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EDITORIAL

IT SEEMS AS THOUGH there are two groups of people in the world: those (mostly older) who are compelled to hand out advice (mostly useless) even when (especially when) no one wants to hear it; and those (mostly younger) who don’t want advice (mostly unsolicited) and don’t listen when it’s offered (even when it is wise, necessary and valuable).

In a way, the job of all journals is to offer advice—in an entertaining way. The reader is then free to accept this advice, or not, without necessarily diminishing its entertainment value. In this issue, OAA Perspectives has asked our readers to send us their own carefully considered words of wisdom, in the form of a “Letter to an Aspiring Architect,” thereby assuming the task of publishing a lot of unsolicited advice:

... the OAA Perspectives Committee conceived of “Letters to an Aspiring Architect” – suggesting, we hope, that the aspirant needn’t be “young,” nor the writer, necessarily, old. What would an experienced intern say to someone just beginning internship, or a final-year student to a first-year student? What advice would a first-year student give to a high school student that might ease his or her way into—possibly through—the architectural profession?

Not just for grey-haired architects—the world changes too rapidly—our invitation extends to anyone who feels they might have wisdom to pass down.

In all, we heard from two-dozen readers, whose advice covers the spectrum of situations and solutions. Some of the advice reflects decades—as much as a half-century—of professional experience, while other items speak from the recent and urgent experience of younger students and practitioners. Many concerns are addressed: at times with something approaching consensus, at other times, with diametrically opposing viewpoints. One issue in particular shows no evidence of being resolved or disappearing: should architects defend their authority over the design process at all costs, or should they be conciliators? Is the Howard Roarke destined to haunt us to the end of time, or are we team players? Is there a middle course?

We are, all of us, looking for advice and not always knowing where to find it. If you have a helpful opinion that is not expressed in this issue, please take the time to send us an email.

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OAA PERSPECTIVES | SPRING 2015

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Publication Mail Agreement #40064978
MARCH 2015/OAA-Q0115/6165
Presidential Message

The Theme of this issue of OAA Perspectives – Advice for Aspiring Architects – got me thinking. It’s easy to get “aspire” and “inspire” mixed up. Both words come directly from Latin. The first translates as “breathe towards”; when we aspire to something, we really do breathe towards our goal. The second word, from the same root, means “breathe into,” which can often mean encouraging others to breathe towards their own goals.

As the newly elected President of the OAA, it has occurred to me that aspiring is not entirely about reaching goals; the idea that we ever really achieve a goal may be a bit of a misconception, if it implies that we might stop moving once the goal is attained. I aspired to being President as the next step in my goal of helping to improve the profession, but it isn’t a stopping place; it’s a launching pad for achieving more for our members.

As a profession, I believe that we work towards continual improvement; there is always something that could be done better, something more to be achieved. Maybe this is because we are engaged in the practice of architecture and “practice” suggests that we keep trying, always aspiring to improve – looking for ways to grow and to help others achieve their goals.

We are a profession of mentors. Whether we are engaged in a studio design review, or we are participating on boards and panel discussions, we are engaged in mentorship – learning from others, listening to diverse opinions and sharing others’ experiences, seen through their eyes. Participating in a lifetime of being both mentee and mentor is a key to success – and it doesn’t end once the Intern Architect Program (IAP) is completed.

My thought when I started writing this piece was to tell you what inspired me to become an architect. Those hours of Legos, model trains, drawing and doodling and art class are classic examples of ways I imagined myself becoming an architect, and it’s easy to say that I drew inspiration from those experiences. Many of us came to architecture that way. But the real questions are: what inspires the profession? And what can we aspire to, as a profession? I have to think the answer to both questions is: the pursuit of design excellence.

Our profession tends to focus on design excellence as reflected in award-winning buildings, and that this will somehow provide inspiration for others. But design excellence means so much more; it’s about making decisions by looking at things through the lens of design in all that we do. Is this business card design the best choice? Is this local restaurant the best design experience for the meal I can have at this moment? Does my choice of car, suit or shoe represent the best design choice I can make at this moment in time? In this way, everything we do reflects our aspirations toward excellence in design, or at least the best we can aspire to at that moment, with the resources at hand.

What inspires us as individual architects is something that we can only decide for ourselves. What inspires us as a profession – the thirst for design excellence – is something that we share and that we can offer to the next generation. I believe this represents the best of the profession – a commitment to life-long learning; to mentoring others as we wish to be mentored; committing to design excellence in all that we do. When our individual aspirations combine as group aspirations, we have the ability to inspire others toward fulfilling their own aspirations.

Toon Dreesen, Architect
OAA, MRAIC, AIA, LEED AP
President
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PRESERVING ARCHITECTURE, NO MATTER WHAT

When we discussed architectural heritage in our last issue, we neglected one critical aspect of the topic – one that is as current as today's news, but of which we were previously unaware. A company in the U.S. advertises on their website that they specialize in

... documenting, marketing and disassembling architecturally unique and historical homes that can be reconstructed on sites where the costly investment in renovation results in the creation of new real estate wealth.  
http://www.reserections.com/index.htm

To accomplish this, the latest technological advancements in measuring, imaging, tagging and transporting are employed. The cost of the operation does not include reassembly. For this task, the firm recommends that the buyer engage an architect and construction experts who are familiar with the requirements of the new site. The process is expensive. You might ask, as some on-line questioners have, why is it necessary to move these buildings in the first place? Wouldn't it be better to try to improve the neighbourhood by rejuvenating its building stock?

This is where things get interesting – and a little scary. In response to one interested buyer, who asks of one property, “Why must it be moved?” the firm responds with frightening statistics regarding violent crime in the neighbourhood, including almost a dozen murders in 2008 alone. Another buyer asks the same question regarding another house, pointing out that they are familiar with security procedures and are “well armed.” The firm responds,

... crack makes users feel invulnerable, so you would get lots of live target practice. Also, this state does not have the aggressive armed self defense laws that would protect you from having gun fun.

This may sound like something out of a post-apocalyptic movie, but the concerns expressed by the buyers and the sellers are real concerns that, in some jurisdictions, are becoming more real all the time. The apparently casual attitude toward the defence of one’s property using potentially deadly force is startling, but, if we have been watching the news, we are aware that it is not uncommon in some North American cities. To their credit, the firm makes the following declaration:

People love wonderful architecture. They want to preserve and protect it. Embedded in the historic architecture preservationist professional culture is the strong idea that the houses should be preserved in situ. Where this is possible, we strongly support this position. We will not move a house that is appropriately sited.

As we discussed in our last feature, heritage preservation concerns much more than architecture – it covers everything continued on page 12

A spirit of inventiveness and determination is reshaping cities across North America and around the world. As incubators for new ideas to renew, rebuild and redefine a city, Hamilton is a prototype. Currently transitioning from a manufacturing steel town to a vibrant arts and livable community, it’s an exemplary location to host the OAA’s annual conference, on Urban Renewal. Come and be a part of the transformation; see the renewal in action. Get a glimpse into the possibilities of community, collaboration and leadership. Witness the value of architecture and architects, as our world continues to reshape and reinvent itself. Join us in Hamilton in May.
that has gone before, including cultural and behavioural elements. In this case, we are forced to ask ourselves: if civil behaviour is not salvageable, and we can’t save our neighbourhoods from destruction, should we salvage our architecture anyway?

“WHAT DO ARCHITECTS ACTUALLY DO?”

If the question sounds a little bit accusatory, it’s probably just your paranoia kicking in. On the other hand, you’ve probably been asked this question before. Under this title, an internet posting presents a chart prepared by Rem Koolhaas’s OMA, showing what, in addition to design, European architects actually spend their time doing, sorted into “four categories: building design, landscape design, interior design, and ‘other’…”

According to the chart, it’s the Dutch who take the lead as most design-oriented, at 69 per cent and, surprisingly, the Danes who finish last at 41 per cent, preferring to spend their time on “other” activities, which include “feasibility studies, project management, and planning.”

It would be interesting to see a similar chart prepared for North American firms. But it would be much more revealing if it also included the many things that we don’t bill for – networking, haggling, commuting, collecting, conciliating, defending …


ERRATUM

If you were curious about last issue’s cover illustration and were able to read the tiny print at the bottom of page 7, you will have been disappointed to find an entirely inaccurate description. We regret any confusion or inconvenience this may have caused. Under “Cover Image,” the following text should have appeared:


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Dear Aspiring Architect, ...

INTRODUCTION

BY GORDON S. GRICE OAA, FRAIC

Macte nova virtute – Go forth with new value¹

Unlike most school mottoes, which merely reiterate a trite Latin phrase, this one actually offers a piece of advice that is worth following. When I was in high school, these words were on every official York Memorial Collegiate document, correspondence and badge. We sang it at football games, to the tune of Gaudeamus Igitur.

I mention this because I think the motto actually affected my life. To begin with, I was encouraged to study Latin – after architecture and drawing, probably the best subject I ever studied. Then it instilled in me the idea, without saying so directly, that knowledge has a value. Exercising curiosity doesn’t just smarten you up, it gives you the courage to meet challenges. It was a long time before I realized this – in my case, maybe 53 years – but the odd thing about advice is that you may consciously reject it while subconsciously accepting it, unaware that you have done so until much later.

So here are my three pieces of advice for anyone embarking on any career, including architecture: 1) study Latin, if you have the chance; 2) study architecture, even if you have no immediate desire to become an architect; 3) seize opportunities – take up as many challenges as possible, in fact, throw yourself into them, especially the ones that take you out of your comfort zone – and don’t rush. As the Romans ought to have told us, but didn’t: ars longa, vita quoque longa.

Please feel free to reject this advice, but don’t be surprised if your subconscious secretly decides to embrace it.

Gordon Grice is editor of OAA Perspectives. He graduated from U of T in 1967 and practiced architecture between 1972 and 1984. Collected careers include illustrating, writing, editing and creative direction.


When I was a student, I used to hear that Frank Lloyd Wright could visualize the whole building, inside and out, when it was still in the planning stage, and I thought, What a wonderful thing. But now I can do it. Practice helps. – Frank Gehry¹
We asked contributors to write a letter of advice to an aspiring architect – of any age and at any stage of his or her career. We requested, in particular, “Looking back on your architectural career, what do you dearly wish someone had told you?”

As you might imagine, the range of our contributors’ advice is as broad as the range of their experience. No two careers are ever the same, so there is no consensus on the advice offered. However, some themes recur:

• Be a defender of good design – even in opposition to clients and users
• Always be a team player (possibly in contradiction to the instruction above)
• Be kind and empathetic – and always consider the public good.
• If you’re in it for the money, forget it. But don’t forget about the money.
• There’s no rush. Architects have long lives, so take your time.
• With an architectural degree, there’s a lot you can do, inside and outside of the profession, including travelling. Consider all your options.
• Above all, be passionate. Love what you do.

The real question is this: do we really need more advice? It’s not like there’s a shortage. There’s free advice: ask anyone, a friend or complete stranger for advice – or don’t ask for advice – and it’s sure to be forthcoming, and worth every cent that you pay for it. Then, there’s actual paid-for advice, from consultants, advisors, life coaches, therapists, trainers and do-it-yourself books in the thousands – it has been estimated that, in 2013, self-help books represented an $11 billion industry.

How, then, should you respond to our (free) advice? The key lies in reading between the lines. Since our journalistic mission is to keep track of what’s going on in the minds of architects, we have asked our contributors to, in effect, to open theirseves. What you will find on the following pages is a chronicle – evidence of what architects are concerned about in the early months of 2015. Bear in mind that a piece of advice always reveals a great deal more about the advisor than the advised.

The following letters are arranged in loose chronological order, according to intended recipient, beginning with a pre-school aspiring architect and culminating with experienced professionals. The concerns, ideas and aspirations are those of the contributors. Is any of the advice useful to you? If not, is any of it the kind of advice you might offer?
DEAR KATY

BY GORDON GRICE OAA, FRAC

I JUST CHECKED your Amazon Wish List, so I could send you a nice Christmas package (there is some really great stuff on there) and I noticed there are a lot of books. Now that you are starting to read really well, you need to have a lot of books. You can never have too many. I noticed one book at the top of your list: The Aspiring Architect: An Activity Book for Kids.1 What a great idea! I think you would be a really good architect because you are very smart and you like to draw so much — also, you are very good at it. I think that your brother Matty would be a really good architect too, because he is smart and likes to draw, just like you. He even made a SketchUp model on my computer last summer.

I had the same reason for wanting to be an architect — because I liked drawing a lot. But when I finally made up my mind, I was a lot older. So there’s still a lot of time for you to decide what you want to do.

Your mom knows a little bit what it’s like to be an architect because her dad is one. She will probably tell you that it seems like a lot of work and sometimes the hours are long. When she was growing up, her dad stayed up late and got up early, sometimes – believe it or not – not going to bed at all. Staying up all night might sound like fun, and now and then it is. You see amazing animals wandering around – skunks and rabbits and raccoons – but they are night animals and we’re not. It’s probably better for us get a good night’s sleep.

The best part of being an architect is that you get to make fantastic things, like buildings and parks and even whole neighbourhoods and cities. But you don’t do it all by yourself — there are a lot of friends to help you. Your job might be to come up with good ideas, to work out the details, to organize people, to talk to builders, owners, neighbours and users of the building, to go to the construction site and, of course, to do drawings.

There are a lot of other things you might want to be when you grow up — maybe you can be something that hasn’t even been invented yet — but if you want to be an architect, this is a great time to start thinking about it. Because you’re good at drawing, you can draw buildings that you like and try to figure out why you like them. But don’t just think about what buildings look like. Think about how they make you feel when you look at them or go inside them.

So, if you and Matty both still want to be architects when you’re grown up, maybe you could work together in the same office. Even better, we can all share an office. I don’t know of any other grandfather-granddaughter-grandson offices. We can be the first. It would be fun doing drawings together.

Grandad

PS: Ask your mom to tell you about the drawings she used to do underneath my desk while I was working.

NOTE 1. THE ASPIRING ARCHITECT: AN ACTIVITY BOOK FOR KIDS BY TRAVIS KELLY WILSON, BLOOMINGTON IN: TRAFFORD PUBLISHING, 2013 – “ARCHITECTURE COMES IN MANY SHAPES AND SIZES. THE ASPIRING ARCHITECT IS AN ACTIVITY BOOK THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS TO INVESTIGATE ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY, DESIGN, GAMES, AND GEOGRAPHY. … THE ASPIRING ARCHITECT IS A FUN WAY TO EXPLORE THE WORLD OF ARCHITECTURE.” – AMAZON.CO.UK
ASPIRING ARCHITECTS SHOULD thoughtfully answer the following questions:

1. **What is architecture?** How would you interpret the following statement? “Architecture is the art, the science and the business of building.”

2. **Who is an architect?** Would the statement below either describe you or the person you would like to be?
   “Architects … are talented people with a flair for design, an awareness of social trends, keen business sense, solid engineering skills and an understanding of the law.” The word “versatile” may have been invented to describe architects!

3. **Do you have:**
   - a flair for design?
   - an awareness of social trends?
   - the ability and temperament to develop a keen business sense?
   - the ability and temperament to develop solid engineering skills?
   - the ability and temperament to understand the law?
   - versatility – or are you set in your ways?

4. **What does an architect do?** Can you either rate your abilities in these areas – or your willingness to learn them if you rated yourself not very high?
   - During their career, architects: draw … write … speak … calculate … take responsibility … manage situations and/or processes. How well do you do these things?
   - During a typical day, architects: meet with clients … win contracts … solve problems … estimate costs … meet with consultants … produce drawings … present at public hearings … draw up specifications … call tenders (bids) … visit construction sites. Can you imagine yourself doing these things?

5. **What does it take to become an architect?** Ask yourself the following questions and allow them to provide a moment of introspection:
   - Do details matter to me?
   - Do I understand and get along with people?
   - Do I truly value the things I see?
   - Can I analyze what I see?
   - Am I a creative thinker?
   - Do I think in a logical and orderly way?

6. **What research can you do on the subject of architecture as a profession?** Have you done any of these things already?
   - Spend some time in an architect’s office.
   - While you’re there, ask questions about who they are and what they do.
   - Read all you can about architecture. Your local library can help.
   - Look at professional architectural magazines (including OAA Perspectives).
   - Visit any of the schools of architecture in Canada and/or around the world.

7. **After all this, do you still want to become an architect?**
   - Yes! (Then set out on the journey with your goal always in mind. There will be many distractions along the way. Each of us has to find our own path to the same goal.)
   - No! (Then you will need to keep looking for what will give you satisfaction.)
   - Not Sure? (This is probably a good place to be. Go for it anyway because an architectural education gives you access to many related careers.)

Collected, compiled, condensed and expanded from the RAIC/Architecture Canada Website. www.raic.org

Herb Klassen is a member of the Perspectives Editorial Committee. He is also a professor and coordinator of the Foundations in Art and Design program at Durham College. Herb graduated from Carleton University in 1978.
By Ian Ellingham, M.B.A., Ph.D., OAA, FRAIC

A COUPLE OF YEARS ago, I spoke with someone who interviewed applicants for registration in British Columbia (they interview in B.C.). He told me that some applicants had been working for firms that consisted of perhaps two or three people working in a basement or a garage somewhere, doing residential additions and other small projects. In the waiting room prior to their interview, they regarded with fear and admiration those who had interned with large, prestigious firms. How much more they must know. Yet, my friend pointed out that in the interviews, applicants who had worked on small projects with small firms knew much more than typical applicants from large firms, who may have spent years doing door schedules. “They had never been spat at by a sub-contractor,” he reported.

This story took me back to my own introduction into real-life architecture. I had completed first year, and ended up in a summer job with a small Toronto architectural practice that had work spread across southwestern Ontario. Many of my classmates got jobs in more impressive firms. Not only that, but my job, in addition to running the print machine, largely involved driving while the principal worked in the car on his frequent trips to clients and sites. I quickly came to appreciate the opportunity, and still treasure that time. Rather than being tied to a drafting board, I went and saw everything — sometimes taking notes, but more often measuring buildings that were to be renovated. I saw the sites, found out about land acquisition and planning matters, saw the paper processes and met contractors, clients and financiers — including those who later spent lengthy periods of time in jail and/or bankruptcy court. I saw all aspects of numerous projects.

The advice: when you are in the earlier stages of aspiring, go to the small firms, not the big ones, and spend time with the small projects. There is so much that can be learned.

Ian Ellingham has an MBA from the Ivey Business School at the Western University, a Master of Philosophy in Land Economy and a PhD in Architecture from the University of Cambridge. His research interests include “decision-making as it relates to the built environment.” Ian is Chair of the Perspectives Editorial Committee.
MENTORING

BY BILL CROMPTON, OAA, FRAIC

DEAR MENTEE,

Ability improves with the gaining of practical, hands-on experience. Although academic qualification is required, professional organizations generally require that a certain level of (documented) experience is demonstrated for licensure, and it is this gaining of experience that benefits from a mentor-mentee relationship. There are two routes to obtaining a licence to practice architecture available in Ontario: by following the university route and a stint in an architect’s office (allow nine years minimum, although longer is the norm) or by following the RAIC Syllabus route, which allows experience to be gained while you follow the course. This also takes about the same time as the university route (10 to 12 years), but it is a great deal less costly (about $17,500 for the entire Program versus $40,000 for six years’ tuition at university) and you have income during the process, as well as, typically, a job at the end of it. I am a big fan of the Syllabus route.

Entrance into the Program can be as early as after high school and generally all who have a reasonable academic standing are accepted. A portfolio helps to demonstrate graphic capability, but unlike university, is not used to limit acceptance.

A big difference is that you have a mentor throughout your study who cares personally for your progress. That person is a registered practicing architect and brings not only academic support but also real-world perspective.

Mentors are also volunteers. In exchange for the time that they give, they get back exposure to youthful ideas and enthusiasm, which is a tonic for the world-weary. I’m constantly amazed at the sheer energy brought to the development of an idea, research and presentation. As well, mentors are appreciated and that lets them (us!) feel that we are giving back a bit for all those who got them (us!) here in the first place.

Finally, in a world where we must convince all those around us – bosses, clients, Authorities Having Jurisdiction, contractors – that we have an idea of what we are talking about, it is most refreshing to spend time with people who think that we’re pretty smart.

Bill Crompton (Carleton University, 1977) is a partner in the firm of David S. McRobie Architects, Ottawa. He has been a Mentor in the RAIC Syllabus Program since 2007 and a Studio Coordinator for the past three years.
DEAR ASPIRING ARCHITECT

BY RICK MATTELJAN

HAVING REACHED MIDDLE age (at least chronologically), I am increasingly wary of that older man’s habit of talking about the past as something distinct from the present. That is not my intention here. I really want to tell you how relevant the past can be.

I came to architectural practice later in life, and by a circuitous route. Architecture was my third career and not the subject of my university degree. I spent the first years of my adult life in sales and marketing and the second decade operating a general contracting business. I had a family background in building and became increasingly interested in the practice of architecture and, in my late 30s, I took a leap of faith (and a major pay cut) and enrolled as a mature but very junior student in the RAIC Syllabus Program. That decision shaped the rest of my life.

Since that time, I have had the good fortune to be trained by a highly skilled and varied group of architects, designers, draftspersons, technologists, engineers, carpenters, building inspectors, surveyors… I can’t begin to credit the people who took an interest in me and knowingly or unknowingly taught me – and continue to teach me every day. Many have become wonderful friends.

I take pride in the fact that I took the road less travelled to get to where I am today. My education has been incremental, and very little of it has taken place in a classroom. For me, that has been a good thing. I think that my construction experience brings a richness and understanding to my work that would have been difficult to achieve otherwise, and my business experience helps with both managing my own firm and dealing with clients in a corporate environment.

I look at the student architects that move through our office every few months. They are universally eager, vital, smart, engaged, and I wonder if I was like that thirty years ago. I think I was. I love trying to pass on to them some of the knowledge and life experience that I have acquired and I try hard to learn from them as well.

My advice, then, is to consciously broaden your knowledge and experiences, especially those that would seem to be outside of the scope of traditional practice, and to use that education, however obtained, to create your own niche in the architectural community. It may surprise you how receptive the profession will be to that, and how much better it will equip you to compete and succeed in what is a very rewarding and exciting career and life.

Rick Mateljan is a Licensed Technologist OAA and Partner in Strickland Mateljan Design Associates Ltd.

IMAGES (TOP) MIIV FOURNIER, OTTAWA. (LEFT) PEN-AND-INK ILLUSTRATION: OAA PERSPECTIVES.
LETTER TO AN ASPIRING ARCHITECT ON GRADUATION

BY ALEX TEMPORALE B.Arch., OAA, CAHP, FRAIC

THERE IS NO single type of aspiring graduate. Each has a unique set of skills and interests. My five years of night-and-day architecture in university changed my life and perspective of the world forever. With so much time and energy dedicated to studio, design became the overriding focus. On graduation day, my vision of architectural practice was idealistic and unfortunately naïve. I’d like to contribute some practical advice based on the experiences that followed. It may prove helpful in avoiding some of the landmines and detours in your road ahead.

This letter is to you, the aspiring designer and future practitioner. Use this advice as you see fit.

Every project you receive is an opportunity. Learning does not stop at graduation but will be a continual process. In rapidly changing times, you must continue to stay at the leading edge of those changes, whether they are social, environmental or technological.

It is vital to find a place that will foster your talent and allow you to grow. Don’t rush to fly solo; be observant and understand the nuances of architectural practice. You always have a lot to learn. Design excellence alone will not necessarily bring you the success you seek, nor will all rewards be monetary. Success will often be determined by luck and relationships. Whether it is through a personal relationship with staff or clients, or a collaborative effort, you cannot create architecture alone.

No matter how creative you are as an innovator, your success is determined by your ability to obtain work. Luck will show which door opens and which closes, and there will be times in your career that you will ponder what the future could have been if only that commission had gone to you.

Architecture is a business in a highly competitive market. Your main competitors are your fellow architects. The Canadian market is risk-averse and is more focused on performance than design. Ours is a country that sells commodities, not ideas, and Canadian business success stories are few in number. To clients, the words “time,” “schedule” and “budget” seem to hold more weight and influence than the word “innovation.” You may be shocked to learn that some very successful architectural practices never use the word “design.”

Another reality is that architecture is a service industry in which our clients control the program and the construction purse strings. It is the client’s approval that you inevitably require. Learn to be a people person, to listen, and to collaborate. You will encounter many hurdles in the way of your success due to the number of decision makers, authorities and trades professionals who will challenge your design expertise. Consensus and consultation are a natural part of the process but don’t compromise your integrity and ideals. It is in reality a balancing act, one that you will learn to master.

Architecture is often regarded as being a combination of art and science. As a designer, you are an artist and you must know who you are in order to create the art of architecture. The degree of creativity you bring to any project will define whether you possess integrity and ingenuity, or are simply an impostor.

Budget is another major constraint to your creative process. However, it cannot be used as an excuse to create boring, redundant, or bland buildings. Design excellence is not contingent on budget. Unless your reputation rises to “star” status, you will always be faced with financial barriers. It is what you make out of small projects with limited budgets that may be extremely important for your future success.

Lastly, success is contingent on sacrifice. Disappointment often plagues designers but it should act as a motivator. For the designer and practitioner, architecture is a calling and a way of life. It is all-consuming, and it is not a job that ceases at five o’clock. It will be a constant challenge. If the process of creation from concept and vision to reality is what drives you, put on the battle gear and enter the fray. Your future awaits.

Alexander Temporale is principal of ATA Architects Inc. and a member of the Perspectives Editorial Committee.
WHERE DO YOU WANT TO BE?

BY P. SIMISTER OAA

SINCE ARCHITECTURE STUDENTS graduate in their mid-twenties, most do not receive their professional licence before the age of 30. No wonder so many architects go on working beyond the age of 65. At 85, Frank Gehry is still producing some of his best work.

What would I advise aspiring architects? Think about where you want to be at the end of your career – when you’re 35, 45, 55 and 65. Then think about how you’re going to get there.

In Architectural Record’s Design Vanguard, Aric Chen comments, “the profession is notorious for making designers wait eons before giving them substantial opportunities to build.” If you want to have your own practice, you should be planning it in the early years of your career. Start by working for the type of practice you would like to have, considering the options: starting your own practice as a sole proprietor, joining together with colleagues as a partnership, or becoming a partner in an established practice. Learn from the architects who are your mentors. How do they find new clients? How do they win projects through competitive bids? How do they position themselves in the market to get the type of work they want?

At some point you may have to take a risk – leaving a safe job with no future. You will have to make some sacrifices, possibly financial, to keep your career on track to reach your goals, but the personal growth you achieve will make it worthwhile.

You may not make it onto the “40 under 40” list, but by putting your creative and planning skills to use in planning your future, you will be able to look back with satisfaction at your accomplishments by the end of your career.

Peter Simister is a principal at CSV Architects in Ottawa and a graduate of Carleton University.

NOTE 1: HTTP://ARCHRECORD.CONSTRUCTION.COM/FEATURES/DESIGNVANGUARD/2014/ESKYIU. AS. CHEN, ARIC. ARCHITECTURAL RECORD. “ESKYIU, HONG KONG: EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF ARCHITECTURAL WORK, A HUSBAND-AND-WIFE TEAM ENGAGES THE PUBLIC IN PROJECTS RANGING FROM INSTALLATIONS TO EVENTS

Architecture is an act of love, not a stage set. At this time of transition, as one civilization dies and another replaces it, devoting yourselves to architecture is like entering a religious order. You must consecrate yourselves, have faith and give. As a just reward, architecture will bring a special happiness to those who have given her their whole being.

– Le Corbusier
DO NOT LET YOUR IDEA GET LOST IN TRANSLATION: BRING YOUR OWN DICTIONARY

BY LIGIA SAATGIAN, B.Sc.Arch, B.Sc.E.Eng., OAA

MANY PEOPLE MAY have already told you that architecture is a complex profession and in the design and construction process you will have to wear different hats. But are you ready to try on the engineering one, thinking and communicating like an engineer?

That vision of the beautiful building that you kept working on in your mind since your school years falls like a house of cards with the first question that an engineer asks: How do you plan on building it? By the end of the discussion, your remarkable concept gets boxed in and wrapped up in the same packaging material as every other building that you can see as you gaze in despair and frustration out the window.

We make our living imagining and designing the form, the space and the ambiance, drawing upon the knowledge we’ve gained from the arts and sciences – social, natural and behavioral – that school opened up our eyes to, and yet, our proposed built form is crippled and disconnected from the message originally intended. Where did the communication go wrong? Where and why did the vision get lost in translation?

We want buildings to be open, bright, transparent and green, and we trust engineers to convert these qualitative properties into quantitative matter. If we want our idea to come across in the final product as planned, we should make it our mission to learn the appropriate language to allow us to oversee this metamorphosis from idea to built form.

Don’t let the engineering language intimidate you; just consult your own personal dictionary. While at times encrypted in acronyms, symbols, formulas and definitions, the engineering vocabulary deals with the tangible and measurable and is objective. It is in the architect’s interest to understand and be able to adopt and apply with equal skill the scientific principles and methods. This doesn’t mean we need to be fluent in the engineering language, but we should know enough to communicate well and eliminate misunderstandings.

Our industry is opening up to new domains: infrastructure, urban planning and sustainability, and now more than ever, architecture and engineering need to find a common language to complement one another and allow easier integration. Today’s projects increase in scale and complexity and include a larger number of participants from a variety of stakeholder groups: planners, engineers, contractors, etc. It is in our collective interest as architects – young or seasoned – that we understand and speak the engineering language so we can continue to lead the discussions and preserve the architect’s role as coordinator.

As Frank Gehry said, “I like the idea of collaboration – it pushes you. It’s a richer experience.”

Be well prepared for the dialogue and pass the message along to your younger colleagues. Hopefully it will persuade them to pay closer attention in that building sciences class!

Ligia Saatgian is an architect and engineer. She received her Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering from the University of Craiova, Romania, 1992 and her Masters Degree, Advanced Studies in Urbanism and Site Planning, from Ion Mincu University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest, Romania, in 1997.

NOTE 1. FRANK GEHRY: A MASTER ARCHITECT ASKS, NOW WHAT? – FRANK GEHRY IN CONVERSATION WITH RICHARD SAUL WURMAN
HTTP://WWW.TED.COM/TALKS/FRANK_GEHRY_ASKS_THEN_WHAT/TRANSCRIPT/LANGUAGE=EN
EVEN THOUGH IT’S been almost a decade since I spent all my waking hours in studio, I still remember those years well, and they’re constantly informing the architect I am today. I wanted to write you this letter to give you some advice that I wish I’d been given. Hopefully you’ll find it useful, perhaps tomorrow – or many years from now.

First, the practice of architecture is mostly about people. Sometimes it’s easier to think that it’s all about the design process, buildings and built form. But one of the odd things that I’ve discovered about architecture that no one tells you bluntly is that it’s a knowledge-based business. So it’s mostly about people, what they know and with whom they share the knowledge. So try to build a network of great collaborators. Once you’ve got a solid network of trusted people to work with, you’ll find out what type of architecture interests you, or how much architecture you’d like to practice.

Second – and you might not enjoy reading the next two words – be patient. Don’t rush the process. Architecture is a long-term career that requires you to follow a sometimes tedious process of licensure and exams. Be disciplined about your time and take one step at a time. It helps if you reward your progress and celebrate any wins along the way!

Third, you should always keep an open mind and stay curious. I look for any opportunity to travel, to look around and appreciate being outdoors as much as indoors. It might be obvious, but when it comes to a project, always try to visit the site, and try to understand the context. Find some time for daily research. It might not always be fun, but studying books that feature construction detailing, sustainable design and learning new tools will be rewarding. You will enhance your ability to produce your work and design to a consistently high standard.

Fourth, understand the contracts, services and deliverables, to get comfortable with the business of architecture. It’s 99% likely that you didn’t spend any time learning about the numbers and the legal aspects of architecture until the very end of school. It might not seem important to know every aspect of the business side, but having a sense of the big picture, and recognizing a successful office and studio, will be valuable.

Lastly, don’t forget the public service aspects: social justice and universal accessibility in your work. I think that it’s a proud part of our role as architects in Canada. Be happy, positive, and generous. Try to participate in the local community. That way, the work you accomplish will be fulfilling.

This list is by no means complete, and you can add to it as you find your own way over the years. Don’t be afraid to talk to the experienced architects you’ll meet along the way – one day it’ll be you doling out the advice.

Alan Ng graduated from the University of Waterloo in 2005. He is an architect and avid traveller, whom you might find running through the City of Toronto’s streets and parks in an attempt to better his half-marathon time.
I'M DONE! I've done the exams! I've logged all my hours! I'm now an architect. A professional. However, after investing time, energy and money, I confess that I'm not sure if it has been worth it.

Since graduating, I've had to learn how the profession works, the skills I need, what personal characteristics are important for a successful career, as well as having to leave aside certain aspirations and narrow my expectations for architecture in my life.

Maybe, I've wanted too much from architecture. A bit naïve of me, perhaps. I wanted it to be my art-way of externalizing my understanding of the world and engaging with it, to give meaning and a measure to my life. However, the reality is that there seems to be little time for this relationship with work in an architectural practice.

My sleepless nights are now largely a result of routine stresses of juggling professional liabilities with expediency. This contrasts with the exploratory sketches, experimentations, and inventions of my architecture studies. I have come to terms with the fact that I had to trade architecture as a life project for architecture as a professional career.

Today, I simply get up to go to work to earn a living. These frustrations are not the profession’s fault. It’s still a noble service. It’s my responsibility to recognize whether the reality of our profession actually corresponds with my impulses. However, I recently rented a small studio space to reclaim some of what I experienced at school.

Fausto graduated from the University of Waterloo in 2006. He is an intern at a Toronto architecture firm and has established an art studio in Toronto’s Junction neighborhood.
DOES ANYONE WRITE LETTERS ANYMORE?

BY JAVIER ZELLER, OAA, MRAIC

DEAR YOUNG PRACTITIONER, here are a few quick things to remember:

Everyone wants to be you; don’t let them down. People will tell you that they always wanted to be an architect. Don’t grumble about how long the hours are, or how you can’t afford the Porsche like your dentist friends. This runs counter to what it means to be an architect and comes off as boring and petty. Your talent and energy brought into form can actually improve the experience of the world around us. You are creating things with other people — it’s social, challenging and positive. We are lucky to be in one of the few professions in which people are usually happy to see us.

MOST OF THE PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY YOU — YOU SHOULD WORK FOR THEM

The majority of people who can’t afford the excellent services you offer is precisely the set of people who will need your talents most acutely. Don’t worry about those clients who want you to design them a second barn for their stable of heirloom Holsteins; there will always be someone else who can help them, and frankly, they will be just fine without your help anyway. Seek out work that has maximum aesthetic impact for a maximum number of people. If you have real talent, try designing something everyone has to use — a hospital, transportation infrastructure, a city street. Remember you will be working for people who otherwise wouldn’t be able to hire you individually, so don’t cheap out. Make sure they get the good, lasting stuff.

DON’T FORGET TO WRITE. NO ONE REALLY KNOWS WHAT YOU DO AT WORK.

Too many architects are silent and our voices are absent in the culture as a consequence. If you don’t say something about what you and your peers are doing (or not doing), someone else will say it for you and more than likely they will get it entirely wrong. Don’t rely on architectural academia to be the profession’s voice; their priorities are necessarily different from the regulated practice. If you are in academia, write more please.

Javier Zeller graduated from the University of Toronto Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design. For five years he worked as adjunct lecturer and adjunct assistant professor at the University, then began his architectural career as marketing director for Montgomery Sisam Architects. He is currently working with Diamond Schmitt Architects.

Architecture isn’t important, the world is important, and we have to change it. It’s a shitty world.

— Oscar Niemeyer

There are two qualities that neither employers nor educators can instill and without which, it is assumed, one cannot become a “good” architect: dedication and talent.

— Dana Cuff

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OAA PERSPECTIVES|SPRING 2015
ADVICE TO AN ASPIRING ARCHITECT

BY IAN ELLINGHAM, M.B.A, Ph.D., OAA, FRAIC

ONE OF THE CURIOSITIES of architectural practice is that, in an industry in which so much money is made, architects themselves often seem to be remunerated with the sweepings from the floor. When lecturing a couple of years ago at a Canadian business school, I remarked that the lecture room was named after a house builder, the university department after a commercial developer, the building after a larger developer, and if we had too many people, we could go to another developer-named building and meet in a lecture room named after a wonderful developer with whom I was employed some years before. Was there money to be made in real estate? Obviously. My drooling business students, through their hypothetical projects, made it abundantly clear that they regarded real estate as just another business – they knew that significant buildings required an architect, but they saw buildings in terms of decisions about marketing and finance.

My main piece of advice is that aspiring architects have to increasingly consider buildings much like financial instruments – one makes expenditures in the near term, in order that expected benefits be received in the future. The benefits might be economic, social, cultural or environmental, but they are all still returns on investment. Balancing is required, to avoid either overinvestment or underinvestment.

Unfortunately, after many years of education, the architect-graduate may have taken just one course that deals with money. The financial aspects of real estate can be both fascinating and complex (take a look at the field of real options), and those business school students – who are likely to be your future clients – know that. This is different than some decades ago, when the general level of education was lower; there were few business school graduates and much less business knowledge, so the architect was the pinnacle of the knowledge hierarchy. To stay at that pinnacle requires effort.

The architect, in transit through time, needs to have regard for the business-school subjects, especially economics, finance and marketing. The resulting enhancement of analytical and decision-making capabilities will lead to improved buildings, with the architect having more influence over the final product, and more career possibilities, including those land- and building-based fields in which all the money is made.

IMAGE PEN-AND-INK FANTASY ILLUSTRATION: OAA PERSPECTIVES.
AN OPEN LETTER TO ASPIRING ARCHITECTS

BY PAUL JURECKA

YOU HAVE PROBABLY come to choose a career in architecture for many reasons, but hopefully because you have the sense that your innate or developed talents and skills lean toward the practice of architecture, and you feel that you may have something to contribute. No doubt you do.

Looking back on my own career, I am struck by how little I really understood at the outset about architecture as an art, as a profession, and as a practical necessity of modern life. This was not merely because of my lack of research or even my naiveté (although both were factors). It was mostly because the culture of architecture changes in keeping with changes in technology, materials, urban theory, and the broader sense of what we understand to be contemporary culture – and it changes quickly. In 1963, I came to the profession as someone who could draw well and was solid in math. Neither talent is of great relevance today, but they continue to shape how I view the world and our work.

Here are a few suggestions – things that I wish someone had told me:

1 You can expect to live much longer than previous generations which could mean that you may change direction, change jobs, and even change professions more than once during your working life. Don’t get in a hurry.

2 Make yourself valuable to your employer, your profession, your community and to your family (not necessarily in that order), and don’t be put off when you feel that you are not appreciated, because it is not really about you.

3 Architecture is a great and noble profession, but it is often a rough ride as a business and is always subject to market forces. You may already have been warned that few of us will ever get the great commissions and the big bucks. Enjoy the challenges and make the most of opportunities. The journey can be its own reward.

4 Those who can adapt will survive and even thrive. This is not just true of cockroaches and rats, but also of those who look ahead to understand and equip themselves for the changes that will come. As you mature in the profession, continue to refine your theoretical base but define and stay true to your core values.

Paul Jurecka retired in June after 47 years in the practice of architecture
DEAR (ASPIRING) ARCHITECT

BY CHRISTOPHER MOISE, B.A., B.E.S., M.Arch., OAA

I ASK THAT you to indulge me for a moment. Put down your pen, close your sketch book, power down your monitor. Now turn your head so you can see out the closest window and take a deep breath: in through your nose, out through your mouth. Now take another. This quiets the mind. Good. Now I want you to remember. Remember with your quiet mind. Remember that thing you found within you or within the world that was at the beginning, whether it was this past summer or many winters ago – remember the moment that you realized this was what your life was going to be all about. Remember what first inspired you to pursue architecture as your life’s work. It may have been a conversation, a book, a person you knew, or trip you took as a child, but whatever it was there was a resulting recognition in you that this is what you would do – what you had to do. I ask you to remember this moment, this feeling within you because although every architect has a unique crystallizing moment, we all share the same result. We are inspired by passion.

We are comrades, Architect; we are brothers and sisters; we are a fellowship. And we stand together with the shared need to express our passion in the world in this one specific way, through architecture.

Let me put this into some current context. Our society today is experiencing a period of enormous opportunity. Cities worldwide are growing at increasing rates and are faced with the dilemma of managing this growth in the best and most responsible way possible, dealing with the limitations of rising energy prices, environmental responsibility and (in North America) vast amounts of space. Our cities continue to increase in population, and as they do, they grow upwards and outwards. Important decisions need to be made by people within our communities concerning the best way to manage this growth and how our new and restored places might best contribute to our changing world – to decide, in fact, how our world could physically be better and work better.

Decisions such as these are based on a long list of contributing factors, including financial viability, market demands, existing planning structures, historic trends and political influence, but the one element that ties all of these decisions together, the common thread in the tapestry of our built world, is the act of design. However, that one crucial act is too often malnourished, mistreated or abandoned all together. Too often it lacks passion.

Now turn back to your desk; look at your latest sketch; ignite your monitor. Do you see your passion before you? That is your job; that is your role; that is your responsibility; that is your gift.

There are too many people making decisions that result in too many uninspiring buildings and places. Christopher Benninger, in his book Letters to a Young Architect speaks out:

… each building looks like a copy of the one before it. These architects are playing on only one sense, the visual, leaving touch and textures, smell and sound, volume and proportions to the winds. Common sense, context and integrating with nature have become passé.

In other words architecture is at one of its low historical points where most of its practitioners are chasing style and crude popularity.

I would suggest that the issue we are facing, and the one that concerns Benninger, can be reduced to one simple truth: where there is no passion, there is no architecture. And the world needs more architecture – more deliberate design that improves the physical state of our civilization. I would like to adapt the powerful words of Mahatma Gandhi and suggest that you, Architect, design the change you wish to see in the world. This is not just a philosophical position. It is not simply important. Christopher Benninger sees that something needs to change, and perhaps, reminded by Gandhi, you can become greater than you are, demand more of your ideas, and create your vision. This is the state you must aspire to.

We are not just talking about one person’s ego being expressed in the world. This is not just about the big institutional commissions, or the skyscrapers, or the luxury homes. This is about everything you might have a role in. I am talking about making a positive contribution to our cities, our communities and our world with every single design. It is in the collective expression of this act of passion that a difference will be made.

Without passion driving you to design, you are failing to deliver your one gift to the world, what you were trained to do, what you must do. And you must be prepared to risk it all. Be prepared to fight against all the other forces at play, to create a built environment that improves your life, inspires you, and connects you with nature and history and the future. Express your passion, fulfill your decision to live as an architect and fight to create a world that fills you with a joie de vivre. Your decisions make all the difference. Your passion matters. Adopt the mantra: If you do not, who will?

So, dear Architect, comrade, I implore you to remember. Remember to aspire, as often as is necessary. Look out your window, breathe deeply and quiet your mind. In through your nose. Out through your mouth.

Now take another.

Christopher Moise is a member of the Perspectives Editorial Committee and is the Urban Designer for the Inner Urban Development Review Branch for the City of Ottawa. Christopher Graduated from Waterloo Architecture School in 2002 and Western University in 1993.

NOTE 1. BENNINGER, CHRISTOPHER. LETTERS TO A YOUNG ARCHITECT. CREATESPACE, WWW.CREATESPACE.COM, 2011
FIRST, THE BAD ADVICE

BY DAVID PEARCE, OAA, MRAIC

IT WAS THE summer of 1977. I was between my fourth and fifth years at Carleton University and I had a summer job working in a very small architectural office in downtown Toronto. At this early stage in my journey to becoming an architect, an older architect gave me two pieces of advice regarding my chosen career.

The first piece of advice was that being an architect was a lousy job and maybe I should look at something where I could make money instead.

The second piece of advice was to not hang around other architects and not to attend any OAA functions. “You will never get work from other architects,” he told me.

These were two very bad pieces of advice, which I did not follow.

On the first piece of advice: becoming an architect and then becoming successful at it is one of the most satisfying things I have done in my life. Perhaps my well-meaning “mentor” was saying, in a backhanded way, that if you look at architecture as a job, you will not be successful. Architecture is a career and it is a life – and there is money to be made. I have seen many young architects come through our office over the past 34 years. Those who are successful have a passion and a thirst for architecture. They want to learn; they put in the hours it takes to get the job done. They make mistakes and they learn from those mistakes. They develop creativity through problem solving and hard work. For those for whom it was just a job, then my “mentor” was probably right.

On the second piece of advice: I admit that I almost fell for this one. However, as I matured in my career, I realized that there is much to learn from others. I enjoy attending OAA conferences and seeing old classmate, exchanging stories, discussing the issues of the day. Collaboration often leads to incredible ideas and is never a waste of time. For more than 20 years, I ran my practice as a sole principal. In recent years I brought in a partner and we have worked together, challenged each other and further improved the quality of our work, broadening our practice.

As I look back on other advice I have received and advice that I have given others, I have a few key pieces I would like to pass on.

1 It’s a small world out there – don’t burn bridges and don’t piss people off.

Whether you expect it or not, you will run into the same people time and time again during your career. The design and construction world is a small community and people you work with, or for, may change jobs but will probably stay in the industry. It is impossible to avoid disagreements, and problems will inevitably crop up that are difficult to resolve. In dealing with these issues, act professionally and do not get personal. Clients, contractors, employees and associates will respect that. The next time around, in totally different circumstances, they will think of you in a positive way. Likewise, do not hold grudges. People may say things in the heat of the moment that they don’t mean. Get over it and move on. Respect your employees, respect your supervisors, respect your clients, respect the tradespeople and respect your peers. Today I have clients who were once employees. Today I have friends who were once clients. There are very few people who I cannot get along with. It’s a good feeling.

2 Keep notes, make lists and write stuff down.

Way back when I was taking my registration courses, I received a bit of advice which I embrace to this day. Chris Fillingham was giving us a talk about how he worked on a day-to-day basis and he mentioned his notebooks. He said he kept a Hilroy Notebook with him and wrote down everything in it: project notes, phone conversations, shopping lists, etc. He said it saved his ass on more than one occasion. I took that to heart and started in June 1982 with my first Hilroy schoolbook. I wrote down everything in it. I kept track of projects and phone calls, made to-do lists, jotted down conversation summaries, worked out fees and made sketches. I now have drawers full of these notebooks – over 200 of them – and yes, it has saved my ass a few times too. As an added bonus, I can sit down, open a book at random and transport myself back many years in my career and relive a moment in time – it’s as though I were there.

3 Put yourself in the other person’s shoes.

It is so easy to look at things only from your side. I always try to think about what the other side is thinking, what they are expecting. It helps you to avoid a lot of misunderstanding and it makes you a good listener.

4 Enjoy the down time.

The business of architecture is very unpredictable. There will be times when you don’t think you can keep up, there will be other times when you worry you will never have another project. I rarely turn down an opportunity, because there is a challenge in everything and you never know where an opportunity will lead. When things are slow, I still get concerned. But I am (still) learning to be confident that slow is not stop. If you are good at what you do, if you maintain your relationships, if you stay in touch, work will always come.

David MJ Pearce is a principal in Pearce McCluskey Architects, Mississauga, and a graduate of Carleton University, 1979.
IBRAHIMOVIC AND ARCHITECTURAL AMBITION

BY ANTHONY PROVENZANO, OAA, MRAIC

SOMETHING HAS BEEN on my mind about architectural ambition since I read an article by “a science guy,” pursuant to an amazing soccer goal that captured the attention of the sporting world. The goal was (is) discussed as being (perhaps) “the greatest goal ever scored.”

It was scored by Zlatan Ibrahimovic, playing for his native Sweden against England in an International Friendly Match in 2012. An article by the UK Telegraph’s Assistant Comment Editor (and science writer) Tom Chivers was entitled, “Zlatan Ibrahimovic and the Audacity of Genius: Why Be a Fiat when you can be a Ferrari?”

It is so difficult to describe the goal in words, it really is best if you view a video online (search for “Zlatan Ibrahimovic’s Stunning Bicycle Kick”). But even if you never see the goal, all you need to understand is that people were seriously asking, “Was it the greatest goal ever scored?”

For the curious: here is my best attempt to describe it:

1. The ball arrives in the air from Sweden’s zone.
2. The ball is cleared by England’s goalkeeper with his head, since he’d left the goalkeeper’s area.
3. Ibrahimovic, seeing the England keeper out of his area, spins around with his back to England’s goal, leaps into the air and executes an overhead “bicycle kick,” 35 yards over everyone and into the England goal, for the fourth time.

Sweden won 4–2, and all Sweden’s goals were scored by Ibrahimovic. After this goal though, everyone – including the England fans present – stood to applaud it.

Amongst the post-goal chatter was included the article by Tom Chivers, who aptly stated, “It’s the sort of thing you wouldn’t even try, unless you believed yourself to be extraordinarily good.”

For Aspiring Architects:

To me, the lesson an aspiring architect can draw from this particular soccer play is that one needs to be willing to take bold risks because nothing great will happen if you do not. I especially believe an architect needs to be audacious in the architectural ambitions of every project. And a great deal of that audacity is driven with confidence, as the Chivers article’s title posits: “Why Be a Fiat when you can be a Ferrari?”

Caveats:

Two alarm sirens immediately go off in my head as I hear myself suggest that “aspiring architects” be audacious and confident, as if a profession so driven by individual ego needed a shove in that direction.

The first alarm siren relates to the audacity of architectural ambition: because if you’re an “aspiring architect” not seasoned by time, you might think I’m saying that we should be making bold architectural gestures at every opportunity. That couldn’t be further from what I mean: I mean to say that you should always set out with the highest order of audacity in your ambition.

At every stage and opportunity, from the design concepts to the final detail execution, you should always aspire to do the best possible thing – and be audacious in that ambition. Time and experience will teach you that clients, sites and specific constraints are all different, so your response must always be measured. While the “… Fiat … Ferrari” question might (incorrectly) suggest I’m a proponent for making Guggenheim Bilbaos at every corner, in fact, sometimes the boldest architectural ambition results in the quietest and most anonymous edifice. And it might require more courage, conviction and confidence to be restrained than the opposite.

The second alarm siren concerns confidence, as it pertains to pursuing the audacity of architectural ambition. While confidence is the fuel for the pursuit, it is a double-edged sword.

Zlatan Ibrahimovic definitely had enough confidence in his abilities to attempt to kick a soccer ball in a way that made people debate whether or not the goal that he scored was the greatest ever scored – in all of the goals scored in all of the soccer games ever played. And isn’t that a great reminder of what can be achieved when you have the confidence to be audacious … and it works out.

Because sometimes it doesn’t work out, and maybe a footballer falls down and gets a ribbing from teammates or the press for being audacious.
Soccer is a game; in architecture, the mistakes last for a very long time. As Frank Lloyd Wright said, “The physician can bury his mistakes, but an architect can only advise his clients to plant vines.”

Tom Chivers speaks to the science parallels: “They laughed at Columbus, they laughed at Fulton, they laughed at the Wright brothers. But they also laughed at Bozo the Clown,” said Carl Sagan, pointing out that almost all the brave outsiders flying in the face of scientific consensus are not the new Galileo, they’re just wrong. But every so often one of them is Galileo: willing to say the apparently ludicrous because their data, and convictions, lead them to it. They should see the odds and think: I’m probably wrong, I’m going to look like an idiot, I should stay quiet. But they don’t.

For an aspiring architect, gathering lessons along your career path, you will be wrong many times, especially in the beginning. And that confidence fuelling audacity might also be fuelling the very reason(s) you will be wrong. Mastering the correct balance might very well be a lifelong pursuit.

Anthony Provenzano is Principal of Anthony Provenzano Architect and a Regular Contributor to OAA Perspectives. Anthony Provenzano Architect is the only Canadian Firm listed with the German sustainable Building Council (DGNB).

My note to all aspiring architects is that while they might not actually be the next Le Corbusier (in the same way that all soccer players will not be Zlatan Ibrahimovic): they should be just as audacious in their ambitions.

**Note 2:** NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE (4 OCTOBER 1953), http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Frank_Lloyd_Wright  
**Note 3:** BROCA’S BRAIN (1979), P. 64. http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Carl_Sagan
LETTER TO A YOUNGER SELF

BY DAVID GILLET

I WAS WHERE you were once, on the cusp of something really exciting, really big, really intimidating. I had my own preconceptions and misconceptions, hopes, dreams and fears, and maybe I still do. There are a hundred things I’d tell my younger self, but I’ll begin with just three:

Put that joy to work.
Get your hands dirty.
Look, look, look.

You are heading this way not because you see architecture as a path to riches. You’re smarter than that. But you think you can make a living doing something you love: creating space, shaping community, building beautiful places.

Put that joy to work.
To begin with, design excites you and the prospect of dreaming it, planning it and seeing it brought brings you a deep kind of joy. Hold onto that – keep that alive as you study the art form, as you learn the business, as you collaborate with others who may (or may not) have that spark in them.

Nurture your joy by living a life, not just doing a job. Get involved in the community. Get to know and care about those clients and learn about their life. Study the ways of the city you live in. Truly become a citizen. And then the path of design, of creation. Use that creative spark to keep the main things the main things.

Look, look, look.
Look around you. Look at the pavement you walk on, the alleyways and broad avenues of the city you live in. Look at the ancient world that is the Parthenon can teach you, an ancient cottage can speak to something deeper than those things, the width of a perfect street mayhem of construction, you’ll be at home and have some real credibility. Maybe even respect. And you’ll have a chance to wear that ancient mantle of Master Builder and deserve it.

Get your hands dirty.
Always have a bit of dirt under your fingernails. Despite the comforting illusion that buildings are isolated forms on a screen in front of you, the reality is very much about weather, concrete strength, square corners and good drainage. There is nothing that can replace or replicate time spent on a construction site. And once on that site, there is nothing more instructive than climbing a ladder, nailing down shingles, cutting rafter angles, trowelling concrete, doing the coffee run for a bunch of fellow builders.

It will pay off in the way you detail your buildings and in your understanding of the sequence of construction. Perhaps even more importantly, you’ll have empathy for the people who construct your designs and an understanding of what is most important to them (and it’s more likely to be the accuracy of your dimensions, not your design theory).

And when you eventually arrive on site as the designer, smack in the middle of the noise and mayhem of construction, you’ll be at home and have some real credibility. Maybe even respect. And you’ll have a chance to wear that ancient mantle of Master Builder and deserve it.

Travel as much as you can – around the block, across the city, across the country and around the world if possible. There is so much to see, so much to absorb. And take a sketchbook with you. Make that hand-eye-brain connection and stretch lines out across the page. Document the things that are important, the proportions of a lovely archway. The magnificent proportions of a lovely archway. He had a whole notebook full of little dimensioned sketches, and he used them every day while designing.

Don’t worry that your first job might have you reading Building Codes and detailing stairways in hospitals. The Parthenon can teach you, an ancient cottage can speak to something deeper than those things, the width of a perfect street will stay with you ... and you’ll use all this knowledge someday. You will.

To be a good architect you need to be a great observer, a competent builder, a person who thrills to good design. But the tyranny of the urgent will try to subvert all this and soon you’ll only see balance sheets, deadlines and the wolf at the door. That’s reality.

But the reality is also that you have chosen the path of design, of creation. Use that creative spark to keep the main things the main things. Stick with your gut instincts, push for that excellent design, stay true to the things that attracted you to this life in the first place.

David Gillett graduated from the University of Toronto Faculty of Architecture in 1983 and now designs residential projects in the Muskoka and Georgian Bay region.
INSPIRATION x CIRCUMSTANCES = ASPIRATION

BY SIU-MAN WONG, Dr. Univ., Ph.D., MBA, OAA, FRAIC

DEAR COLLEAGUE,

Aspiration is the product of inspiration multiplied by circumstances. On writing this letter, I would like to share a personal experience with you.

It was summer 1972, in the OAA lobby, and Istvan Lendvay overheard me telling someone that I was seeking employment as an intern architect while attempting my licensing examination. He offered me a career on the spot. I would report to work in two days and I would be eligible for two weeks of annual vacation to study for the exam. By being flexible, he provided the basic need of having food on the table. I knew that my aspiration to become an architect was within my reach.

The drafting room was staffed by foreign-trained architects, including the African tribal chief with 10 wives waiting for his return from immersion in democracy, and the Korean architect, who would diligently mark title blocks in lower case with “This should be in capital letters.” But all of us were inspired by Istvan’s Hungarian accent and under his mentorship we gained the insight that our cultural backgrounds and language barriers would not prevent us from becoming architects.

As a correctional facilities architect, Istvan is a strong believer in democratic treatment of offenders through rehabilitation during incarceration. To this end, he would generously share his practical knowledge in Justice Building by volunteering as a speaker in China, Cuba, Egypt and Eastern European countries. His approach, telling “how to do it” instead just “what to do,” brought changes to the justice system and improved safety standards in correctional institutions.

He still found time for the Registration Board, for inaugurating the Architects Act and for establishing the requirements of Building Type B in the Building Code Act.

After retirement he dedicated his time as a CESO volunteer advisor, promoting humane treatment of offenders and inspiring young professionals to serve those in difficult circumstances. At the age of 80, he successfully completed eight international assignments and 13 in Canada.

As aspiring professionals, we are inspired by the examples of others. Many a time, a kind act by another architect will help us to achieve success beyond our wildest ambitions. Please make it your responsibility to help aspiring professionals to achieve their goals too.

If you are a foreign-trained architect, your difficult start must not dampen your aspirations. Istvan came to Canada in 1957 as a refugee with a young family. He learned the language by sitting in the theatre watching the same western movie until he could repeat the script. He had tried to get “high” with root beer. In spite of this “handicap,” he was inducted into the College of Fellows in 1984, for his contribution to the profession. Foreign-trained architects have made the professional colourful, have contributed diversity and have inspired architectural excellence.

Architects may not be rich and famous. Our passion, professional knowledge, life experience and practical skills create ripple effects making the world a better place each day. Our greatest personal rewards are doing the work we love and are proud of.

With this, I wish you success.

Siu-man Wong is the Manager, Projects, at Ryerson University and an architect who believes that the architect is the conductor of an orchestra of multidisciplinary professionals.

It’s a little facile, maybe, and certainly hard to implement, but I’d say, as a goal in life, you could do worse than: Try to be kinder.

– George Saunders

Really to believe in something is the greatest boon, I think, and to believe wholeheartedly in it and serve it with all your strength and your might is salvation, really.

– Frank Lloyd Wright
ARCHITECTURE AS A WAY OF LIVING

BY JOHN DORRIS OAA

ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN may be described as future thinking. We are professional futurists specializing in buildings and site development. Why is it that architects can see a building before it’s built, but often can’t plan their own future? Anthony Robbins, the success guru, says that if you don’t have a plan for your next five years, you aren’t living a fulfilled life. Do you know where you want to be in 40 years? Who do we listen to for advice on visualizing our career? In my case, there were several individuals that planted seeds that grew into my architectural career, during my last year of high school and my first year of architecture school. Before that, I really didn’t know what an architect did, except through glimpses of architects in TV programs such as The Brady Bunch and movies such as The Fountainhead.

Later, design critics – those “ideal” architects at university who all had private architectural practices – painted an image of an architect as occupying a lofty station in society: educated, financially well-off, artistic, technically adept, and of unquestionable character. These images helped the seed to grow. Graduation from Pratt School of Architecture was the proof of germination. OAA registration and my career in the following years represented the budding forth into a recognizable architectural practice.

In a recent conversation, one of my youngest co-workers noted that his uncle had practiced architecture in Ontario until the last downturn in the economy, then left to work in California. He found it interesting that, at the same time, I had come from the States to practice here in Canada. Perhaps the key here is the fluidity of the profession. We acquire skills that are useful all over the world. This can be a very useful fact, since work can dry up in one region and flourish in another.

My early perceptions of the profession were limited by my exposure to what the profession appeared to offer, and most people giving me guidance in those years understood architecture only as an abstract idea. Early architectural instructors glorified the bohemian ideals, and viewed architecture as a lifestyle, not a job. One could not retire from “living” the way one might retire from a factory or desk job.

LOOK INTO YOUR FUTURE. If you are a young architect, picture yourself 35 years from now. Say you are at your 40th high school reunion, as I was recently, enjoying conversation with old classmates who have gone their separate ways, and now is your chance to catch up on what has happened in their lives and share your life experiences with them since the “good old days.” Many of your mates may have retired with a full pension. One of my high school mates who worked with me in a grocery store during our high school years recently retired from his position as a district manager of several grocery stores. Three of my high school classmates graduated from architectural schools. One graduated near the top of his class and became affiliated with a large construction company; a second went into municipal planning and retired with a six-figure retirement package but always wondered what it would have been like if he had pursued a private practice; the third was not heard from after university. What will your story be?

Here are few tidbits of advice that might help you to build your future:

1. You may have the skills and knowledge to “do it all,” but don’t. Hire a bookkeeper; pay for staff to do the things you would prefer not to do, like specification writing, detail drawings and answering the phone. Save the fun stuff for your own indulgences if that is what you prefer. Many architects start a practice because they want to do the things we were trained for in school, to be in charge of the design work and rack up those design awards.

2. Worry about the money. Do not undercharge for your services. The monetary value you charge for your services is a measure of what you contribute to society. Lock up your retirement funds in a program safe from creditors and former spouses. Credit cards are not a line of credit.

3. Architectural training can be exercised in many ways. Be open to what needs to be done. Many excellent contractors are architects. Many prominent business executives have architectural training. Governmental bodies at all levels employ architects. Many successful graphic artists are architects. CAD and modeling training is often a pathway into movies, special effects, advertising, product design and illustration.

But the best advice I can offer may also be the simplest. Be happy and enjoy your work, whatever it is. And more importantly, demonstrate that enjoyment to your clients, and thank them for the opportunity to serve them by doing what you love doing.

Architecture is a way of life, as well as a never-ending process of growth and education.

John Dorris graduated from Pratt Institute in New York in 1971, immigrated to Canada 1972, and registered with the OAA in 1976. John has been a Sole Practitioner since 1979 and Plans Examiner at the Town of Milton since 2000.
LETTER TO A YOUNG ARCHITECT

BY CATHY CAPES OAA, FRAIC

LAST WEEK, the Opinion Pages of the New York Times (December 15, 2014) included a piece called “How to Rebuild Architecture” by Steven Binger and Martin C. Pedersen. In it, they described the buildings created by the millennia of architects before us as “profoundly human, tied to our DNA.” They went on to ask the question, “At what point does architecture’s potential to improve human life become lost because of its inability to connect with actual humans?”

Traditionally, our cities reflect the shared values that shaped them, whether intended or by default. Our built environment conveys messages regarding what we care about and how we negotiate our relationships with each other. In our profession, we experience this when collaborating with increasingly complex groups representing diverse interests.

In order to bring your best talents forward and participate most effectively in working with these groups, you will need to build new skills and capabilities. These assets will prepare you to participate in achieving a shared purpose and developing the full potential of each project together.

I suggest you hone your skills inside the office while gaining knowledge through experience outside the office, such as:

• Showing curiosity and engaging in conversation with your neighbors. Ask them questions that bring your shared interests together.
• Talking to people about the relevance and value of design. Everything – no matter how mundane or beautiful – is designed.
• Developing skills in making the best use of available assets while building relationships. Volunteer within your community.
• Observing, sketching and photographing. Look for the expression of our humanity in everyday actions.
• Travelling – it doesn’t have to be far.
• Reading broadly. Allow ideas to rub together to create something unique.
• Studying something else. Make room for your thoughts to grow.
• Making something from scratch – cook, sew, knit, carve. Remain connected to the physical world of creating at many scales.
• Connecting with contagious optimism. Seek out enthusiastic partners in this, as well as other professions and creative industries. Peter Prangnell asked years ago in his Manifesto, “How can we reclaim ‘our problems are in the cities’ when we find it had to work together to any real advantage? Our ability to deal with problems in the cities depends on our imaginative potential to see other points of view.”

The broader your experiences and relationships in and across our communities, the better you will value diverse points of view and solutions that arise outside of traditional disciplines. Use these skills to discover and exercise your clients’ passion and ability to shape their environments by together, thinking through all possibilities.

Cathy Capes graduated from the University of Toronto in 1984. She is an architect with Tillmann Ruth Robinson and a member of the Perspectives Editorial Committee.
Mid-Career and Later
**THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF FRustration**

**BY GREG REUTER, OAA**

_I think you will_ agree with me that down inside, deep – my extensive medical education tells me somewhere below the spleen – a good architect holds a serious grudge against a particular issue, and has dedicated his or her life to designing structures that address it. This special preoccupation isn’t always immediately recognized; often it takes a less-than-pleasant client to shake out of us what we are truly passionate about. Otherwise, without that moment of retaliatory design-spite, these preoccupations can take decades to be identified. I personally know of architects well pitted against climate change, car culture, suburban sprawl and Lululemon pants, among other things. Venting about these issues can be helpful, but sometimes you need to get really mad and tell a client just how it is. Sometimes they even thank you for it.

Granted, it is important to serve your clients well and meet their needs squarely. This can require a great amount of patience and after a while, you may get a little worn. For many years I worked very hard not to show any frustration with the artificial hurdles thrown onto my projects or with decisions made by my clients. Now, I didn’t get frustrated with all clients, mind you, generally just with those included in the short list below:

- Developers of condominiums
- Developers of apartment buildings
- Developers of commercial buildings
- Private residential clients
- Private institutional clients
- Public institutional clients
- Clients that wear plaid.

Frustrating clients are essential: they make us sharpen our skills at convincing others of our ideas, and they push those golden eggs of design wisdom a little further out of reach. It is there, the egg sitting solitary, unused, and becoming a lone silhouette under layers of project soot, that we can clearly see what it is we want to accomplish. Hence the architectural nectar harvested on the next project becomes that much sweeter and the client that held the ladder climbs the rungs to join us with a new far-reaching perspective.

An aspiring architect can find the egg sooner. Look inside yourself (again, under the spleen where these ideas grow), find what it is that you are preoccupied with, and start convincing yourself that no one else cares. One day you will be pleasantly surprised.

**Greg Reuter** is a Toronto architect and a member of the Perspectives Editorial Committee.
CHERRY PICKING: ADVICE FOR THE ASPIRING ARCHITECT

BY LUKE ANDRITSOS, OAA, AIA, RA (CA), NCARB, MRAIC

I WAS ASKED to put together a concise, cohesive letter guiding the aspiring architect; creator of spaces, mood-master of venues, wearer of style. That’s tough, so I won’t do that. But I will offer this thought: a run-on blast of diction peppered with advice ranging from the practical to the out-there/esoteric. Cherry pick at your pleasure, addito salis grano. Ready?
1. Don’t take advice unless you asked for it or paid for it.
2. Iambic pentameter is fine for wooing, not
3. Don’t let the office know you can model, or
4. Don’t dim your ideas with details – they fall in place naturally.
5. It’s all about time.
6. Advice is never neutral; it is geared towards the receiver.
7. Journeys leave you free to un-create.
8. Mix business with pleasure. It will get you far.
9. Mundane tasks have a zen-like beauty all their own when you get into the groove.
10. Get credentialed; do your exams early.
11. There’s room for all types in architecture: some shine coordinating sheet sets while others hunt the wow factor.
12. Listen deeply to clients.
13. Recognize whether you are a solo artist or part of the design choir.
14. Enter competitions for project types you are unfamiliar with to expand your design chops.
15. Your professional network may ebb and flow into your social network. Use a filter.
16. How does it feel to possess the power to stamp? Heavy? Charge for it.
17. Be kind.
18. Seek out the poetic – things are deeper than they seem.
19. Add value to your work and cash will follow.
20. Use the powers under your control to do some good.
21. Write about architecture, or at least lay the jargon on thick now and then.
22. Don’t have affairs in the plotter room – it’s inconvenient for other staff and may recalibrate the machines.
23. Define your value early on and visit often.
24. The right design answer is a beautiful one; footsteps become lighter as it resonates.
25. Have fun.
26. Napkins are not only nifty for wiping up beer rings, but for sketching too.
27. Grab a lot of jobs. But be nice when you quit or get canned.
28. There is infinite potential in the synergetic combinations of work place, people and skills out there – plug in and they activate.
29. Volunteer – it’s nice.
30. There will be an unsettling of comfort – rent, bills, even social voids – while you are a free radical jumping into the next combo. This should fill you with confidence, bravura and competence.
31. A talented builder is your best friend.
32. Diversified experience is invaluable to the liquid ground we call the marketplace.
33. Skills build and amplify, one atop the other
34. Beware the golden handcuffs; be free range.
35. Ctrl-1 brings up the properties window in AutoCAD.
36. Be hyper-conscious of structural, mechanical and electrical requirements in your work.
38. If you have pets, get a lint roller – your dark, muted wardrobe will thank you.
39. Don’t be intimidated by parametry – learn BIM and exercise it often to stay relevant.
40. The elegant design solution taps into your logic before your brain does.
41. Have fun with your crazy designs but be careful – you have a responsibility to protect the health, safety and welfare of the public, not to mention the client.
42. Schedule your licensing exams on a Friday, and never just after the weekend’s Dionysian festivities.
43. Be concise in word and languishing in dreams. Unless you are paid by the word.
44. Collaborations are nice but not at the expense of your creative genius.
45. Nap in the day if you can, but never at client meetings.
46. Shield your personal space.
47. Don’t design crap. You can sell out with more dignity in other fields.
48. Shift gears – architecture is a rich, complex layered field where technical and artistic interests are rewarded. Try some production work if you consider yourself a designer, and dream up some designs if you’re a CAD monkey.
49. As the Poet Laureate Robert Lowell once said, “freelance out along the razor’s edge.” Your career will be infinitely more rewarding for it, possibly financially too.
50. Time is ephemeral and flighty, so make your body of work one of symphonic storytelling for the children. I dare you.
51. You need shade and light – design accordingly
52. It is your professional duty to succeed based on your terms. What are they?

Luke Andritsos is an architect, licensed in Ontario since 2004, and in California since 2008. His diverse background includes cabinet-making, music and teaching. He is currently a senior design architect at Forrec Ltd. in Toronto.
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OAA PERSPECTIVES | SPRING 2015
Following the OAA’s release of the Code of Ethics in May 2010, the OAA received a significant amount of feedback from its members. This mostly positive feedback generated robust discussion at the OAA Council about the Code and how it could be improved. Just as other codes and standards are updated periodically, the Council decided it would be appropriate to update the OAA Code of Ethics from time to time. Hence, the release and publication of the Ontario Architects’ Code of Ethics, Version 2.0, which incorporates member feedback and the Council’s discussions on the matter.

Generally speaking, nothing has been added or deleted from Version 1.0; there are no new ethical standards nor have any ethical standards been removed. The updated Code consolidates related ethical standards into fewer, more comprehensive statements. Council also re-considered some of the grammar to hit a consistent positive, imperative tone, as well as simplifying the font and graphic presentation. The Code of Ethics is not law; it is an aspirational document against which architects can check themselves, in the course of their practice. Hopefully, Version 2.0 helps architects by being more concise and easier to read than Version 1.0.

The Code of Ethics can be downloaded from the OAA Website at www.oaa.on.ca and printed in the format of each architect’s choice. OAA Council hopes that all members will display the Code of Ethics in a visible and dignified place within their offices.
WHERE DO ARCHITECTS REALLY LIKE TO LIVE?

By Stig Harvor, FRAIC

This article previously appeared in the Toronto downtown community newspaper, The Bulletin, October 2012 – see www.thebulletin.ca.

Where do architects who design tall condo towers really like to live? A revealing answer was provided last fall by a prominent and gifted Toronto architect who designs many such towers. He participated in a panel discussion at a public meeting on November 2, 2012 at the Queen’s Quay Centre. The meeting dealt with the perennial and contentious issue of building heights, showcased by the Centre’s exhibition “Too tall?”

The architect said he lives in the thriving low- and mid-rise Beaches area. He would not mind living in a highrise condo but does not want to move. The problem for him is not height but neighbourhood quality. His comment is an astute judgment on the quality of life in the growing jungle of ever-higher condo towers along our waterfront south of the railway tracks.

His comment also emphasizes the essential difference between architectural design and urban design. Architects normally design individual buildings; urban planners design total communities. Individual buildings may have good visual and other qualities. Nevertheless, people, even architects, react to and enjoy animated exterior spaces created by the buildings.

This is evident in tourists flocking to older European cities. The walls of continuous, usually humanly-scaled, mid-rise buildings lining their streets are often fairly ordinary in appearance. The buildings, however, create enclosed streets and squares that can be likened to outdoor rooms where there is an energetic public life of people shopping, mixing, meeting and socializing.

Toronto’s southern downtown core today lacks many vital aspects of urban design. The area is brutally divided by the massive, elevated Gardiner Expressway. Its concrete structure and ramps occupy much valuable land. It neutralizes an attractive pedestrian environment. It destroys the livability of condos immediately facing it.

It is worth noting that the Gardiner was built over 50 years ago, through an industrial harbour area. The area today is vastly transformed, into a dense and growing residential district. If the elevated Gardiner were not there, would anyone today urge building such an ill-fitting monster through this newly developing area?

Interestingly, a similar question can be asked of the Island Airport. If it had not been there for many years as a minor airport in an industrial harbour, would anyone today suggest building a busy, expanding commercial airport there?

Considering the Gardiner, it has an essential function as an indispensable major downtown east-west artery. This was amply demonstrated the weekend of 15–16 September, 2012, when it closed for regular, annual repairs. Downtown streets were clogged.

The alternative for the present elevated Gardiner, however, is a wide, tree-lined major street like University Avenue, supplemented by a downtown bypass tunnel under the harbour to serve only through traffic. As for the Island Airport commercial flights, they can be diverted to Pearson after the new permanent rapid train link from Union Station to Pearson is ready for the 2015 Pan American Games.

Admittedly, these are very major changes but, in the long run, necessary to improve our unique downtown waterfront area for future generations.
Meanwhile, our imaginative and successful government-funded Waterfront Toronto organization is valiantly improving the immediate area close to Lake Ontario. Queens Quay Boulevard is being slowly transformed into a treed, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly street retaining both cars and streetcars (see illustration).

Unfortunately, no effective overall control is exercised by our city in downtown areas. Through tax cuts, our planners are understaffed and overworked. The short-term and short-sighted immediate demands of the private market rule with developers aided by the all-powerful Ontario Municipal Board.

We as citizens, however, have an opportunity in the current review of the Toronto Official Plan Act to demand a certain percentage of affordable housing and larger apartments for families to create mixed and balanced communities (www.toronto.ca/opreview).

A century ago, a fast-growing Toronto had an illustrious early Commissioner of Works, Roland Cardwell Harris, who served for 33 years, 1912–1945. Among other achievements, he built the Bloor-Danforth viaduct spanning the Don Valley. He included a subway deck below the roadway. It paid off handsomely – but only 60 years later!

Harris’s farsightedness is matched today by many informed citizens and dedicated public servants. What we need today are new mayors imbued with a vision of a well-functioning, more liveable city where the car is not king.

**Stig Harvor** is a retired architect living in the successful, planned, mixed income, low- to mid-rise St. Lawrence Neighbourhood, near the lake.
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A USG COMPANY
But what is so perplexing and annoying about this situation is that there is a clear label over the ON switch that reads in capital letters “DO NOT LEAVE OFF.”

This rather minor situation begins to speak volumes about the impact of technology on human behaviour. The printer has been like this for more than eight months. No one has made an effort to change their behaviour in order to either figure out what the message means or to leave the printer on. (The label implies that turning it off is okay, but leaving it off is not. If you find the printer off, are you ordered to turn it on immediately?)

If such a label were to be put above the ON/OFF switch of someone’s life support mechanism in a hospital, would the result be as innocuous as this one? Have our surroundings become so bland, have we become so oblivious to them, that we ignore or do not understand the signs that are presented to us? Is this just the tip of the iceberg of a situation looming in the future? I am optimistic enough to believe that it is an isolated incident, but pessimistic enough to fear society’s slow decline into oblivion.

P.S. I have asked our IT department about the situation and have been given a ticket id # 01014544 accompanied by an email that begins “Hi Herbert, Your request for support has been logged and assigned to the next available technician for resolution.” More reason to be optimistic?

P.P.S. After about a month, a technician did get back to me saying the printers are now so sophisticated that they are supposed to be left on all the time. They have their own energy-saving mechanisms. They only need to be turned off to be reset. The “PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE OFF” sign has been removed and I have had no more printing issues. All is well for now.

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“DO NOT LEAVE OFF”: A sign of the times and, of the place?

BY HERB KLASSEN

THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO HAS 24 publicly funded Community Colleges (of Applied Arts and Technology): 18 in southern Ontario and six in northern Ontario. As institutions of higher or post-secondary education they were created in the 1960s by then Education Minister William Grenville Davis to be different from the universities of the day. These institutions were intended to meet the educational needs of the communities in which they were located. For over 50 years they have been preparing graduates for the jobs and workplaces on offer by local and broader communities.

Ontario’s community colleges are the sum of the people, places, things (stuff) and ideas of the communities of which they are a part (this is a good thing). But these communities have been changing and the community colleges are working hard to keep up. The communities have become more global through advancements in communication and information technology; the people are more diverse through immigration and global migration; the places are becoming larger, more urban, and generic (one room in a college in Toronto is the same as a similarly functioning room in Ottawa); the things have multiplied and developed exponentially to the point where only experts know how to deal with them (Moore’s Law); the ideas, and the assumptions on which they are based, are also changing – either being questioned or made obsolete.

The challenge facing community colleges (and other institutions of higher learning) is the need to come up with solutions for meeting the educational requirements of the continually changing community they serve – solutions that will be able to respond to changes in technology, in delivery processes, and in workflow.

This is the environment in which I am working. I have taught for one of the community colleges for over 28 years and, for most of these years, I have been involved with the teaching of design and the implementation of Information Technology to the design process. The last 10 of these years I have also been teaching the Fundamentals of Art and Design to first year students who “might” want to pursue a career in art or design. Much has changed in teaching and in art and design. The current crop of students I see are from the category called “Millennial” or “Net Generation.”

A lot of what is achievable by students, and the institutions of which they are a part, hinges on their learning some basic and simple concepts – concepts that require them to be observant, to question, to interpret, to recognize, and to take action.

In teaching fundamentals to this generation, we try to give students an appreciation for the creative process. We use both traditional and new techniques for this purpose. Drawing, for example, is to be done by hand and digitally. Some of the students struggle with the old, others with the new, but we hope they all will be delighted, intrigued, and maybe even also intimidated by the results they achieve when they are developing and applying those basic concepts and skills.

It is also hoped that the results they achieve will motivate them to do more, go further in their exploration and experimentation – to take ownership of, and to be engaged with, the world around them and how it keeps changing. They need to be observant of the people, places, things and ideas that form the basis of the world they live in, and the world that they are going to make for themselves and their children.

This current reflection and introspection on my part about the state of the community college system, and the educational demands that are being placed on it by the generation currently entering the system has come from a rather minor situation I encountered in dealing with classroom printer technology. Every time I enter one particular classroom (which is part of a series of similarly equipped classrooms) and want to use the printer in that room, especially if I have the first class of the day in that room, I find that I have to turn the printer ON (the power on sequence takes more than five minutes). continued on page 53
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