduation from Columbia University, Amira has worked in New York City for various architectural firms developing projects from design through construction for public, commercial, and high-end residential projects. Her passion for innovative design is enriched by explorations of the environment, emotions, and psychological interactions as well as in sustainable design. Amira was a semi-finalist in the Pentagon 9/11 Memorial Competition, and her submission was featured in a show at the National Building Museum. Her work was also presented at the Van Alan Institute gallery as part of a curated exhibit on "Houses and Housing" and she had participated with a team on a competition entry that was advisory selected for "Designing the High Line." Ms. Joelson has served as a visiting jury critic at Columbia University, Parsons School of Design, The City College of New York, and Pratt Institute School of Architecture. She is currently working at HLW International, and she is a LEED AP professional.
Exposure: Making the Most Out of Your Internship Experience
by Tany Catarov

It seems pretty simple—in theory, that is. First, have or develop a passion for architecture. Second, go to an accredited school, or go through enough schooling to earn an accredited degree. And lastly, find a firm that will expose you to qualifying hours of internship practice...or at least try.

The road to becoming a certified architect today is much more than a journey—it’s a challenge. For some, the road is smoothly paved, while for others it’s one with too many bumps and potholes. It all depends—and because of that, it can be frustrating to many and even cause them to fall off the beaten path. I thought I had a pretty easy road, until I faced unforeseen circumstances in gaining exposure for my internship. I landed a good job with good benefits, and even worked on interesting projects. The problem was, I wouldn’t be able to see these projects come to life beyond my computer screen. They were all located out of state and out of my reach. The few local projects were not highly sought after.

Becoming a well-rounded architect by getting the most out of a firm was important to me as I tackled the particular obstacles I faced on fulfilling my internship practice. How would I be able to gain the right exposure? Would I become a well-rounded architect? I knew I wasn’t alone. I was not the only one at my firm with the same questions and concerns. I knew something had to be done, not only for the sake of us interns, but also for the company and the success of future interns at my firm.

From there a series of events unfolded that, looking back, I am proud to say I helped generate and promote. I discovered early on that my firm had at one time had an IDP committee for promoting the internship practice within the firm. Starting that up again seemed like an obvious first step, so I contacted my HR manager and said that I would be interested in being a part of it. Soon after, we had our first IDP committee meeting with a total of four people. We started slowly—my task was to educate others at first on all the current IDP procedures—it made sense since I was in midst of it at the time. We ordered registration forms and booklets. Information was gathered on resources to get interns started on their path—Web sites, discussion forums, etc. With all that being done, we were ready to introduce ourselves and what we compiled to the rest of the firm. Today, we have an active list of more than 20 people and counting. All are interns at different levels; many started their process in part because of the IDP committee.

From there, I became active in setting up workshops, and kept my eyes peeled for any new information to share with the IDP committee. I e-mailed reminders and documents and kept the IDP Committee up to date on anything I was learning through newsletters and announcements. Opportunities were out there just waiting to be claimed, and I made my strides to get myself and others involved in them. News of a local project that our firm had had in the works for years finally came to fruition, and talks of construction started floating around our office. I helped our IDP committee to arrange field visits and a contact point with the contractor. Our local AIA chapter recently announced its IDP and ARE sessions this year, and those dates and times are marked in our company calendar and announced at company meetings. The exposure that our company offers for interns now has grown two-fold. And new interns joining our company now receive a packet of IDP information along with all the other new employee paperwork. I have heard how happy and delighted they are that we actively promote the internship process, and I feel good knowing that they are not alone along their journey with us.

Through the active and persistent efforts of the IDP committee and myself, we have reached out to many interns. I am proud to help empower them and to raise awareness of the internship process. Our company has made a commitment to me and all interns to expose us to the type
of experience we need to become well-rounded architects, and I look forward to continuing to be a part of this commitment in the years to come.

For more information, click on the following resources—

**WORDSBY**—an AIA newsletter article that describes an intern's unfortunate experience with an unethical firm.

**Forward Web site**—the quarterly journal of the National Associates Committee

**National Council of Architectural Registration Boards Web site**

**AIA Michigan Web site**

Tany Catarov is a practicing intern in Farmington Hills, Mich., and will be ready to study for her Michigan ARE exams this upcoming fall. Having completed a BS in Architecture and Architectural Illustration from Lawrence Tech University in 2002, she continued her education and completed her MArch in 2005. Currently she is working for an award-winning high-end retail architecture firm that does national and international projects. She is also active in her local AIA Detroit Chapter, is a National Associate AIA member, and volunteers as an architectural mentor at her alma mater for those interns with questions and concerns about the IDP process.