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MENTORSHIP

EDITORIAL

ANY SKILLED OCCUPATION OR PROFESSION is built, consciously or unconsciously, formally or informally, around mentoring. Knowledge has to be passed from generation to generation: from master to novice. In architecture we all have mentors, some assigned to us, and others who have just wandered into our lives and made a meaningful contribution to our growth as architects.

When we asked for contributions to our feature, we were hoping to receive perhaps ten or twelve good essays on the subject: recollections about an unforgettable mentor who made a difference in the writer’s life (and how was this accomplished?); a personal memoir of an experience as a mentor (did it lead to the writer’s own personal growth?); perhaps even a few reflections on a mentoring experience that went wrong (might we all learn something from it?)

We waited for a long time. Contributions did not start tumbling in. It soon became apparent that this topic is very difficult to write about. Many contributors confessed that they hadn’t really thought about their mentors – or mentees – in a long while, but once the memories began to emerge, they formed a tangled web of spiritual, emotional, personal, intellectual and professional vignettes that was difficult to sort through and even more difficult to describe.

When finally submissions began to arrive, they were often disjointed or confused. Some contributors rewrote and resubmitted their essays – several times. Other contributors endured some fairly heavy editing by this magazine’s tireless editorial department. But in the end, we have managed to collect eleven stories about a unique and precious phenomenon: architectural mentorship.

Every once in a while, in our search for an answer to the question, “What is it that builds an architect?” we ask our writers to take some risks. We – and, I believe, our readers – are grateful that there are architects prepared to accept this challenge.
President's Message

This issue of OAA Perspectives includes several viewpoints on the internship program, which is an OAA Council priority. In my practice over the past several years, I have worked with approximately a dozen interns who were engaged in the internship process, despite having gone through an older system as graduate associates. To get a broader perspective, I sat down with Jessica O’Rafferty, Administrator – Admissions, to review the current program and the role mentors play.

Historically, most architects, me included, were trained by experienced practitioners who passed along their knowledge and skills to apprentices. Over time, the ever-increasing pressures of practice transformed the master-apprentice relationship to that of employer-employee. The Internship Architect Program (IAP) has been introduced as a national program that helps to ensure that, within this framework, future Canadian architects are well prepared for architectural practice. While employers provide the range of practical experience required in the training of today’s architects, the role of mentors is to advise and assist the intern throughout the process. In Ontario, more than 1500 interns are currently recording their experience.

The mentor-mentee relationship is a mutually beneficial learning experience for both parties involved. For mentees, it offers the opportunity to receive, at the beginning of their professional careers, valuable advice and guidance. For mentors, it is a chance to get a fresh perspective on the issues, concerns, hopes and enthusiasm of those who have committed to joining the profession. The program relies upon mentors who motivate and encourage, as well as give direction and feedback regarding the intern’s progress. Mentors “listen, guide and encourage,” playing an important and active role throughout the process.

Mentors are obliged to meet with the intern two to three times a year, review their progress, and offer advice. This can be done by whatever method is convenient for both. I encourage everyone who is eligible – architects licensed in Ontario, Life Members and Retired Members – to find out more about the mentor program. Information is available at www.oaa.on.ca. Please consider giving back to the next generation; the strength of our profession depends upon it.

I am pleased to serve as OAA President this year. Having just spent the past two days with Council reviewing our direction this past year, assessing our successes and identifying areas for improvement, we reaffirmed our commitment to several priorities including public awareness, client awareness, and internship. I was pleased with Council’s enthusiasm, diversity of ideas and discussion, and cooperation to collectively come to agreement on our direction.

During the coming weeks, we’ll be determining how best to achieve our goals and look for opportunities to integrate what we have already started, to tweak existing programs and services to best meet what we want to achieve, and to quickly assess new opportunities as they arise. Together, we hope to accomplish much this year. We will let you know about our plans and report on our achievements as they occur. With optimism I look forward to the months ahead.

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Bill Birdsell, Architect
BES, B.Arch, OAA
President
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RESPONSE

LETTERS

Hi Gord,

Ugly and beautiful as perceived by architects and others was a great topic for OAA Perspectives. I enjoyed seeing the Golden Section come up again, because it was top of my mind during my student years in the quest to uncover the sources of beauty. It was a somewhat furtive quest because words like “beauty” and “attractive” were (still are?) frowned upon in our profession. There was, and perhaps still is, a general sense that architectural aesthetic value has to be deeper than can be portrayed by words commonly associated with make-up. So we fall back on words like “memorable” and “visual quality.”

While I enjoyed Christopher Green’s piece, I wish he could have gone beyond the experiments as to whether the Golden Section made for visual beauty through finding out whether people preferred the Golden Rectangle to others. It seems to me that the whole point of its use (or that of other proportional relationships such as Corb’s Modular and Mies’s obsession with proportion) in architecture, painting or other forms of art is the rich set of related dimensions that it can generate. The tie to the golden section of the beautiful shell of the nautilus is not to the rectangle itself, but to the spiral formed by the intersection of the descending series of embedded dimensions. Can Mr. Green enlighten us on any investigation into popular aesthetic preferences for objects or patterns that incorporate the golden section of the beautiful shell of the nautilus?

I, for one, would be interested.

Roger du Toit OAA, FRAIC, CSLA, MCIP, RPP, AICP, 
Toronto

Dear Editor,

After my return from an extended trip abroad, I found in the pile of collected mail the latest issue of OAA Perspectives, a journal which I always read from cover to cover. This one, dedicated to subjects of beauty and ugliness, was particularly interesting. Indeed, it is important from time to time to review the aesthetics of our built environment. This is particularly important in cases when buildings are built as monuments or a high form of art.

We have to bear in mind, however, that the beautification/uglification of our physical environment is not the primary reason for the construction of buildings. Beautification is a secondary societal need. The primary need is to enclose, maintain and protect a small volume of air that provides us with the thermal comfort in which we, as a species, evolved. A portable microclimate was our unique form of adaptation to the brutal and unpredictable forces of nature and it allowed us to migrate to practically every corner of our planet.

The imperative of our time appears to be to make our existing life support systems and subsystems more resilient, which we could accomplish with the help of advances in artificial intelligence. Our next challenge could be the pursuit of autonomy. We can build resilient cities as an assemblage of autonomous or semi-autonomous buildings, or we can embrace both strategies and work out a healthy ratio between dependency and autonomy.

These and related challenges may be interesting topics for another exciting issue of OAA Perspectives in the future.

Vladimir Matus, Toronto.

[The writer is an OAA Life Member. The letter has been slightly shortened due to space constraints.]

MORE UGLINESS

“For the first time since I had been in Barcelona I went to have a look at the cathedral [La Sagrada Familia] – a modern cathedral, and one of the most hideous buildings in the world. Unlike most of the churches in Barcelona, it was not damaged during the revolution – it was spared because of its ‘artistic value’, people said. I think the Anarchists showed bad taste in not blowing it up when they had the chance.”


ARCHITECTS OF....

As we’ve seen in countless book titles and newspaper headlines, you don’t have to be an architect to be an “Architect of” something (architect of the World Trade Center bombing, the architect of Cambodia’s Killing Fields, etc.). There are many instances in which the word architect adds nothing more than a touch of class or serious intent.

- Allegri, the architects of fabrics – www.allegri.com
- Ebel, the Architects of Time, “have been creating beautiful luxury Swiss watches with a passion since its [sic] inception in 1911....” – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ebel
- Metal Smiths Master Architects Of Jewellery Inc. – a company in Red Deer Alberta
- Architects of Melody Records – a record label that “believes in artists and the power of music....” – www.architectsofmelody.com/
- Architects of Will (Card Type: Artifact Creature; Creature Type: Human Wizard), Jace, Architect of Thought (Card Type: Planeswalker). These appear to be cards in the set: Alara Reborn (codenamed Scissors)
- Megadeth Architecture Of Aggression – a song by written by Dave Mustaine and Dave Ellefson. Lyrics include: “You know your worth when your enemies / Praise your architecture of aggression.” – www.lyricsfreak.com/m/megadeth/architecture+of+aggression_20091355.html
- Architects of Leisure (“It’s not a company, it’s a privil-ege®”) – www.luxeprovisions.com/
- Architects of Change – A TV show, which the website describes: “Far from being ecological or political militants,
the Architects of Change are above all entrepreneurs. They believe in creative capitalism to boost social, economic and environmental wealth.” – www.architectsofchange.tv/

• Architects of Grace – a British band, whose latest release, Moments in Time is “As good as anything Peter Murphy, Joy Division or Nine Inch Nails ever did.” Release http://architectsofgrace.bandcamp.com/


ARCHITECTS AND UNICORNS

In the Social Studies column of The Globe and Mail, Dec. 3, 2012, under the heading “An incredible discovery,” the following statement appeared:

... in what appears to be a genuine world exclusive, the inimitable Korean Central News Agency has now broken the incredible news that architects in Pyongyang have discovered a unicorn’s lair.

The Times of India registered a similar claim. But, in fact, the original Korean Central News Agency release reported that:


When it comes to the discovery of mythical creatures, we believe that credit ought to be given where it is due. Let the archaeologists claim this one. Just leave the discovery of Nessie and Big Foot to us. ☝
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Mentorship

INTRODUCTION

BY GORDON S. GRICE OAA, FRAC

THE ORIGINAL MENTOR, the guardian and advisor of Odysseus’s son Telemachus, makes only brief appearances in Homer’s epic poem – not nearly enough for us to gain any appreciation of his character. If it weren’t for a story written nearly 2500 years later by a 17th century French author, Mentor’s many admirable qualities may not have come to our attention at all. But by the eighteenth century, the word mentor had entered our language, with the definition “an experienced and trusted counsellor.”

Wikipedia explains, “Because of Mentor’s relationship with Telemachus, and the disguised Athena’s encouragement and practical plans for dealing with personal dilemmas, the personal name Mentor has been adopted in English as a term meaning someone who imparts wisdom to and shares knowledge with a less experienced colleague.” As the contributors to this issue’s feature make clear, there is more to mentorship than any brief dictionary definition can describe.

The tradition of architectural mentorship began before our profession existed. “From the middle ages onwards, experienced master builders and later architects took on apprentices to teach them basics of architectural practice.” With the Industrial Revolution and the growth of more formal systems of professional education, the role of mentor became a quaint anachronism, replaced by instructors and curricula. More recently, the tradition has been revived, with some architectural associations advocating for an official mentor to be available to guide every future architect (mentee) into the profession.

In the accounts that follow, you will see the way that the mentorship experience has altered the lives of many architects, through memorable experiences and relationships that change and develop through time. We learn about the unique RAIC Syllabus program, in which mentorship has been a cornerstone. In some stories, a mentee becomes a mentor. In other stories, we learn about the mentorship of foreign-trained professionals. There are serial mentorships and unsuccessful mentorships. One contributor wonders how a protégé knows when it is time to leave his master and set out on his own. In all of these accounts, there is no indication that mentorship is anything but a precious, sacred, even spiritual, thing. Every story reveals a unique, personal definition for the word mentor.

Gordon S. Grice is Editor of OAA Perspectives

“Telemachus, you will be neither a coward nor a fool in the future, if your father’s manly vigour has descended on you.... This journey of yours will not prove futile or fruitless.”

— ATHENA, ASSUMING THE FORM AND VOICE OF MENTOR, ADDRESSES TELEMACHUS IN HOMER’S THE ODYSSEY
It was well after midnight and I was standing in a very long taxi queue at the St. John’s, Newfoundland, airport. It was a cool evening, and my thoughts of hotel rooms and early wake-up calls were broken by the booming sound of “Mr. Mateljan,” perfectly pronounced as only a fellow Eastern European could, from somewhere further back in the line. I felt the rest of the travellers looking at me, probably wondering why I was owed this deference. Maybe I was a celebrity being recognized, or perhaps an escaped prisoner being commanded to stop. It was hard to tell from the tone. I just smiled, however, and instantly recognized the voice of my mentor and friend, Mariusz Gontarz.

We had not seen each other in several years and both of us had grown a little heavier and grayer in the interval but, as we shared a cab into the city, I could not help but think about the hours that I had spent in his company and the lessons learned from him that have shaped my career, outlook and life.

I was a student of the RAIC Syllabus Program for about seven years and served as the Toronto chapter student representative for about half of that time. Like many Syllabus students, life pressures persuaded me to take a leave of absence and I have yet to help but think about the hours that I had spent in his company and the lessons learned from him that have shaped my career, outlook and life.

I was a student of the RAIC Syllabus Program for about seven years and served as the Toronto chapter student representative for about half of that time. Like many Syllabus students, life pressures persuaded me to take a leave of absence and I have yet to go back – but such is the draw of the program and its members that I and many others like me still consider ourselves to be students. We are the apostates of the architectural community.

Mariusz has been a mentor with the RAIC Syllabus Program since 1987, a coordinator of the Toronto Chapter for more than a decade and now serves as Ontario coordinator as well. He is a tireless volunteer champion of the program and leader of a group of dedicated volunteer mentors who give of their time and expertise to a body of students eager to learn but for whom a return to full-time study is not a viable option. Syllabus students are generally employed full-time and are balancing marriage, children and mortgage. They bring to the program experience and knowledge gained from previous education and often extensive practical experience. They are adults and expect to be treated that way, and the genius of the Syllabus Program is that it fosters a healthy and meaningful dialogue that makes this possible. For the students, the benefits of the program are obvious but for the mentors this is much more intangible.

Many months after our cab ride, I had the opportunity to ask Mariusz to comment on mentoring and, by extension, to discuss what motivated him to become so involved and what keeps him coming back year after year. I don’t know if he answered the question directly but his comments were complex and intriguing.

He began by talking about his family and childhood in post-war, communist-era Poland. His family and their property, like so many others, had been ravaged by the war and this left an indelible mark on those of his generation. This was followed by the privations of the communist occupation and the way that it contrasted with what was considered to be the more sophisticated pre-war culture of fashion, arts and learning. Equally significant was the end of the tradition of the three-generation home, where older members would pass their knowledge and wisdom down to the younger members.

Mariusz was admitted to architecture school in Warsaw, after sitting a two-day hand-drawing examination. He was very quickly influenced by his professors, whom he associated with the pre-war Modernist period. Interestingly, his first job was mentoring fellow students in hand-drawing techniques.

This was a period of turmoil in Poland (that would end with the rise of the Solidarity movement in 1980). Like many students of the day, he was involved in anti-regime movements, protests that represented his sense of justice and freedom of thought. His education was broad, encompassing architecture and engineering and including much construction site experience. One particularly interesting story involved working in the mountains with craftsman building houses using traditional joinery methods.

Following graduation, he worked in Warsaw and London, then immigrated to Canada, where he had to re-establish his credentials. He began working with Carruthers Shaw & Partners in Toronto (now CS&P Architects), and credits his mentors there with hugely aiding his early professional development. Until recently, he practiced at CS&P, but is now principal of his own firm. He was...
encouraged to attend the Syllabus as a guest critic by Laszlo Nemeth, another long-serving mentor (now retired). He stayed because of a natural interest and ability in teaching, a love of the profession and the craft associated with it and because of the ability it gave to be associated with a discourse that was more philosophical than would typically be found in the workplace. He also readily acknowledges that it has helped him with his own communication and professional skills. Asked what keeps him attached to the Program, he replied, “Don’t tell this to my students, but I learn as much, or more, from them as they learn from me.”

I was very fortunate that, as Syllabus chapter representative, my responsibilities included sitting in on the final crit discussions, where the students were evaluated and marks assigned. That was always an interesting time because I was impressed both by the fairness of the evaluation and by the intellectual depth and rigour of it. My own skills of architectural appreciation and critique were shaped by listening to the mentors evaluate student work.

Mariusz firmly believes in the basic driving idea of the Syllabus Program: established members of the profession, passing down their craft and knowledge to younger members. Over the past decade, he has been vocal in his support of this ideal, addressing the OAA AGM on more than one occasion. He is happy that the Program has stayed with the profession and under its control.

Mariusz has been a constant in the Syllabus Program in Toronto for the past 20 years and many hundreds of students have had the benefit of his time and expertise; a few have even graduated to become principals of their own firms. The pride in his voice is obvious and intense when he talks about these individuals. He has a sharp wit and can command a room. I recall one occasion when I put some of my work on the wall for evaluation. In typical student fashion, I had run out of time and didn’t get finished what I had intended and I can admit now that it was rather meagre. He studied it for a few minutes and then said “Mr. Mateljan,” (there’s the deference again) “there is a difference between minimalism and minimal!” The room fell silent. I couldn’t disagree, but I must have talked my way out of it because I wound up getting a B.

My favourite memory of Mariusz and his style is of a final crit some years ago. To understand the story, you have to understand that Mariusz has always imposed hard work on his students and demanded excellence from them. But, he has also been known as a staunch defender of his own students at crit time. I was sitting next to a senior student when one of Mariusz’s students was on the receiving end of some sharp criticism. Mariusz was turning and twisting in his seat, clearly uncomfortable, and just as it was his turn to speak, the student turned to me and whispered, “Here comes the cavalry!”

Rick Mateljan is a partner in Strickland/Mateljan Design Associates Ltd. and a member of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee.

“Mariusz has been a constant in the Syllabus Program in Toronto for the past 20 years and many hundreds of students have had the benefit of his time and expertise; a few have even graduated to become principals of their own firms. The pride in his voice is obvious and intense when he talks about these individuals.”
"When you can take the pebble from my hand, it will be time for you to leave."  

AS A CHILD, I never quite understood how this final test was relevant to the training of a kung fu master. On the surface, yes, there is a test of muscle reflexes, speed and manual dexterity, but how exactly was this rite of passage supposed to cap off the culmination of years of training? A student reaches maturity and attains a requisite level of proficiency in the martial art of kung fu, a relationship is fostered under the tutelage of a great master, the journey has begun and the lineage is passed on. A newly equipped student, girded with imparted wisdom, goes out into the world to meet the greater challenges that await. “Oh! And uh, by the way, young Grasshopper, before you go, there is this matter of a small pebble thing I’d like you to do….”

In my mind, the lingering question for Caine (the student, played by a young David Carradine) must have been: did he actually beat the master or did the master let him take the pebble from his hand? I wonder: are these the thoughts of a young cynic, or is it my inability to grasp the greater meaning in the proverb?

Stripped of poetics, the pebble challenge presents the point of leaving as the quintessential moment between disciple and mentor. It is seemingly the point at which the responsibility for all that has been learned falls squarely on the shoulders of the disciple. But has responsibility really been transferred?

If a mentor’s task is to help the student realise his or her potential, then responsibility lies mostly with the pupil – to seek and challenge himself or herself – in time, perhaps even beyond the student’s own limits. While I’m no expert in Buddhism, it seems to me the responsibility at the point of leaving is something the mentor never really had.

It’s no surprise that in many mentorship models the mentor is less a teacher who disseminates knowledge than a guide who points in directions that will best promote self-discovery or, as in the Buddhist canon, a process of inner transformation. As a process made up of challenges that confront an intern, these events or inner struggles can be seen as a series of departures on a collection of small journeys. At each turn, each event, a new departure takes place and so it can be said that the act of leaving starts at the beginning of mentorship and repeats through iterative events that deepen throughout the disciple’s journey.

In this one task then, one could say that the role of a mentor is minimal in importance, at least in comparison to the multiplicity of successive tasks that test the student’s responsibility, culminating in the final event of leaving. In short, the mentor’s responsibility is essentially one that continually prepares students for moments of leaving.

In the education and nurturing of an architectural professional, our mentors are wise and generous in sharing their experience, but at the point of leaving, no pebbles are transferred. Instead, there is the Handbook of Practice, lessons, caveats, rules of thumb, tricks of the trade, and the long list of processes; there are design drawings, client meetings, minutes of meetings, shop drawing reviews, door schedules, AutoCAD, accounting procedures, and many more items in a seemingly endless list. Perhaps this is why mentors specialise, or advise specialisation, but primers on these specialised subjects are often perfunctory. We bring skill, organisation and focus to these studies, but can their meagre content transform us?

I’m reminded of a past mentor who would often conclude an explanation of how best to mitigate moisture penetration at a window sill (or a similar topic) with the statement, “You know as much as I do now,” as if to say, “Well, you’re on your own,” as a point of leaving. For the mentor, it was important to know when to “leave” – when to make the hand-off. For me, the student, it was time to muster whatever ability I could and wrestle it out.

And yet, in the conduct of our profession, personal mentor-mentee relationships are hard to establish. There is “office chemistry,” and
social interaction but ultimately, our unique personalities may be difficult for a mentor to isolate from the maze of day-to-day professional concerns. The mythical American football coach, who seeks to make his rookie not only the best football player, but also the best person, represents an ideal because good people, regardless of what qualities they possess – leadership, discipline, creativity, etc. – make good organisations and good professions.

In Buddhism, it takes more than fast runners to make the best football team, because “a diamond can only be polished by another diamond.” 1 In the words of Daisaku Ikeda, “Students’ lives are not changed by lectures, but by people,” 2 and when we teeter on the fulcrum between past and future we perceive most the “shared commitment between teacher and student, mentor and disciple.” 3 The memories of this moment likely live on long after the shared commitment is severed.

A ten-year-old recollection of my mentor – a martial arts enthusiast in his own right – comes from one of his better observations: “It’s better to fight the battles you can win.” Perhaps he thought of me as a pacifist. More likely, he was just offering simple guidance on how to best spend boundless intern architect energy.

Hopefully, when we reach our own point of leaving, we remember recurring phrases because they have passed down a personal approach to future challenges in the professional sphere. They are cogent examples that instil a deep potential in us.

What did John Glenn feel like when his space capsule left the rocket tower? What did the security guard think when the Terminator said to him, “I’ll be back”? What did Caine think when he had the pebble in his hand?

In the end, the pebble test is not about how fast the learner can be (will Caine surpass his master in a simple prearranged challenge?). Perhaps the pebble test is a game of diversion in which the manual dexterity required was never attainable and the master opens his hand, ushering Caine out the door, introducing him once again to himself.

**Thomas Leung** is an architect practising in Ottawa and a member of the OAA Perspectives Committee.

of an architect, mentoring plays an extremely important role. And in the small world of architecture, past mentors may be encountered repeatedly. Over time, the mentor-mentee relationship may change, with the influence increasingly flowing both ways. I was fortunate to have had a number of mentors, one of whom, Glen Milne, has had a profound effect on my development as an architect.

Last summer, my wife and I were invited up to Glen Milne’s lakeside cottage for a few days. I was obviously expected to offer some thoughts on the new guesthouse in which we were to stay. This might be expected from any architect-guest. But my mind was on more significant matters: what exactly, I wondered, might I have received from this particular mentor, and, whatever it is, why do I value it so highly?

WHY MIGHT MENTORING BE IMPORTANT?

Obviously, mentoring involves special relationships. A mentor is different from a teacher or coach, because mentorship seems to create a sort of collegial relationship. This is quite understandable when the mentee is likely to become a full member of the club, sooner or later. In this respect, it might be regarded as community building within the discipline. Perhaps the best mentors do not determine marks or conditions of employment. Mentor-mentee conversation may work best as a flowing low-risk (for both parties) proposition – one that allows one to sort out one’s ideas.

This sort of relationship is perhaps especially important where buildings are concerned, because buildings are not quantifiable phenomena. The kind of quantified analyses common in other fields are often difficult to apply since every building is different, and data is usually either unavailable or suspect. Specific analysis is not warranted for many of the small design matters that are being addressed on an ongoing basis through the development process. Hence, many solutions may be generated and selections made in a mysterious experience-based manner.

In other areas, there are many anecdotes about this: a naked Archimedes running down the street shouting “Eureka,” or Crick and Watson spending hours in The Eagle, their local pub, musing on the possible structure of DNA. It is readily apparent that the human brain is capable of dealing with exceedingly complex problems, integrating both quantified and unquantified information, confronting uncertainty, and, most importantly, contending with missing information, to come up with solutions, sometimes at the most unexpected times.

But acquiring the capability to do this can be a lengthy process. Many experienced architects will recognize the route by which people move to become capable decision-makers – a path explored by numbers of theorists. One model offers five stages: novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient, and expert. In the earlier stages, people learn and apply fundamentals in an explicit manner, following sets of rules. As the individual moves through the stages, the complexity of tasks becomes recognized and unconscious processes become more important. Ultimately, the expert practitioner will have a multi-dimensional understanding of the field.

A good mentor-mentee relationship will push along this process. While some of us may recall some mentor carefully explaining some calculation or method, perhaps it is in the progress towards the higher levels of thought, analysis and resolution that he or she can make the greatest contribution.

WHAT I LEARNED

While many – perhaps most – architects, have had one or more mentors, it is sometimes difficult to answer the question, “What exactly did I get out of my relationship with this particular mentor?” One can readily identify some of the things one learns – many of us will recall learning how to design steel beams, calculate building areas, interpret the building code or understand architectural insurance. But other, probably less tangible but possibly more important, things are transferred from mentors.

Milne sees himself as a facilitator, and, reflecting on my own activities, I see this is also how I tend to undertake things. Facilitating involves listening to a diversity of opinion,
encouraging ideas to appear, assembling them into feasible alternatives and supporting their implementation. This approach recognizes the capabilities of project teams. My own approach has been to ensure that clients are fully involved, and know how and why the decisions have been made. After the development process is complete, they should be able to respond to any criticism of the results with the knowledge that they were full participants. Thinking back over numerous projects, better results occur when the insights and capabilities of a diversity of people are recognized and utilized. Sometimes people who are not usually part of the project process, such as janitors, salespeople or nurses, have very relevant experience and opinions.

Hence, in most projects, I have found this management role becomes exceedingly important. Within that function, comes recognition of many important factors. For example, different people have different backgrounds and resultant areas of expertise. Then there is the need to understand what happens through the project creation as well as after the project is operating. Another factor is that existing buildings and systems have to be considered, so the best features can be reflected in new projects and the worst problems not repeated. Feedback throughout processes is important.

The Milne cottage reflects this ideal. Being a small building of only 550 square feet, the project team consisted of Glen, his wife Janet, the builder, past influences and others who had an interest in the project — the local building inspector being one — and, one might suspect, any number of past students and colleagues. Milne collected ideas and synthesized them. In keeping with his interest in Finnish culture, he sees the entire property as a cottage campus, following the precedent of a collection of buildings built around a central focus, in this case a large table built atop a large tree stump. As well as the main building, there is also a studio of 108 square feet.

Understanding buildings as processes to be managed before, during, and after construction, and using a facilitation approach, reduces risk. All of this is in distinct contrast to the Howard Roark approach, where the product is seen to be the creation of one superhuman who, following his own personal values and visions, will control every detail to come up with a masterpiece. The professions, perhaps especially architecture, seem to be especially susceptible to this sort of attitude, perhaps somehow being flattered into this illusion by the wider public.

As a student, I was drawn to people who challenged me, but who also extracted my own ideas, listened to them and built on them. My own teaching methods have reflected this. I attempt to respond to their thoughts, needs and ways of learning.

"As a student, I was drawn to people who challenged me, but who also extracted my own ideas, listened to them and built on them. My own teaching methods have reflected this. I attempt to respond to their thoughts, needs and ways of learning."
learn, I was the one who challenged him to think. Perhaps within a profession it is necessary to pass things on.

**THE COTTAGE ITSELF**

The guesthouse is a fascinating example of Milne’s collaborative approach to design (and to mentoring). While he sees the building primarily in terms of its Finnish precedents, combined with some ideas gained from working with Louis Kahn, it can also be interpreted as a continuation of Ontario cottage tradition.

Two features are immediately obvious. Synthesizing the ideas of his design team, Milne was able to connect the design with the future users. One nice feature is that the design allows the occupants of the guesthouse to retreat from the activities of their hosts. The entrance is located away from the other buildings, and there is a progression through the building: one enters into a small screened porch (kicking off sandy or snowy shoes), past a convenient kitchenette and toilet area, to the bedroom, and then, surprise, to a delightful screened room with a work surface, overlooking the central “table” area and the lake. Imagine, one can set up the computer or take out a book and read in privacy, yet see what is going on. You can see people coming and going, hail a passer-by and actually engage in conversation. Discussion can occur for a few minutes before the people decide if they want to come together.

After considering the overall structure, there is the detail. The building reflects Ontario cottage vernacular. It expresses itself as something that might have been built by an able do-it-yourselfer over the course of a summer, or perhaps by an unsophisticated local builder, using materials from the local Beaver Lumber. It is dark green with white trim. There must be a reason why cottages were historically painted those colours. Did our predecessors pick that (or dark brown) to fit into the forest settings – or were those colours simply cheaper? The admission has to be made that this version is covered in vinyl siding, but it is pointed out that it is simply a way of applying all those future layers of paint all at once.

Inside too, tradition meets the twenty-first century. There is indoor plumbing, since, today, most people expect comfort – few really cherish the experience of stumbling down a path looking for the outhouse in the middle of the night, wary lest some skunk is out on its own mission. There is also a kitchenette, so guests can make an early breakfast without disturbing the main cottage or vice-versa. And there are actually interior finishes, not just the two-by-four framing and the inside of the outside sheathing that one often encounters in cottage country. But the floor is plywood, and I hope it stays that way, as if waiting for some final flooring that is never going to come.

Every “crit” has to offer criticism, but how exactly do you criticize the work of a mentor? Are there failings? Even the best thought-out building inevitably has strengths and weaknesses: Glen can look forward to many evenings on his porch with his friends, drinks in hand, watch the sunset, and happily debate the nature of architecture and meaning.

Mentorship may never end. True mentorship is a special relationship that can survive decades, or actually strengthen. Even decades later, I am learning things from the relationship. Ask yourself the question: what exactly did you get from your mentors? The answers might be revealing. So, my mentor, did I let you off too easily? Probably, but we do want to be invited back.

Ian Ellingham is chair of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee. He is the co-author of Whole-Life Sustainability (RIBA Publishing), which will appear in early 2013.

**NOTES: 1.** Glen Milne was one of the people responsible for the creation of the School of Architecture at Carleton University, taught there for a number of years.
MENTOR’S ROLE is to be a coach, not a captain. Brian worked a couple desks over from me and, for the first few months, there was no real need for us to talk. But in his natural environment, the pub, he was congenial enough. He enjoyed jokes and stories and it was a pleasure to witness his conversational mastery with fellow employees and bar patrons. That was enough to engage my interest right at the start. After a while, we fell into a rhythm of having the occasional drink after work.

He had begun his career within sight of the Pacific in the ’50s and worked his way from firm to firm east across the prairies until he was deposited in Toronto. His experience included large firms of known, award-winning architects, as well as small anonymous firms. Brian had formed opinions on all of them and everything related to architectural work. I soaked it all up: pointers on how to maintain your office plant, observations on architects from his past, specific teachings on handrail and door details. Along the way, the axiom “don’t shade your eyes, plagiarize” entered my vocabulary.

A few things have changed in our profession over the years, as the cycle of newer technology parallels a reduction in office staff. But the meagre income awarded to junior members remains a constant. In those days, the life of a young two-kid family such as mine seemed to be a battle between an omnipresent housing need and a modest income, and the bank did little to relieve this problem. So an extreme solution was required: build your own house. We found a building lot in Toronto that was deemed unusable by others. The site and the time frame were tight. As a result a three-bedroom house of sixteen hundred square feet had to be squeezed into a volume of only thirteen and a half feet wide by forty feet long by thirty feet high. Something out of the ordinary was called for.

Having established Brian as my mentor made it easy to ask for and accept his review and possible criticism of this very personal design work. He began by questioning the needs program and my design intent. Then he looked at the preliminary design and challenged some of my “lazy” solutions. Like a fighter, I set about training with Brian as my second. Discussions took place a couple of times a week after work as the design and details evolved. His criticism was sharp at times, but it drove me forward toward my own unique solution in those few short weeks of spring. Brian was generous in sharing design details, including one for the construction of a stair made entirely of plywood.

Contractor selection followed, and the permit was issued in time for the property closing. Construction began the Monday after ownership was confirmed. That hectic pace did not allow much time for the intern part of my life (in those days, we were called graduate associates). In fact, I left for the first day of the architect exam as the second truck arrived to pour concrete for the foundation. The house was built through the summer into the fall and was occupied in February. By March, I was the holder of a Certificate of Practice.

I often reflect on those few spring weeks filled with intense discussion and debate about our first family home, built by our own hands. I also think about Brian, my sounding board and advisor, during those days, who, by generously offering just the right advice at just the right time, was a perfect mentor.

Bill Birdsell is the newly elected president of the OAA.
The OAA program was deemed a great success; indeed, it was formally recognized by the Government of Ontario for its structure and effectiveness. In addition to an abundance of positive feedback, a number of mentee success stories were recorded, including, for instance, the example of Francisco, a young architect who came to Ontario in early 2006 from Colombia and immediately enrolled in the first session of the program.

Like many mentees, Francisco was highly motivated and had a great desire to learn about the architectural profession and workplace in Canada. In the Fall of 2006, as a continuation of the program, he secured a volunteer position within a small architectural practice in order to continue to build upon new Canadian knowledge he had gained through the program. Given his commitment and innate drive, combined with his talent, it was not surprising that he also landed his first job in architecture in Canada at the end of 2006 with a prominent Toronto practice. Francisco's achievements, realized over such a short period of time are nothing short of remarkable. They also represent, in my opinion, a tall order by any professional standard.

Now, after six years with the same firm, he has very capably worked his way up the company ladder to the position of job captain within the firm's construction documents department. Further, he is now volunteering as a member of the advisory committee of the new IPLAN program (see below) and is contemplating serving as a mentor within the group mentoring initiative of this program.

IPLAN – THE FIRST FULL-SCALE BRIDGE TRAINING PROGRAM IN ONTARIO FOR IEPS IN ARCHITECTURE

Immigrant Professionals Leveraging Architectural Knowledge for New Opportunities (IPLAN) is a new bridge training program for IEPS in Architecture. Funded by the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada with JVS Toronto as the lead, the program is delivered in partnership with Ryerson University, Career Edge Organization and the Ontario Tourism Education Council (OTEC). The primary objective of the program is to provide participants with an opportunity to build upon their international education and work experience by gaining the knowledge and skills – the tools – necessary to successfully integrate into the architectural workplace in Canada. Program components include three architectural academic courses (Building Codes and Regulations, Materials and Methods, and Revit), a comprehensive lecture on sustainable buildings, a customized Canadian Workplace Essentials course, employment preparation workshops, and mentoring. With a targeted intake of 120 participants over its duration, the program is currently scheduled for delivery to September 30, 2014.

The first formalized group mentoring program in Ontario for internationally educated professionals (IEPs) in architecture

In Canada, as in many countries, mentoring has a longstanding tradition in the professions and skilled trades sectors. However, the history of formalized group mentoring programs in our country and province is a very recent development.

For example, in architecture, the first government sponsored group mentoring program in Ontario was the OAA’s Internationally Trained Professionals (ITP) Mentoring Pilot Program which I had the opportunity to manage while serving as OAA Deputy Registrar. Launched in the spring of 2006 after extensive input from OAA Council, the program was delivered over two years in partnership with JVS Toronto through funding from the Government of Ontario along with a substantial in-kind contribution by the OAA. Over the program’s duration, 105 IEP mentees completed the program and, in addition, nine others residing outside the Greater Toronto Area completed the program on-line. In addition to meeting and working with the mentees, as manager of the program I had the distinct pleasure of working with over 25 architects, the majority of whom served as group mentors.
GROUP MENTORING WITHIN IPLAN — A CALL TO MEMBERS TO SERVE AS GROUP MENTORS

Group mentoring, opportunities for internships and ultimately employment in architecture are all key initiatives within IPLAN. In my current position, also as manager of this program, I am provided with an opportunity to model group mentoring within IPLAN on the former successes of the OAA program. Hence, using already tested and proven curriculum, groups will consist of five to seven mentees who will be matched with an architect mentor.

Further to the above overview, this article is intended as a call to fellow members who may wish to serve as a group mentor within IPLAN. Perhaps you served as a mentor in the former OAA program, found it very rewarding and would like to repeat this experience; perhaps you are an IAP mentor and would like to expand your mentoring experience to include recent newcomers to Canada; or perhaps you are yourself internationally educated and would find a great deal of satisfaction in sharing your knowledge and experience with a like-minded group. For those of you who have not served as a mentor through a formal program, you may be asking the age-old question, “What’s in it for me?” to which I respectfully respond as follows:

Group mentoring has the ability to:

• hone your communications skills and cross-cultural competencies while developing a better understanding of architectural practice internationally
• help expand your professional network
• allow you to share your knowledge and experience, in order to help another become successful, while expanding your learning and contributing to the overall betterment of the profession
• leave you with a sense of accomplishment as a result of receiving positive feedback about making a real difference in improving an individual’s ability to establish a new life in Canada.
• (on a very practical note) receive up to 10 OAA Continuing Education hours within the category mentoring under unstructured learning as per the current ConEd cycle.

Philip Hollett is an architect with over 20 years of professional experience, obtained both in practice and professional regulation. From 2003–2009 he was an OAA Practice Consultant and later, Deputy Registrar, during which time he managed the OAA’s Mentoring Pilot Program for Internationally Trained Professionals in Architecture. He is currently the Manager of IPLAN, an Ontario Bridge Training Program for Internationally Educated Professionals in Architecture.

For more information about serving as a group mentor within IPLAN, contact Philip directly by telephone at (416) 649-1713 or by email at philip.hollett@justoronto.org. For more information about IPLAN, including the program delivery schedule, visit the IPLAN webpage at http://www.justoronto.org/index.php?page=iplan
T has never been more commonplace to be from somewhere else than now. According to current membership statistics from the OAA Registrar’s Office, one in three licensed architects in Ontario identify a country of origin other than Canada, with approximately the same ratio of intern architects also identifying an academic origin outside of Canada.

As a former “fresh-off-the-boat” or FOB to Canada from Singapore, I blend into the growing community of visible minorities with my fobby resume, fobby accent and fobby preference for ethnic food from Chinatown. I had the benefit of having immigrated at the start of my professional career instead of mid- or late-career.

In the case of one foreign-born architectural professional, it was different. He agreed to be interviewed for the article under the condition that he would remain anonymous. He is an Egyptian-trained architectural professional who moved to Toronto in 2005 as an economic immigrant. His senior managerial and construction management experience comes from a decade of being chief architect in a prestigious engineering firm in the Middle East, and being owner of a design-build firm for the next 16 years, managing large projects. This experience, combined with his extensive network of business contacts in the Middle East, makes it all the more surprising that he has garnered only two interviews from Canadian employers so far, both of whom informed him that he was overqualified for the position.

Much is made of the “hometown advantage.” In sports, the phrase describes the psychological advantage over the visiting team that comes from playing in familiar facilities and in front of supportive fans. A study by the Yale School of Management and Aalborg University found that startups survive longer and generate greater profits when their founders launch them in their home regions, highlighting the importance of community in the formation of new businesses.

I was fortunate to have a mentor who reversed my “hometown disadvantage” by providing an invaluable recommendation that led to a new job in 2005. Charles Lau, currently an associate with Dialog, is a Canadian Chinese whose family immigrated to Canada when he was an infant. He is roughly my age and is a graduate of the University of Toronto. We used to wish each other Gong Hei Fatt Choy in our many email correspondences, interspersed with exchanges such as, “What is a flow test?” and jokes with headlines that began with “You know that you are Chinese if….” (You fight over who pays the dinner bill; you own a meat cleaver, a wok, a rice cooker and a slow cooker; you have Tupperware in your fridge with three bites of rice or one leftover chicken wing…). For his part, Charles perceives no advantage or disadvantage to being a minority practicing in architectural firms in Canada. “I believe in our culturally rich industry, architects can all benefit from one another in some capacity, no matter what their cultural background, heritage, or demographic,” he says.

Such multiculturalist thinking is along the lines of the landmark Multiculturalism Policy of Canada that was officially implemented as a legislative framework in 1971. Canada was the first country in the world to adopt such a policy. Jeffery Reitz, a sociologist at the University of Toronto, cited one public opinion poll indicating that Canadians see (immigrant) multiculturalism as an important component of national identity, “less important than national health care but more important than the flag, the Mounties, and hockey.”

On the other hand, J.S. Frideres, Director of International Indigenous Studies at the University of Calgary, suggests that Canada has become the battleground for ethnonationalists, who vie for a more homogeneous unicultural and unilingual state. It is inevitable that the architectural profession will increasingly participate in this discourse.

There is a call for the profession’s traditionally homogeneous makeup to become more diverse and to better reflect the current cultural environment. This “outsider’s edge” will serve to reduce the “mismatch between the consumers and producers of the built environment,” by providing a cultural competence that allows professionals to develop a range of cross-cultural communication skills and to develop the knowledge base and techniques
"While I feel that I have not completely made the transition from an outsider to an insider, even after all these years of residing in this country, I no longer perceive the dividing line between the two states of being within myself."

That allow them to understand differences in the use and perception of the built environment.

With efforts from the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council (TRIEC) and JVS Toronto to provide a bridge program to assimilate foreign-trained professionals into the industry, with the RAIC and provincial architectural associations providing clear guidance, the role of the mentor becomes even more important. Through the Mentoring Partnership, there have been only 17 architects participating as mentors since the start of the bridge program.

In an email interview, Jessica Hume, acting manager of communications with the TRIEC, says, “Currently we do have a need for architectural mentors, as we have 13 mentees … waiting for mentors.”

I asked some foreign-born licensed architects if having a mentor would be helpful in assisting their integration into the profession. Most replied that it would be, especially if the mentor went beyond reviewing and signing the experience log-sheets and instead provided real-life advice and contacts for the newcomer professional wishing to become part of the workforce.

My mentor Charles, who can be classified as belonging to the “1.5 Generation,” because he immigrated here as a young child and is considered to be fully assimilated into his host country, commented that he did not realize the issues I might have faced during my tenure as a first-generation immigrant intern architect. On the one hand, I had to first complete the accreditation of my foreign degree with the CACB, which included attending the Professional Practice course at the University of Waterloo. Only then could I sit the NCARB exams and work towards meeting the rigorous practical experience requirement for licensure, like everybody else. On the other hand, I consistently had to navigate a meaningful path within the architectural practice as an outsider, away from familiar social, emotional and professional networks.

While I feel that I have not completely made the transition from an outsider to an insider, even after all these years of residing in this country, I no longer perceive the dividing line between the two states of being within myself. The novelist Yann Martel said that Canada is “one of the greatest hotels on earth – it welcomes everyone from everywhere.” And he may have been right. But hotels are designed to provide temporary accommodation. Like many architects from somewhere else, for now, I continue to rent a room in this hotel.

**Natalie Tan** is a member of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee.

**NOTES:**
1. www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2011/05/immigration
THE VOICES IN MY HEAD

BY BARBARA ROSS OAA, FRAC

YOU NEED TO be comfortable in your work,” my grandfather says, as he brings a stool to the boat-house floor for me. He is 85 and I am 15. He has run logs on the Ottawa River and surveyed whole tracts of Northern Saskatchewan. My adventures are yet to come. He has built five buildings, three of them entirely by hand. I am unaccomplished, curious. I’m arranging a few boards I want to trim and, out of respect, or perhaps rebellion, I’ve avoided grandfather’s bench and have chosen a new spot of my own. But everything is going to be low for me get a good angle with the saw. If I were paying better attention to my set up, then the thing I’m making just might materialize in the way I want; if I don’t, then I’m upping the chances that I’ll be disappointed. That’s why he gives me, once again, his affectionate advice – this time, like the time before, and the time before that.

It’s not that you’ll find me, any time soon, in the back aisle of the grocery store, arguing with the ginger ale, but I do hear voices. These are my mentors, speaking in my memory, showing me, reminding me to listen. I thrash and wiggle. He restates the matter. He’s trying to get an accurate result, and he needs an accurate drawing to do so. Finally, I begin to get it, and offer to do some fast erasing. Someone intervenes, saying there’s not enough time; the wrong-ish drawings stand uncorrected. We’re both unhappy. Some days, mentoring isn’t pretty. But this mentor’s elegant, erudite, Southern voice reverberates in my head, and you’ll remain connected. Spend your days with this voice in your head, and you’ll remain connected. Spend your days acting on it, and you’ll always be busy. Start reminding others with it, and you’ll become someone’s mentor.

Family members, teachers, supervisors at work, others in our business – these are some of my mentors. They’ve used a number of devices: the broken record, the flowery phrase, surprising humility, humour, drama and occasionally even a bit of logic. I think they knew what they were doing. The messages are entrained, and they come to the rescue when I need them. Now if I could only find that email …

“Y

hill towns we are studying ("sic neve candidum aloc..." see, I’ll never forget it). Then he arranges to take us touring the following week. This mentor opens doors to places most people never see. But then suddenly, he must rush – he calls the Vatican “The Plant” – and it’s time for him to clock back in.

Later, “If I were 30 years younger, I’d be really upset right now!” and into the front lobby of our little office she swooshes. The lady is tall, with flowing everything: gray hair, layers of black capes, big skirts, and big movements. She is an interior designer. She drives a black checker cab with the back seat torn out. She is loud, she is funny, she is strong. To me, she is awesome – and I have no idea what she means. After all, I am thirty years younger, and I do get upset. I wonder: if I stay in this architecture game until my hair turns gray, will that change? Maybe not. Slowly she climbs the stairs to commiserate with my boss. In the drafting room two floors below, we can hear everything. Some supplier has defaulted, and things are late, wrong, incomplete, and the client has had a fit – we’ve seen it before, we’ll see it again. Laugh, and the world laughs with you; cry and you cry alone.

Still later, “Ask the question,” says Geoff, whom many reading this will recognize. So often we assume we know, or remember, what the client wanted, what the designer intended, what the project manager was trying to co-ordinate, what problem the on-site installer is encountering – and so often we are missing some crucial piece of information. Spend your days with this voice in your head, and you’ll remain connected. Spend your days acting on it, and you’ll always be busy. Start reminding others with it, and you’ll become someone’s mentor.

From around the same time comes, “Not every word that springs from my lips is a golden egg.” It’s the Pope’s Latinist speaking. Yes, you heard me. We’re at the Gregorian University in Rome, studying conjugations and hearing the poetry of Cicero flow like a river from the head of the class. It’s reassuring to hear that even the mighty are fallible. The speaker is more than a teacher: he is the teacher of our teacher, and about this we are curious. Up, up, he reaches, grabbing hold of the ancient and mysterious, and bringing it to a place where students in the modern world can see it, grasp it, maybe even (amazingly) use it. Being more than a teacher, he takes a few neophyte architects under his wing. After class he lingers, translating literary references to the classical world, then suddenly, he must rush – he calls the Vatican “The Plant” – and it’s time for him to clock back in.

Barbara Ross is Principal of The Research in Architecture Studio, Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, and a member of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee.
COMING TO UNDERSTAND THE MEANING OF MENTORSHIP

BY ROBERTO CHIOTTI OAA, FRAIC

MENTORING – and being mentored – has been a constant in my career for as long as I can remember.

HOW COULD I ever forget my first Waterloo co-op work term at Arthur Erickson’s Toronto office, my utter shock and amazement that every member of the office, all of whom were registered architects, would engage me in serious architectural conversation, not as an unsophisticated 19-year-old student, but rather as a respected peer with an opinion worthy of consideration. I also remember their indefatigable willingness to provide sage advice and gentle encouragement when required, reminding me that “God” was in the details and that, as a draftsman, it was okay to focus on accuracy first and speed later. The principals and project captains were unfailingly patient with me as I agonized through every assignment from model building to detailing my first stair. And they were incredibly generous in allowing me to spend the better part of a day accompanying a senior member of the firm on his bi-weekly site visit to an Arthur Erickson house under construction, learning first-hand how drawings get translated into built form.

Later, while working in the Vancouver office, I had the privilege of working with students from every school of architecture in Canada and my entire social life during that memorable summer of 1974 revolved around the office and my new colleagues, young and old alike. Not only did they teach me important professional skills, offering affirmation and support during my early years as an architect, but they also instilled in me invaluable social skills, such as being open to a diversity of opinions, being an attentive listener, and being fully present – skills that have served me well ever since. This is also true of the experience and mentorship that I received at all the other architectural firms that employed me during my student co-op years and after graduation.

The most profound and life-changing influence on my career was provided by a mentor that I first met at the University of St. Michael’s College Faculty of Theology at the University of Toronto. My wife Kimberly and I had enrolled as special students in theology when other circumstances in my life led me to seek out my own continuing education. It was here that I met the person who, for me, exemplifies all the best characteristics of a mentor. Being engaged in full-time employment meant that Kim and I had to choose from a limited offering of evening courses and one course per term seemed to be all we could manage. After experiencing an introductory scripture course and one on the history of pastoral care, we were eventually drawn to a course on ethics taught by Professor Stephen Dunn.

Father Steve (he was a priest with the Passionist Community of Canada) turned out
to be no ordinary teacher. You might even say that for some of us, his teaching style was somewhat unnerving. Unlike other faculty, who seemed a little pedantic, Professor Dunn was decidedly didactic, treating each class more like a seminar than a lecture. He’d often introduce a topic and let us run with it, based upon the readings and drawing from our own personal experience. Sometimes we’d wander off on tangents, but he had a gentle way of nudging us towards self-discovery and of empowering us to take responsibility for making sense of it all.

Thanks to Professor Dunn, I was introduced to the wisdom of Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan’s structure for ethics. To paraphrase his teachings: do your research, be intelligent, be reasonable, be responsible and work from a place of love, not fear. I soon came to recognize this approach as sage advice indeed for dealing with the myriad challenges and important decisions that I have encountered since, within my own professional life as an architect.

We next took Professor Dunn’s course on Environmental Ethics at the Elliot Allen Institute of Theology and Ecology at St. Mike’s (of which the professor was founding director). This is where Father Steve introduced us to the scholarly work of fellow Passionist and cultural historian Thomas Berry, who had devoted the latter half of his life to articulating a functional cosmology necessary to bring about a mutually enhancing, human-earth relationship. Drawing from recent scientific discoveries about the nature of the universe, its beginnings and its continuing unfolding, he established what has become the basis for the integration of sustainable design strategies into my architectural practice and for providing the ideology and pedagogy for my own approach to mentoring and teaching. I eventually completed my graduate studies at St. Mike’s, earning a Master of Theological Studies degree with a specialty in Theology and Ecology from the Elliot Allen Institute.

In addition to his academic career, Steve Dunn was also co-director of a retreat centre near Port Burwell on the northern shores of Lake Erie where, among other ways of introducing people to Thomas Berry’s work, he hosted annual colloquiums featuring Berry in conversation with other theologians, scientists, authors, artists and even politicians. Our initial visit to the centre coincided with the beginning of the first war in Iraq and it was from Steve that I came to understand the consequences of the conflict not just for human life but also for the earth itself. Images of burning oil wells haunt me to this day and constellate for me the negative consequences of our exploitive relationship with the earth.

Steve’s religious community had also founded, and continues to staff, St. Gabriel’s church in North York. Sitting on a property of seven-and-a-half acres, the Passionists decided to divest a major portion of that property in order to finance the construction of a new church to replace the existing, energy-inefficient facility built in the 1950s when the parish was established. The intention was to leave an ongoing legacy for the parish community it served that would give tangible and meaningful expression to the eco-theology of Thomas Berry and provide a sustainable facility that would require fewer financial resources and energy to operate. Of the several firms interviewed for the commission, Larkin Architect Limited was awarded the contract to design the new church. For a brief time, the roles of mentor and mentee became reversed, as Steve set out on “pilgrimages” to Ronchamp and other architectural precedents that we suggested, where he might learn about contemporary architectural language used to articulate sacred space. The resulting new church, perceived as a whole, serves as a form of catechesis in and of itself, embodying Tom’s teachings and, like the great mediaeval cathedrals of Europe, it reclaims architecture’s primary role of giving expression to a particular cosmological perspective, inviting worshipers and visitors alike to reflection and transformation. To this day, Steve Dunn and I remain good friends and continue to engage in ways to share the responsibility of mentoring others.

Meanwhile, my own role as a mentor to the architecture profession unofficially resumed in 1999. While attending an OAA-sponsored event, I was introduced to the idea of becoming an official mentor for OAA interns and have happily served in that capacity ever since. At any one time, I seem to have about half a dozen interns that I meet with at regular intervals of six months or thereabouts. Despite the demands of running a busy practice and devoting considerable time to mentoring and supervising my own staff, I have never turned
“As I begin the journey towards succession within my own architectural firm and look forward to the task of mentoring my staff as they assume more and more responsibilities for the running of the practice, I am drawn towards expanding my role as teacher and mentor both officially and informally.”

down a request from an intern to serve as his or her official mentor. Perhaps it is because I feel a deep sense of responsibility as a professional to provide the nurturing and support to others that my own mentors provided so freely and unconditionally to me, or perhaps it is to acknowledge that over the years I have learned as much from my mentees as they have from me. Despite the necessary investment of precious time and energy, there is no doubt that I accept the invitation mainly because I enjoy it so much.

For mentees, the anxieties associated with making potentially life-changing career decisions, with the many difficulties inherent to balancing work and family life, with deciding which learning opportunities to pursue, with desperately trying to find work within the profession as a foreign trained architect, or with facing a life-threatening illness can seem pretty difficult or even terrifying at times. As a mentor, I have found that by remaining steadfastly calm, authentically present, and genuinely supportive while journeying with an intern through his or her struggles, the process can be satisfying and rewarding for both parties. Meanwhile, reflecting Steve Dunn’s mentorship for me, I have helped to facilitate dialogue that empowers my mentees to make their own important decisions, congratulating them with every new exam passed or experience gained, celebrating their successful fulfillment of the programme and ultimately, seeing them on to registration.

This worthwhile experience has drawn me to expand my role as mentor within the teaching profession both as a studio instructor at Ryerson University and currently as guest faculty at George Brown College’s Institute without Boundaries (IwB), where many other active practitioners assist in preparing students of this graduate program for a diversity of career opportunities within the design professions. I have learned that providing constructive criticism, positive affirmation, and encouraging grades can go a long way towards inspiring students to produce exemplary work. In addition to the teaching assignments at the IwB, I also serve as one of many professional advisors for the several annual design charrettes that they host, provide leadership training workshops, and facilitate individual mentoring sessions throughout the year, all in an effort to support and nurture students through an extremely intensive and demanding program.

As I begin the journey towards succession within my own architectural firm and look forward to the task of mentoring my staff as they assume more and more responsibilities for the running of the practice, I am drawn towards expanding my role as teacher and mentor both officially and informally. To my own innumerable mentors from within architecture and without, I am eternally grateful and hope that I can continue to pass along their legacy of wisdom and encouragement to those who will face the many challenges and opportunities of our profession.

Roberto Chiotti is principal of Larkin Architect Limited in Toronto. Much of the firm’s work is focused on sacred space.
**THE RAIC SYLLABUS**

**BY LIZA MEDEK OAA, DAQ, MRAIC, AIA ASSOC.**

In 1978, THE Royal Architectural Institute of Canada established the RAIC Syllabus, which has evolved into a combination of online courses, design studio and practice, reminiscent of the traditional atelier method of instruction/education. Online courses are made available through the RAIC Centre for Architecture at Athabasca University, design studio is available across the country through local chapters and, finally, practice is the work experience component of the program. The Syllabus is unique in that it engages the apprentice/student and mentor/architect with a combined objective leading to professional architectural registration.

This program is intensive and generally takes twelve to fourteen years to complete, for those who, like Plamenova Belomorska, have the perseverance. Milena graduated in 2012, the program’s latest and 99th graduate.

Then there are graduates who become registered Architects and give back to the program by becoming mentors. Debbie Friesen, graduate number 45, is one of those people. She graduated in 1999 and is one of the 50-or-so mentors participating this year in the education of students across the country.

An RAIC Syllabus mentor is responsible for instructing students in the design studio by encouraging them to think critically about their approach to design and architecture. The term “mentor” in the RAIC Syllabus Design Handbook is defined as a faculty member who supports the development of a balance in visual communication techniques by assessing both free-hand drawing skills and computer-generated drawing skills; selects and modifies, as required, assignments for studio; provides feedback and assessment to students; and finally, organizes juries, and consolidates and synthesizes jury comments for students.

A mentor typically meets with a student weekly and provides constructive input to a specific design problem. The mentor helps students to sustain rigour in the process of design with patience, commitment, and persistence. The mentor is familiar with the specific goals of each review and ensures that the student has completed those objectives. Students require the mentor’s compassion, judgment, and encouragement to maintain the goals and constraints of the design project.

A mentor is a registered architect who advises and monitors students on the progress of their work. In its thirty-three years of existence, the RAIC Syllabus has had hundreds of mentors involved in one capacity or another. Oh, one thing I forgot to mention: an RAIC Syllabus mentor is a volunteer.

Liza Medek has been an active Mentor and/or Juror in the Ottawa Chapter since 2004 and is currently the Director of the RAIC Syllabus.

**NOTE:** 1. Correspondence courses will be phased out by the end of 2013

“The crystalized essence of this process, to me, is the Syllabus model, where mentors volunteer their time and are rewarded by no monetary means but, rather, by the satisfaction of sharing that passion, by promoting and preserving the history and culture of architecture, as manifest in the successes of their students.”
DEBBIE FRIESEN ON BEING A MENTOR

Having received the benefit of countless hours of mentoring from some amazing people, of course, I want to give back, but that’s not really why I do it. Syllabus is like a mental gym – mentoring keeps my brain fit and sharpens my design chops.

MILENA BELAMORSKA ON BEING A MENTEE

I guess the first thing that comes to mind is the impact that mentors have on their students. I sometimes wonder if mentors realize how profound that impact is, not only in imparting knowledge but also in conveying an attitude, a world view and a passion for the profession. The crystalized essence of this process, to me, is the Syllabus model, where mentors volunteer their time and are rewarded by no monetary means but, rather, by the satisfaction of sharing that passion, by promoting and preserving the history and culture of architecture, as manifest in the successes of their students. Whereas in other professions mentors serve to supplement the body of knowledge, in architecture, and specifically in Syllabus, mentors are part of the entire education process and are uniquely responsible for shaping the young professionals.

The fact that this responsibility is accepted and carried out on a pro bono basis makes this method of education absolutely unique in the western world and leaves much to be thankful for, both on the part of students and on the part of the profession as a whole.
I have been both mentor and protégé over the last few years, but I hadn’t thought much about the process until, during an OAA Perspectives meeting a few months ago, a discussion arose. I realized that despite having had mentors and currently being a mentor, I wasn’t entirely sure what mentorship was all about.

To me, the word mentor has always been synonymous with coach and teacher; just as protégé is with apprentice and student. Our discussion at that fateful Perspectives meeting led me to think in more depth about the differences between each of these roles, which I felt needed to be defined to get at the heart of the mentor-mentee relationship. Then perhaps I might discover what its importance might be to the process of becoming an architect.

After doing a little research and finding little clarity in the historical origins, I became satisfied with the following distilled distinctions. Coaches are those who help another to achieve a specified goal through focus and motivation, despite not necessarily having the skill or knowledge to achieve the goal themselves. Teachers are those who impart their knowledge and skills to their students. Mentors have specific knowledge and experience to share, without directly telling the protégé what to do.

So, applying these distinctions to the architectural internship process, I could see that mentor fits better than either coach or teacher, as there is no direct goal to help coach the intern through (although licensure serves as the unspoken termination point), and there are no direct instructions to be given. Unfortunately, this clarification still left me with little understanding of the nature of the mentor-mentee relationship and where the value might lie for both interns and professionals.

I do remember thinking, as I embarked on my own internship experience, that my choice of mentor held the potential to provide a meaningful relationship between someone with expertise willing to act as a guide – the mentor – to a young, less experienced, apprentice who is eager to learn and grow – i.e., me. However, I was sceptical that it should be prescribed by the Association and I questioned whether it should be mandated at all.

Quite by accident, I had two official mentors during my internship. The first was a colleague whom I met while working in a small office, who seemed to have a good handle on the profession, could provide good advice and guidance and with whom I developed an easy rapport. However, once I started working in another office I found it increasingly difficult to connect with him. During that first year or so, I began meeting more regularly with another architect, more for shared interest’s sake, and we soon became friends. Before long, it became clear that our discussions and his influence on my developing understanding about my life and future role in the profession made him much more my mentor than the person officially designated as such. What started out as a friendship crystallized into a more meaningful relationship to which I was giving as much as I was getting. My mentor’s years of experience and expertise were shared and exchanged for my energy, enthusiasm, fresh insight and perspective on the profession and the design world. What made this a mentorship was this synergistic relationship that I hadn’t experienced with my first mentor.

I look back now on the last couple of years, during which I have been in the role of mentor, and finally realize that I am not the only one to blame for the fact that this experience has been unfulfilling. I have made myself available and willing to engage, but if there is no two-way relationship with real dialogue and meaningful exchange, it is not so much a mentorship as a prescribed signature and a cup of coffee. Near the end, I asked my young protégé what he thought about the experience and whether he felt it could have been different. I was hoping to hear a hint of the same disappointment I felt, but instead he told me he got what he needed from the staff at his office and would I kindly sign here, here and here.

I felt more let down than he did over this botched attempt. In retrospect, I should have recognized that the mentorship relationship can and should be a really important experience for both intern and professional. But more importantly, a good mentor-mentee relationship is not easy to find, and the responsibility should not be taken lightly – by either party.

I draw two conclusions from this realization. First, I believe that the OAA should keep the mentorship program as a requirement of the internship process because, when it yields a successful relationship, the value cannot be measured. But, secondly, I would recommend that interns be pushed to take advantage of the benefits of the program as, at the very least, one meaningful professional relationship at the beginning of a professional life, rather than just regarding it as another hoop to jump through.

But interns beware; it is your responsibility to find the right fit. I implore you, go out and meet potential candidates. Test them out over a coffee or a beer. See if you share interests but, most of all, find someone to whom you will be able to give as much as you expect to receive. If you find this match, you will have found something more valuable than java beans or hops and barley.

Christopher Moise is Director of the Urban Design Group at FOTENN in Ottawa and a member of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee.
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THE ENVIRONMENT

Annals of Science: Measuring the Success of the Modern Vegetated Roof

BY BARBARA M. ROSS, M.Arch., OAA, FRAIC

You’ve heard the sales pitch, and it goes something like this: Green roofs make buildings more energy-efficient, lower the temperature on the city sidewalk, keep excess storm-water out of the municipal drains and offer shelter to homeless birds, bees and butterflies. They increase property values, lower tenant turnover, and create jobs. Green roofs are beautiful and, above all, they are good. We must have them.

I happen to agree that a living, growing rooftop can be a beautiful thing. However, we all must ask, are there any special risks involved when we include one in our design? Certainly there are risks with any building material, so what makes this one different? With a green roof, there’s the increased load placed on the structure and the weight of the water that the engineered soils retain. Dried plant material may catch fire, and the wind, particularly around high buildings, may scour and erode the entire vegetated system. There is the risk that roots will penetrate the roof membrane. On the other hand, there is the risk that the plants will die.

What about the potential benefits, then? Are they really there? How much benefit can one expect? The Foundation for Architectural Research’s Task Group on Green Roofs has been looking carefully at these questions. The primary benefits over which an architect, working at the scale of an individual building, can have the greatest influence are: storm-water management, energy-efficiency and bio-diversity. We’ve reviewed more than eighty related studies – including consultants’ reports, articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and academic theses – written by scientists in 20 locations in North America and in Europe, Southeast Asia and Japan. We asked, what can the world of research tell us about these three potential benefits? Here’s an overview of what the scientists have to say.

Storm-water can be retained by particular kinds of vegetated roofs, for a limited period of time. Given the right set of conditions, peak runoff is smaller in volume and later in onset, on a vegetated roof, than it is on a hard-surfaced roof. Some combinations of plant material plus growing medium also can process retained storm-water through the processes of transpiration and evaporation. However, these effects are not evident when the mercury dips below freezing. In milder locales, where rainfall is frequent – even if that rainfall is gentle – a vegetated system may remain saturated, and therefore unable to take up and retain added water. Successful storm-water management is determined by: climate, season, the composition and depth of the engineered growing medium, plant selection, roof slope, and the age of the vegetation. Some scientists strongly caution designers against the idea of down-sizing the pipe to the municipal storm drain, because

Research teams throughout North America have been looking deeply into green roofs, to discover how they really perform. On the roof of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design, at the University of Toronto, Professors Margolis and Wright are examining various plant mixes, soil mixes and irrigation regimes to see what works best on urban rooftops in our climate.

Photo: Barbara M. Ross
Bio-diversity is increased when a vegetated roof is located near other bio-diverse places, has a varied topography that includes places in which small creatures can take shelter, has an overall composition that suits a particular species and is maintained with particular care.

Energy-efficiency is a growing concern these days in all corners of the construction industry. A green roof may help save energy in the summer, to some degree, but it does not next to nothing for the fuel bills in the winter. Vegetated roofs do not increase the thermal resistance of the overall roofing assembly; the principal mechanism is shading of the roof from solar radiation. Because buildings in Canada use far more energy for heating and lighting than they do for cooling, even a significant saving during the summer pales in the context of the overall annual tally. Several studies peg the simple payback at 70 to 200 years. Within this not-so-helpful range, the shape of the building, the type of plant material, whether the roof is already insulated, and whether the growing medium is wet (from irrigation or retained storm water) further influence how much energy may be saved. We'd like to find a report that compares the fuel bills before and after a building is retrofitted with a green roof – but we've not seen one, as yet.

Regarding bio-diversity, vegetated roofs can provide stops for migratory birds and permanent dwellings for beneficial insects such as honeybees. Bio-diversity is increased when a vegetated roof is located near other bio-diverse places, has a varied topography that includes places in which small creatures can take shelter, has an overall composition that suits a particular species and is maintained with particular care. The possible down-sides of encouraging bio-diversity on an urban rooftop may include birds crashing into neighbouring buildings, various species damaging the plants on the roof, or fledgling birds falling victim to larger birds of prey. We have not seen a study concerning the likelihood of attracting unwanted species, such as rodents or plants that are considered noxious weeds. The research in this area is described, by those currently engaged in it, as "a frontier in applied ecology." Some argue that green roofs have an edge because of the combination of benefits they offer. However, the scientists' findings point to trade-offs that are unavoidable. For instance, the vegetated roof that handles storm-water most effectively may not save much energy. The design that accommodates wild species best may not handle storm-water as one would wish. Also, research in Europe has, after nearly 40 years of effort, concluded that there is no such thing as a "zero-maintenance" green roof. The interaction of all of the factors is quite complex and the reports call emphatically for more study that is tailored specifically to each local eco-region within North America, because each circumstance has its particular challenges.

None of this is to say, "don't design a green roof." To the contrary, a vegetated roof – vibrant, diverse, and changing with the seasons – can offer an amenity that people in a building will really enjoy. To realize such a success, though, the specific goals for the project ought to be chosen carefully and stated explicitly. Then the details can be chosen to support the goal. One size definitely does not fit all. We hope to increase the odds of success by opening a door towards the latest findings. In our full report, we present a diversity of research, and also show where questions remain unanswered. We hope designers will benefit from what science has observed, so far.

Barbara Ross is principal of The Research in Architecture Studio, Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, and a member of the OAA Perspectives Editorial Committee.

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NOW AN UPSCALE NEIGHBOURHOOD, YORKVILLE

started to develop in the 1830s as a rural village north of the City of Toronto, through parcelization of farm lots. By 1853, it was officially incorporated as a Village, with the current Bloor Street as its southern boundary. In 1883, the Village of Yorkville was annexed to the City of Toronto.

By the 1960s, Yorkville became known for its cafes, clubs and hippie culture. Today, though located in “midtown Toronto,” evidence of its nineteenth century origins remain and the atmosphere of the village past can still be seen in the narrow tree-lined streets, Victorian mews houses and picturesque gardens.

The opportunity for a new park in the Yorkville area was created in the late 1950s, when the Victorian row houses on the south side of Cumberland Street were demolished and the site cleared to make way for the construction of the Bloor-Danforth subway line. While the community advocated for creating a park over the underground subway at this site, a surface parking lot was installed instead as a “temporary” holding action … for the next 40 years.

In 1991, the City of Toronto sponsored an International Design Competition for the new park. The winning design by Oleson Worland Architects in association with Martha Schwartz/Ken Smith/David Meyer Landscape Architects proposed that the parking lot be turned into a park to celebrate the history of the Village of Yorkville and reflect the diversity of the Canadian landscape.

The park’s design had four main objectives. First, it should reflect, reinforce and extend the Victorian scale and character of the original village. Second, it should provide unique, inner-city ecological opportunities for the introduction and display of native plant species and communities. Third, it should provide a variety of spatial and sensory experiences, landscape qualities and park functions. Finally, it should link the park to existing pedestrian walkways and adjacent areas.

To achieve these objectives, the park was designed as a series of gardens. The gardens vary in width, with frames that are symbolic of the lot lines of the row houses that once stood on the site. Each garden contains a distinct collection of plant communities, ranging from upland conifer and deciduous species at the east end of the park through lowland/wetland varieties and a granite outcropping in the central areas to shade gardens at the west end.

In many ways, the Village of Yorkville Park set a new standard for urban parks. In an article in last September’s Landscape Architecture magazine, Toronto critic Christopher Hume wrote: “Unlike many contemporary urban spaces, Yorkville (Park) is not so much a space of entertainment as it is a place simply to be. Concerts aren’t held here; cars aren’t put on display; products aren’t launched…. The scale is human, almost intimate, and the attention to detail demands a more personal and thoughtful response.”

In recognition of its unique accomplishments, in addition to retaining its original design integrity and continuing contributions to the public realm, in October 2012 the American Society of Landscape Architects awarded Landmark status to the Village of Yorkville Park.

David Oleson is principal at Oleson Worland Architects in Toronto.
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