



COLUMNS

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HOMEFRONT

BY BECKY SPEVACK



Balance – it’s something I find myself struggling to maintain in life, and it has been that way for as long as I can remember. My experiences both being part of and working with the creative class has taught me that they are nothing if not devoted, driven possibly to a fault. Starting in high school, I would spend hours on end in my bedroom, painting into the wee hours of the morning; upon being given a studio in my future husband’s family barn, my life (and canvases) shifted there. Once introduced to glass, countless hours, days, months were spent in the hotshop refining the craft. The studios at college were often filled with artists sleeping on the floor, catching a moment’s rest where they can before waking and going back to creating.

Now, my life is spent on a creation of a different kind, yet still completely consuming. My life has grown to include the title ‘mother’ (or ‘mama’, according to Calliope). And once again I find myself wanting to give my all, to provide and teach and love and pour into her everything I possibly can. But I recognize that to be the best person, the best mama I can be, I need to be myself, need to take time for me. However, recognizing and practicing are two very different things. Balance continues to be something that has to be fought for, something to be claimed.

Simultaneously, as my daughter grows into a person, I need to remember to meet her needs, to acknowledge her feelings and opinions, even when they don’t jive with my own. When she was just a wee babe, I could throw her into her sling and carry her around as I ran errands or took hikes. As long as she was fed, rested, loved, she was content. Nowadays, she has strong preferences on how we should spend our time. A recent example occurred while on vacation about a month ago. We were

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staying on the Isle of Palms, South Carolina, in a condo less than 75 yards from the Atlantic Ocean. I *love* the ocean, and was so excited to be so close again; listening to the waves each night felt like home. On our first full day there, we geared up and trotted down to the beach, thrilled to share the sand and water with Calliope for the first time. I was all set for a day in the sun. Upon setting down in the sand, though, Calliope decided she was not very interested, thank-you-very-much, and proceeded to demand being carried, refusing to touch the tiny, shifting grains beneath our feet. Granted, it was a completely new sensation for her, but I had let my enthusiasm for my love of the ocean overshadow her potential fear or uncertainty. I hadn't even considered that the vastness of the beach and water, the new feeling of the earth shift with each step, that these experiences could cause her distress. It was a quick reminder to step back and acknowledge her needs, to restore balance within the family. I would get my time in the sand, but not at her expense.

As each issue of this magazine comes together, I try to think about what, if any, uniting themes may be found among the pages, and (in case you haven't been able to guess yet) balance resonates loud and clear in this June 2011 edition. Our cover feature – “Social Studies” – takes a look at social media tools and how various architects are utilizing them within the profession. For some of you less familiar with what is available online, I hope you find this article a useful place to start. But even if you are already an active participant in the digital world, I hope you will find some new ideas or perspective in how one can use the tools to their advantage. For all of our readers, though, I think you might agree that finding your comfort zone, finding that *balance* is key.

Additionally, as we roll out this issue, AIA Pittsburgh is undergoing the task of redesigning its website, and defining what that new site will be. There have been many discussions regarding how the site will best function, how to ensure that it meets the needs of users, and how it will be a destination that viewers seek out. There has also been much thought put into the future of *Columns*. The world is quickly going digital, with many newspapers and media outlets taking their resources away from print and onto the screen. As this new website is developed, we will be exploring how *Columns* might transition to an online publication. Again, we seek to find the balance that will allow the magazine to thrive as the best possible publication that it can be. Stay tuned for what promises to be an exciting second half of 2011! 



A RESPONSE TO DESIGN

BY ANNE J. SWAGER, HON. AIA

Fifteen years ago, I wrote a column for this magazine about my experience of being at Children's Hospital with a very sick baby. My youngest child, Ellen, came down with a life threatening virus at 10 days of age. She had to be rushed to Children's after she stopped breathing one evening. That began a three week stay for me which in the end really brought home the power of design.

Initially, Ellen spent a week in intensive care. Those days were the most terrifying as the doctors sorted through the possibilities of what might be wrong with her and warned us that she might not live. We spent every minute that we were allowed by her side and slept in a windowless room with bunk beds, no chairs, and only an overhead light. Grim does not even begin to describe it. When you were not by your child's bed or trying to sleep, you got to sit in a large "special" waiting room with plastic furniture lit by fluorescent lights and rounded off by lingering cooking smells from meals cobbled together on hot plates. Unable to bear the assault on my senses, I often wandered the halls looking at the art, which was often quite wonderful.

Ellen is now 15 and very much a teenager, with many friends and lots of loud music. The virus left her with brain damage that manifests itself in physical problems. She has had five surgeries to help her walk and talk more normally and each time we have stayed with her in her hospital room, sleeping on pullout chairs.

This March, Ellen had another orthopedic procedure on both feet. Once again, I prepared to "camp out" at Children's. I started in the surgery waiting room where I settled near a window on a fabric covered chair for the 3-hour wait. For the three days Ellen spent at the new hospital, her

room had a big window overlooking Bloomfield. Realistically, she didn't seem to notice it but I did. I slept on a couch with a fold down cushion and I actually slept. The bed was very comfortable and the nurses used cell phones to commu-

nicate so we were spared the blaring PA system. Lighting was recessed and targeted so when the nurse came in to see Ellen I would know she was there but never fully awoke. Best of all was how responsive the nurses were. When called they came very

quickly, leaving us to wonder if Children's had tripled the staff.

I was fascinated by the Evidence Based Design seminar at Build Pittsburgh in April. John Schrott, AIA spoke mostly of his firm's work at St. Clair Hospital but I was able to see that our experience at Children's with the shortened hospital stay and the rapid transition Ellen made away from intravenous pain meds to oral ones was in large part a response to the design. What would not have occurred to me was that the attentive nursing care we received was more a factor of the redesign and placement of the nursing stations and less the addition of more nursing staff.

Taking care of your child in the hospital is never something any of us want to do. But if you have to do so, Children's is the place you want to be. Careful thought was given to how families have to "live" in the space and it shows. Children's used to have a slick branding strategy that went something like *we don't just treat the child we treat the whole family*. While I am sure the staff tried to do so, their efforts could not overcome the drawbacks of the old hospital. But now, thanks to their architects they could dust off this slogan and recycle it because it really rings true. **C**



AIA Pittsburgh serves 12 Western Pennsylvania counties as the local component of the American Institute of Architects and AIA Pennsylvania. The objective of AIA Pittsburgh is to improve, for society, the quality of the built environment by further raising the standards of architectural education, training and practice; fostering design excellence; and promoting the value of architectural services to the public. AIA membership is open to all registered architects, architectural interns, and a limited number of professionals in supporting fields.

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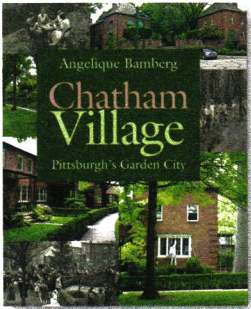
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Volume 25, No. 2




LOCAL BOOK FIRST TO FOCUS ON CHATHAM VILLAGE

Angelique Bamberg – a local consultant specializing in historical preservation – has penned the newly published “Chatham Village: Pittsburgh’s Garden City”, the first book-length study of this historic community. Founded in 1932, Chatham Village has gained international recognition as an outstanding example of the American Garden City planning movement and was named a National Historic Landmark in 2005. Bamberg establishes its historical significance to urban planning and reveals the complex development process, as well as its social significance, extolling it as a model for planned housing and urban-based community living. “Chatham Village” is published by University of Pittsburgh Press and is available at local bookstores. 



BUILD PITTSBURGH – RECORD HIGHS

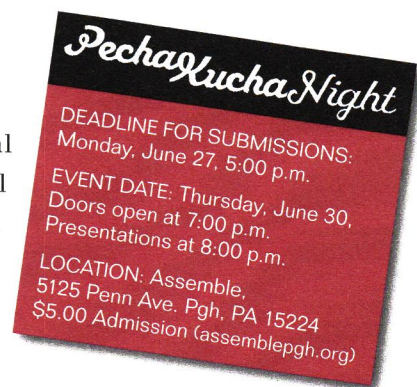
Early this April, the David L. Lawrence Convention Center was once again home to AIA Pittsburgh’s annual day of continuing education, Build Pittsburgh. The day started with a keynote address presented by AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker and then quickly moved into a rich and varied selection of sessions. With a record turnout of 240 attendees and 28 exhibitors, the day was a great success. Thank you to all who helped make it possible! 



PECHAKUCHA – Call For Presentations

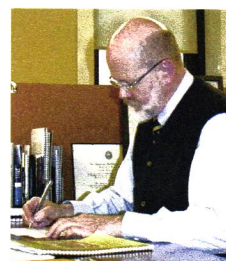
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THANKS FOR 15 YEARS!

Columns would like to give special thanks to Donald Zeilman, AIA for the time and energy he has volunteered as chair of the magazine’s editorial board. For the past 15 years his insights and ideas have been priceless, and seeing his smiling face across the table has lightened many a meeting. Thanks, DZ! **C**



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social studies

Marketing, connecting, and communicating in the digital age

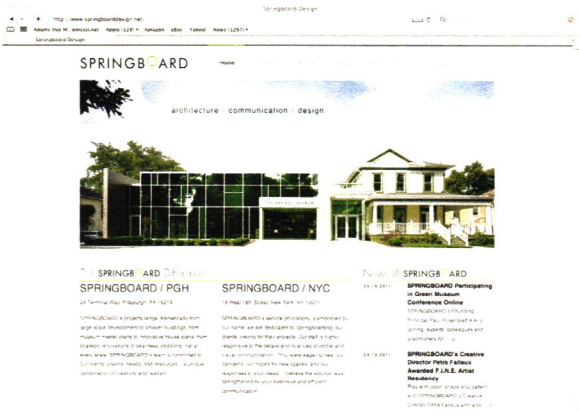
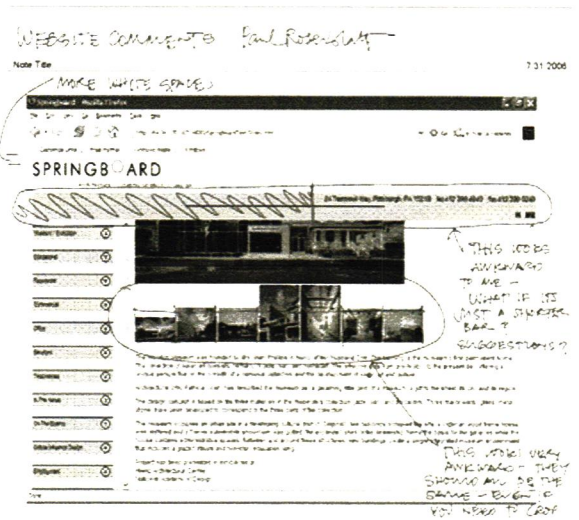
BY BECKY SPEVACK

Social Media. If you haven't heard of it yet, it's about time you do. You may be wondering: What is it, and how does it apply to the practice of architecture? And isn't it a bit ironic to address digital technologies within the pages of a print magazine? All good questions which will be answered in due time. But first, as you begin to read this article, ask yourself: How is my firm being marketed? And how do I want my work to be perceived by others?

I am sitting here, trying to determine how to begin this article, how to tackle this topic of social media. While it is something I use daily, it somehow eludes definition. So I sign in to Facebook to see what others are up to. "Writing about big, abstract ideas makes my head hurt," I post for my 155 friends to read. Perhaps not the most eloquent way to put it, but it gets the point across. As I scroll down, I am connected to people from across the world, spanning from a childhood neighbor and playmate (who now lives in Florence, Italy and is often traveling the globe) to the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, from individual architects (and their firms) to AIA chapters across the continent (AIA|LA wishes everyone a happy earth day!).



COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON COMING SOON



The evolution of a website: SPRINGBOARD's website (top to bottom) in 2003, 2006 and 2009.

And just like that, I know how to describe it: **Social media are the tools created to connect people, regardless of location or circumstance.** They allow us to create a virtual community and put the controls in our hands. We are able to guide and define how we are represented and who we interact with, reaching as broad or limited an audience as we choose.

WEB SIGHTING

If you were able to attend Build Pittsburgh this past April, you may have noticed a session entitled “New Media Revolution”, which (similar to this article) explored what tools are available digitally, and how to use them as marketing devices. One of the presenters, Paul Rosenblatt, AIA, proffered his own experiences/forays into the world of websites and social media. As founding principal of SPRINGBOARD Architecture Communication Design LLC, he has long acknowledged the need to be connected via the digital world, but the way in which the firm has tackled that connection has evolved as he and other firm members better understood what that process can look like.

Founded in October of 2001, SPRINGBOARD launched their first website in spring of 2003 – a point in time where many firms did not yet have a website. “Since we are interested in how technology can leverage our practice in terms of speed, accuracy, efficiency – and creativity – creating a website to reflect this was a natural extension of our practice,” Rosenblatt remembers, but acknowledges that the initial decision to create a website presented many challenges, including a small portfolio, limited budget, and lack of experience in web design. The firm had an intern who could code in HTML and asked him to develop some concepts based on the design of their studio space. “He did a great job animating the site,” Rosenblatt gives credit where it is due, although admits that the site had a major flaw – it was nearly impossible to update. “As soon as we had projects to add, we had a real problem. On top of that, we couldn’t announce anything, or add news..... We didn’t know any better, but we learned quickly.”

A new site was released to the public in 2006, but it too created challenges for the firm. A more static, portfolio-style site, it was easy to update but lacked sophistication and did not attract views unless a firm member sent someone directly to it. After about a year, Rosenblatt started researching website optimization and wondering how to make SPRINGBOARD's website a more prominent destination.

The current site went live in 2009, and incorporates a blog-based news section and provisions to distribute white papers and other materials. "Over the years, I have realized that a company's website is really dynamic. To be effective, it needs to stimulate two-way communication, to encourage people to participate in it and be regularly refreshed to bring people back to see what is new. Right now, I am always thinking about how I can use it more creatively."

BECOMING SOCIAL

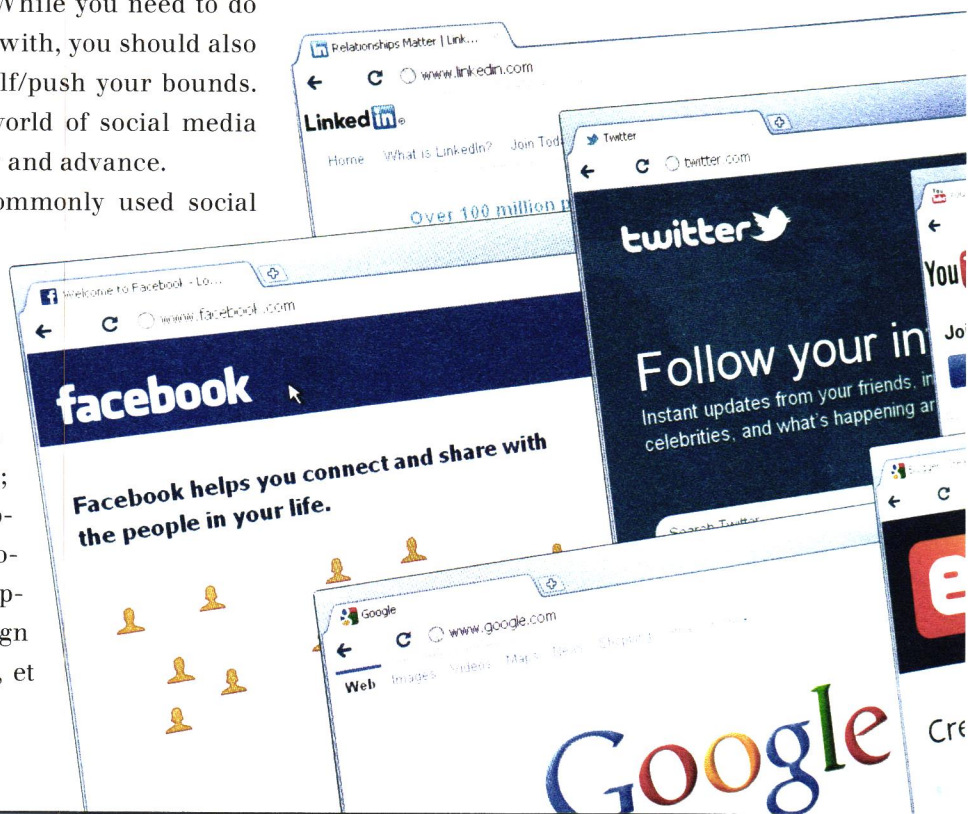
There are a number of social media applications available, each offering a slightly different or unique experience, allowing you to connect with others in a specific way (see "Getting Started", page 11). Obviously, the more you use, the larger and more varied your online community will become, creating a greater dialogue and more potential or opportunity. While you need to do what you are comfortable with, you should also remember to push yourself/push your bounds. What's available in the world of social media will only continue to grow and advance.

Facebook, the most commonly used social media site, is a place many firms have made their own. Through registering as a business, you are able to garner a following of other users; provide pertinent firm information; create photo albums, uploading images from portfolios; and release timely updates – an open house, design award, project completion, et cetera.



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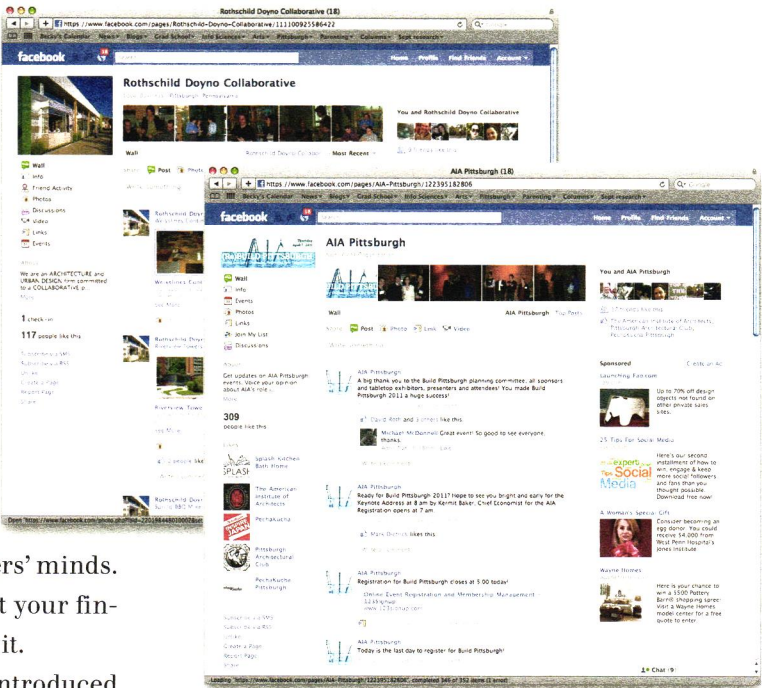
PAUL ROSENBLATT, AIA



One firm that has been taking advantage of what Facebook has to offer is Rothschild Doyne Collaborative (RDC). In the year since joining the site, the firm has made a habit of putting their work, and their work environment, out there for all to see. RDC has assembled over 45 photo albums, highlighting projects, firm events, their office life, public outreach, and more. This frequent updating gives their followers – 115 of them! – a continual stream of firm news, keeping them towards the forefront of viewers’ minds. Virtually free marketing is available at your fingertips, if you will take the time to use it.

David Roth, AIA, meanwhile, was introduced to social networking via LinkedIn. “I started business networking with LinkedIn to stay in touch with colleagues, and then began to use it more as part of recent job search(es).” Looking towards a future of collaboration, not competition, his network now has over 400 people in it, representing a variety of fields – from the arts to science, and all points in between. “These cross-discipline relationships will be the forum for future innovative projects, particularly in the fields of design and sustainability,” he predicts.

AIA Pittsburgh has also embraced these online communities, actively maintaining both a Facebook page and a LinkedIn group. In under two years, the organization’s Facebook page has over 300 followers, and is used to post updates about events related to the design community, another way to reach out to architects about the professional development opportunities they are creating. The LinkedIn group – “AIA Pittsburgh - Collaborate” – was created in May of 2009 as a response to the Unemployed Architects Group that AIA Pittsburgh had started as a biweekly lunch meeting in response to the mass layoffs earlier that year. The LinkedIn group became a place for those architects and others to discuss and share job opportunities, marketing ideas, economic news, and much more. It created a feeling of inclusion and community at a time when many were left feeling professionally stranded.



Rothschild Doyne Collaborative and AIA Pittsburgh have each established a lively presence on Facebook.



David Roth, AIA launched a blog (theenergybubble.blogspot.com) about the converging effect of the energy crisis and the housing bubble.

getting started

A look at some popular ways people are connecting



LinkedIn: A great first step for those of you wary of social media, LinkedIn is “a business oriented social networking site, used mainly for professional networking.” Once registered with the site, a user can create a profile which can include education and employment information, similar to a resume. You can reach out to associates by “connecting” with them, create a company profile, or join any number of groups, which focus on a specific topic or interest. The permission-based approach, in which any contact with another professional requires a pre-existing relationship or the intervention of a contact of theirs, is intended to build trust among users.


Facebook: The most widely used social networking tool there is, Facebook use was initially limited to college students, but gradually expanded; now, anyone 13 or older can become a user. Users of Facebook create a personal profile, can upload pictures, add other users as “friends”, post status updates, message others, “like” any number of topics, companies, or activities, and generally keep in touch with one another.

Twitter: Twitter is a microblogging service, or a place where you can write about anything, within the confines of 140 characters. (For your reference, that previous sentence was 121 characters.) You can follow what other people write about or you can contribute your own thoughts, messages called ‘tweets’.

Architizer: Architizer describes itself as “a way for architects to interact, show their work, and find clients.” It is a social network created exclusively for architecture, a place where design professionals can upload project images. Anyone can join, so thousands of design enthusiasts have access to your work everyday.



YouTube: YouTube is a video sharing site, where users can upload their own videos or view what others have uploaded. This can be a good place to put videos on the web that are then linked back or embedded into your own website or blog.

Blogs: A blog is a type of website (or sometimes part of a website) that functions as a record of one’s thoughts, ideas, commentaries, etc. It can also function on a more professional level as the place where an individual or company posts information on a regular basis about products, events, or important announcements. 

GOT AN IDEA? GET IT OUT THERE

Everyone has a blog these days. No really, *everyone*. Don't believe me? As of 2010, there were over 150 million blogs out there (as tracked by BlogPulse). That's right, I said *million*. So why add your two cents? Because your perspective is unique. And because there is someone, somewhere out there, who has similar interests and is looking to read what others have to say about it. Rosenblatt can attest to this. "I am a 'vinyl junkie' and write a music blog about my passion for records – blog.vinylrecordarchitect.com. Although my blog is not about architecture... it reflects who I am and what I am involved with creatively and intellectually." One record store owner even found SPRINGBOARD via Rosenblatt's blog and hired the firm.

Roth is also among the many bloggers out there, penning theenergybubble.blogspot.com. More directly tied to Roth's professional identity, it was "launched as a by-product of my ongoing research about the converging effect of the energy crisis and housing bubble." The blog is made up of a collection of articles and commentary, presented three times a week. "It's a simple process and pretty automatic now, with about a half hour spent researching topics each morning while I have my coffee."

WHY YOU NEED TO SIGN-ON AND LOG-IN


Over these pages I have provided examples of how others are using social media tools, what they are doing. So what should you be doing?



Paul Rosenblatt, AIA shares his love for records on his personal blog (blog.vinylarchitect.com).

How does one decide how to approach this myriad of social media choices? First, you need to create accounts for yourself – pick a username, a password, and log-in. Find people or groups or blogs that interest you, and follow them. Comment on what they have to share, make your voice heard.

"Social media provides me with new ways I can 'socialize' with a lot of people I haven't even met," Rosenblatt notes. "[It] enables me to reach far greater numbers of people than ever before." Roth whole-heartedly agrees. "This collaborative spirit is at the core of business networking, as it's a way to showcase our experiences... We're all in it together, learning each day about the great works of others." It may just seem like a keyboard and computer screen to you today, but give it a week or two, and you will start to see a community evolve. You will find yourself connecting with colleagues, clients, friends, relatives, and others from around the world, participating in an interactive dialogue greater than the sum of the parts (or people).

"It is not advertising," says Rosenblatt, "it's making contact with folks, using digital technology. There is nothing wrong with new means of communication – new tools have been evolving for centuries." He acknowledges that it can be intimidating, that there are many options and it can feel like a waste of time, but he feels it's not a waste, just different. And worth it. "To not use social media, you are closing the door to so many potential interactions." 



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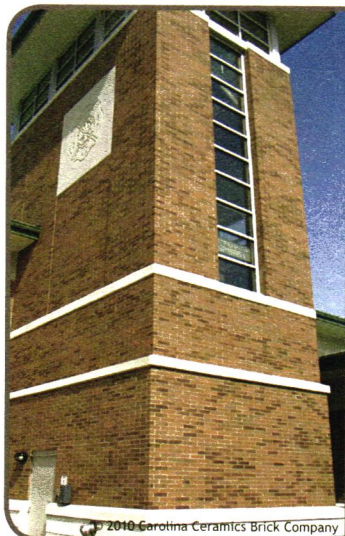
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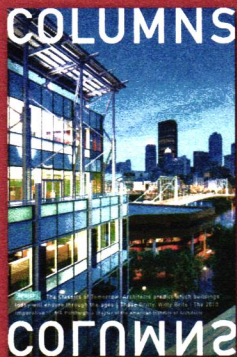
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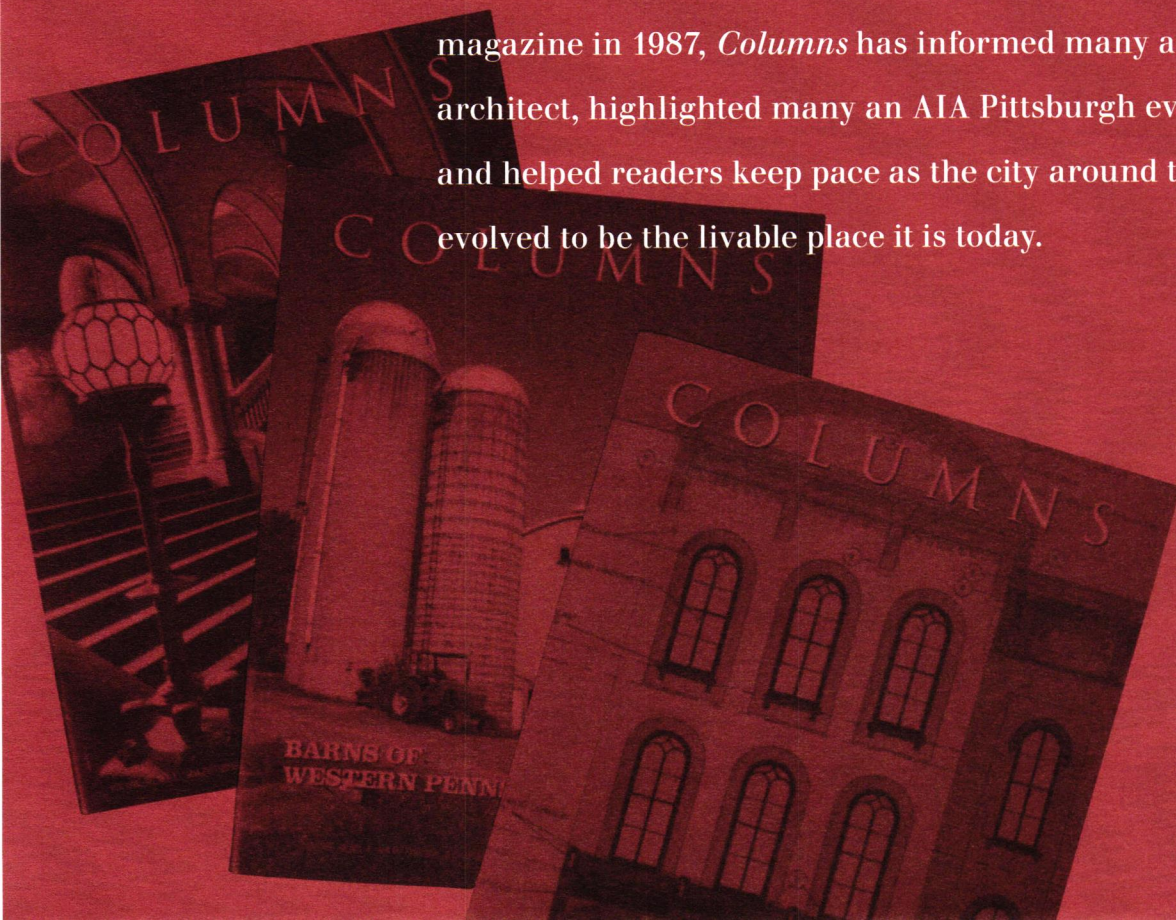
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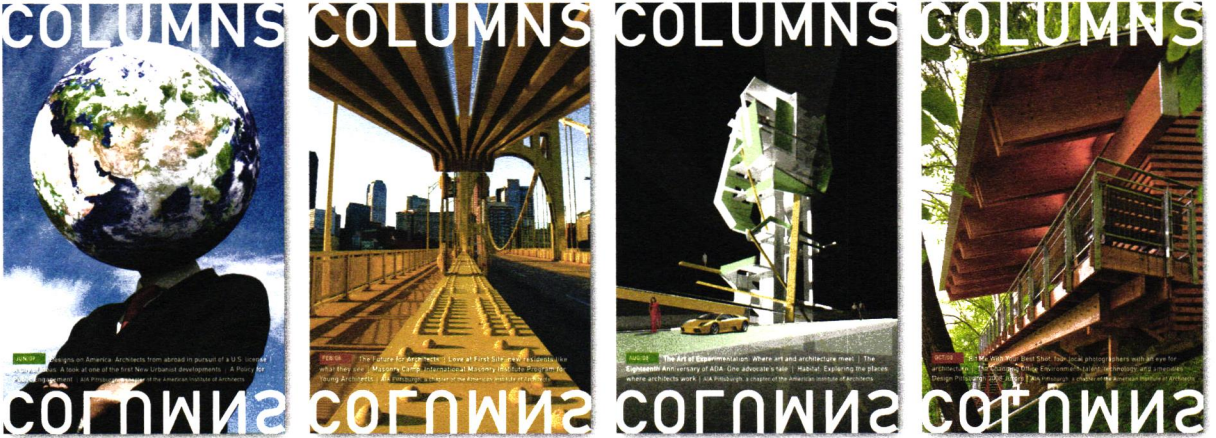
COLUMNS



What began as the chapter newsletter has morphed over the years, first into a small but frequent publication highlighting chapter news and events and then into a magazine used to explore projects, ideas, civic development, and trends in the profession.

As AIA Pittsburgh takes steps towards taking *Columns* digital, the magazine takes a look back at where it started, and where it's been. First published as a magazine in 1987, *Columns* has informed many an architect, highlighted many an AIA Pittsburgh event, and helped readers keep pace as the city around them evolved to be the livable place it is today.





A CHRONOLOGY OF HIGHLIGHTS

September 1987 – AIA Pittsburgh begins publishing *Columns*. The magazine starts out as a 12-page, monthly publication, but quickly jumps to 24 pages.

May 1991 – AIA Pittsburgh celebrates its 100th anniversary. *Columns* captures the journey.

September 1992 – *Columns* receives a facelift, presenting a new design.

October 1993 – First Design Awards issue is published. While *Columns* had been highlighting the Chapter's Design Awards since its inception, this year a whole issue is devoted to the event and honors, a tradition that continues still.

March 1994 – Mayor Tom Murphy introduces this issue of *Columns*, which focuses on the Urban Zoning Code Project.

July/August 1998 – Special issue “Residential Architecture Portfolio” breaks *Columns* traditional format, offering consumers of residential architectural services a look at members firms’ work.

July/August 1999 – The “Visitor’s Guide to Modern Architecture” is published, part of Living Architecture: Alive in Pittsburgh, an effort focusing on architectural tourism. This specially themed issue of *Columns* was placed in hotel rooms and made available at the Visitor’s Center on Liberty Avenue.

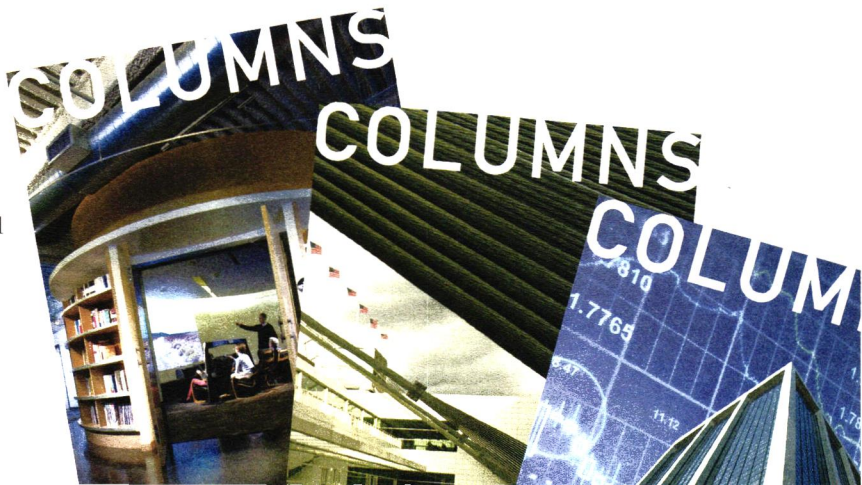
October 2004 – *Columns* reports on the Public Art and Architecture Roundtable.

July/August 2005 – “Starting Your Own Design Firm” roundtable discussion gives readers a look at the pros and cons of striking out on your own.

April 2007 – A redesigned *Columns* is introduced, featuring full color printing and a more modern feel.

RECURRENT THEMES THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

- Pittsburgh’s riverfronts, from industrial sites to miles of parks
- Downtown’s revitalization
- Historic preservation – with an annual preservation issue, a look at the city’s most endangered sites and best preserved buildings
- Civic design process, highlighting projects such as the Wabash Bridge Tunnel and the Pennsylvania Barrier Project
- Dossier: profiling AIA Pittsburgh members, exploring a little about their lives, their work, and their dreams



BREAKING

BUSINESS BRIEFS

A/E Works – formerly Pow-erhouse Design – has added **Jimmy DeCecco, AIA** to its staff in the position of director of architecture. As a firm principal, he will lead and oversee all aspects of design including project management, reduction, quality control, and quality assurance for all design work. DeCecco has been practicing architecture in Pittsburgh for 21 years.

Pittsburgh native **Jeff Young, AIA** has returned to the region to work in a management position at **Burt Hill, a Stantec Company**. Young earned a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997 and has been working at the New York office of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill since. Utilizing experience in design, project management, and business development, he will lead the firm's regional efforts in the corporate/commercial market.

The Community Design Center of Pittsburgh (CDCP) has chosen a new president and CEO. Stephen Glassman



DeCecco



Young



Glassman



Merck

will join the CDCP this June, succeeding Anne-Marie Lubenau, AIA, who is starting a Loeb Fellowship at Harvard University later this summer. Glassman is an award-winning architect and was principal of his own firm for 25 years. Most recently, he has served as chairman of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission.

Mary Crawford was recently certified as a Certified Construction Manager (CCM) by the Construction Manager Certification Institute (CMCI). Crawford is the founder and president of Crawford Consulting Services, Inc., an award-winning woman-owned small business construction consulting firm headquartered in East Pittsburgh that specializes in construction management, cost

estimating/cost engineering, CPM scheduling, value engineering, owner's representation, and quality assurance.

Lami Grubb Architects, LP has added three staff members. Raymond Bowman joined the firm as an intern architect, Sheila Vidas is the senior interior designer, and Rowan Johnston an interior designer. Raymond Bowman, LEED AP is a graduate from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Architecture, and has been employed in the architectural field for 4 years. He joined the firm as an intern architect and project manager for Lami Grubb Architect's retail and hospitality sector. Sheila Vidas, NCIDQ Certified, graduated from the University of Nebraska – Lincoln with a Bachelor of Science in Interior Design.

Vidas has been employed in the interior design field for 7 years at design firms in Nebraska and California. Rowan Johnston is a recent graduate of Chatham's Masters of Interior Architecture program. She recently finished her internship requirements with Lami Grubb Architects to complete her degree, and was hired full-time as an interior designer.

WTW Architects' Kristin Merck, AIA has achieved the status of registered architect. She is currently working with the firm's design groups on the Eisenhower Middle High School and the Penn State Beaver Campus Wellness Center.



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KUDOS

Astorino has been ranked in the Almanac of Architecture & Design 2011, within the directory's Design Intelligence 333, which lists its top 333 architecture firms in North America. The Almanac is a detailed reference manual that chronicles a wealth of vital data; highlighting firm statistics, building types, extensive award listings, compelling profiles of individuals, and other indispensable information. The Almanac of Architecture & Design was recently selected as one of the Top 10 Architecture Books of the Year by ArchNewsNow.com.

Burt Hill, a Stantec Company has received the Grand Prize Award for outstanding educational facility design in the 20th Anniversary Spring 2011 edition of LEARNING BY DESIGN, the biannual guide that showcases innovative school and university design and construction projects. Recognized for the design of Springfield Literacy Center (Springfield, PA), the firm is one of only four firms to receive a Grand Prize Award in the Spring 2011 design competition.

The Design Alliance's Eastside: Phases I & II has been selected as one of ten winners of the Urban Land Institute's 2011 Awards for Excellence:



Springfield Literacy Center, Springfield, PA

The Americas. The awards program recognizes best practices of the full development of a project, not just architecture or design, and hope to promote better land use and development.

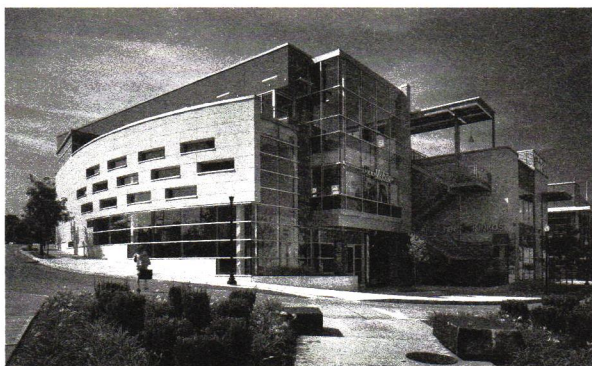
The Master Builders' Association of Western Pennsylvania celebrated its 125th anniversary on March 19th. The landmark anniversary was honored by Pittsburgh City Council, which presented the MBA with a proclamation and declared the date as the "Master Builders' Association of Western PA Day" in Pittsburgh.



SPRINGBOARD's creative director Petra Fallaux was named the F.I.N.E. Artist-in-Residence at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh for the month of May. Fallaux is recognized for her vividly modern, abstract quilts inspired by the landscape of the Netherlands, where she grew up. Her quilts were on display for the month and she presented an artist's lecture on May 15th. To learn more, go to www.petrafallaux.com.



Fallaux



Eastside: Phase II, photo by Massery Photography, Inc.

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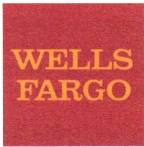
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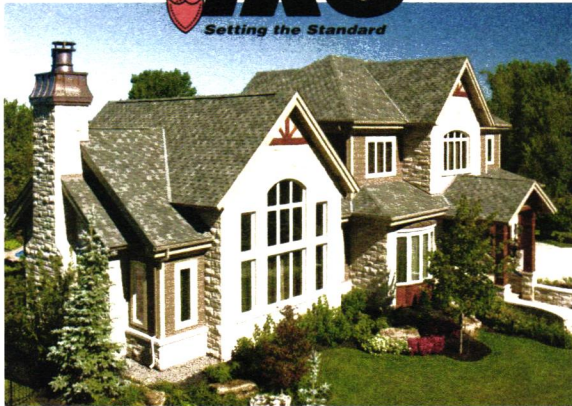
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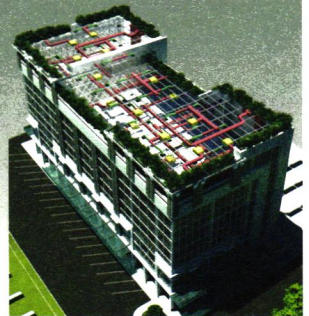
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oil & water

Can architects and engineers collaborate and avoid conflict?

BY MICHAEL COLLEGE, PE

The doors that appear at the last minute; the driveways reminiscent of a downtown street grid; the HVAC units on top of the building, clearly visible to all who walk by, but no one thought to mention their bulk during design; the utilities that eliminate areas for landscape because they were the ‘most efficient’; the conceptual layouts that leave no room for utilities and structural support...



It’s probably not a surprise to anyone in our industry, or anyone related to anyone in our industry (or for that matter, anyone within a mile of our industry) that architects and engineers don’t tend to have the same approach to things. We all have our stories, anecdotes, and jokes of how the other side just ‘doesn’t get it’.

Any time I hear the question asked why these two groups are so different the first thought that crosses my mind isn’t an answer, but a thought that I wouldn’t have it any other way. To me this is truly a scenario in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

I suppose since I didn’t even make it through the first paragraph without trying to reduce something to an equation, I should ‘fess up. I’m an engineer.

To me, the best design comes from teams where individuals collaborate, each bringing a unique set of skills, outlooks, and personalities to the project, each adding their own piece to the mosaic. However this hasn't always happened in the past.

"Too often in the past we treated our professional involvements on projects as turf wars, seeking to defend our own expertise and tearing down that of our other peers" says Glenn Harris, RLA, president of Renew Design Group. "As a landscape architect I was trained to take pride in the stewardship ethic our profession has fostered. But sustainability today has taken on new meaning and is embedded throughout projects across the board within most professions. We still have our areas of expertise in architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture but more than ever we share in a successful project outcome and sustainable design because it requires us to join our collective expertise. From planning the site to carrying out the details of daylighting, water and energy efficiency, we need to be collaborators."

The design process has become increasingly interwoven through the years. The areas which used to solely be the responsibility of a single entity now includes multiple. Stormwater used to be handled almost entirely by the civil engineer with possible roof drains designed by others. The approach was simplistic; get the water away as soon as possible. Today there's a different outlook through sustainable design.



"Now it is a natural resource that can be touched by all of our professions. We used to design to keep the elements out of our buildings; weatherproof them, capture the run-off, pipe it away, conceal it, add it to the streams and increase the flooding and erosion along their banks. Now we recognize rain as gifted to us from the sky, captured by soil and plants, shed from architectural surfaces and through porous and vegetated treatments. Artful solutions to dealing with rain provide naturalized conditions that lead us all

to a new landscape aesthetic, offer views from within and settings surrounding our buildings. As the future progresses, green roofs, green walls, and porous pavements are going to force us to partner more and more," says Harris. What used to be addressed by the civil engineer in isolated design now includes input from the architect, the landscape architect, plumbing engineer, and structural engineer.

So how do we coordinate our groups so we can accurately consider them teams? It's easy to throw catch phrases out on how we accomplish creating a design team out of a collection of designers, but it doesn't happen through chance.

A BALANCING ACT

Although many shy away from needing to add additional meetings to our lives – with good reason – sometimes it is the best answer. The nature of projects now requires the collective efforts of multiple designers requiring input from these professions at an earlier stage. Traditionally, a building could be placed based on viewpoints to and from the building and the site made to 'fit' to the building. Today, when incorporating sustainable design, multiple facets impact the location, orientation, layout, and size of the building. From quality of soils for stormwater management to impacts on energy consumption, there is a seemingly ever-growing list of parameters that need to be incorporated. Yet none of the new aspects that need to be addressed eliminate any of the traditional aspects that were previously considered. Each component must be considered and balanced not against, but with, all the others.

These early meetings allow and foster input from each members' unique design perspective, to help guide the design as it's created as opposed to their perspectives altering the design later. It creates an environment where the team is creating and refining the project together as opposed to a situation where you have one group that seemingly creates and another that seemingly destroys by saying what won't work.

Depending on the specific project, parties

that should be considered include the owner/owner's representative/end user, the architects, engineers (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, structural, site civil), landscape architect, and maintenance staff.

When addressing specific rating systems submission checklists can be beneficial. One method commonly used on LEED projects is the credit checklist. The list is already prepared, tailored for specific projects, and possibly most importantly, means no credits will be missed that need to be discussed.

While going through the list of potential credits it is important to assign monitoring and preparing each credit to an individual. This person might not be responsible for the design aspects of the credit itself because that may overlap areas of responsibility. For example, in LEED for Schools Credit 4.2 – Bicycle Storage and Changing Rooms, the bike racks would probably be addressed by the site civil engineer/landscape architect and showers by the architect. Even if there are multiple disciplines involved there should be a defined lead. Increased ownership is taken of an assigned credit if it's assigned to a person (with a company noted) rather than just to a company.

When requesting attendance of a representative it's beneficial to make sure that you have the right person from each design group present. This person may change as the project shifts from the early stages of design, where the discussion of design possibilities and constraints is highly important, to later stages, where documentation increases in priority. You want to be sure the person in the room can speak for the group they represent and that decisions can be reached with the attendees.

These meetings should provide a direct conversation between all design members and the owner. Many times in projects the needs and desires of the owner are relayed through one party to others. While the information may be exactly the same, hearing directly from the source creates a connection between all of the designers and the end users.



We still have our areas of expertise in architecture, engineering, and landscape architecture but more than ever we share in a successful project outcome and sustainable design because it requires us to join our collective expertise. From planning the site to carrying out the details of daylighting, water and energy efficiency, we need to be collaborators.

It's beneficial to keep in mind throughout the entire process, beginning with writing a proposal, that these tactics will add additional time and expense earlier in the project than what may be customary. However, the time invested early in the project, with input and collaboration from all parties, will reduce the amount of time, effort, and cost at the end.

Due to the nature of our projects being continually refined as they evolve through the design process, answers to many design questions evolve. The design process (schematic drawings, design drawings, and construction drawings) is generally set up for a project to be conceived and then continually refined until it is ready for construction. The questions in the schematic phase generally require answers that are more general and are refined to include more detail through the later stages. However, this isn't always how an engineering mind seems to work. Engineers often like to give the answer as a "final answer" with the level of detail needed for final drawings, which in many circumstances might not be the answer needed.

It's important to make sure that everyone on the design team, including owners, understands the level of precision in which questions are being answered. Early in the design process the answer for the cost of a system will generally be a magnitude of scale. Later, after the number of options for a given system is reduced a more accurate cost will be required.

To some, a more detailed answer is always a better answer; however in many cases this isn't true. If four options are being considered and with minimal effort two options can reasonably be determined to cost twice that of the others then a more detailed analysis is not warranted on the two more costly options. If a detailed analysis was attempted on all the options then fewer options might be considered due to limitations of time which may inadvertently eliminate the best option.


In the end what does it really come down to? There are many answers but the largest com-

ponent is communication. Engineers and architects, while involved in the same industry, come from very different backgrounds and trainings. There's a reason each of our design specialties is a profession unto itself.

Harris explains, "Line, form, color, and texture have long been the elements of aesthetic design. Architects understood them in their own way using a preferred palette of building materials to modify the land and create space. Planners and landscape architects used these elements in other ways keying in on the lines, forms, colors, and textures available in the palette of the land and promoting treading lightly to maintain those natural elements that already existed. Engineers were accused of not understanding or respecting either the natural or the built elements of


design and focusing on cost efficiency problem solving. The sustainable design emphasis today creates a rush for everybody to be an expert and to claim their niche in leading the world to the best sustainable and responsible solutions."

It's not that we don't appreciate what the other professionals do, just that we each focus on our own specialties. Becoming an expert in one field is a career long journey that few earn the honor of saying they've truly accomplished. I know there are always more classes I want to take, books I want to read, or things I want to learn than there are hours in a day to accomplish. That said, whenever an architect or engineer in another field takes the time to explain something from their perspective to me, it makes me a better civil engineer.

"Working together to achieve sustainability for the whole project bridges the gap in our prejudices and our different understandings of design," says Harris. "The best projects of the future will be those where different professionals learn to get along, respect one another's expertise and work together in line, form, color, texture, and 'sustainability'...the word that I used to know as 'stewardship'." 

Michael College is a civil engineer specializing in site development.





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