

FORUM FOCUS: INSTITUTIONAL AND KNOWLEDGE FORUMS

In the summer of 2008, IIDA introduced the brand-new Institutional Forum and Knowledge Forum to replace the former Education and Research Forum. *Perspective* spoke with Institutional Forum Advisor Stacy Reed, IIDA, LEED AP, and Knowledge Forum Advisor Phil Bulone, IIDA, to learn the benefits of the expanded Forums.

Why has IIDA chosen to create the Institutional Forum and Knowledge Forum from the former Education and Research Forum?

Bulone: IIDA had received feedback from Members regarding the categorization of the Education and Research Forum. Members also expressed a desire for a place to exchange information about designing educational facilities, such as schools and libraries. We came up with a plan to create the Institutional Forum, which deals with the design of schools, libraries, museums, recreational areas, family service centers and religious facilities, and the Knowledge Forum, which encompasses valuable education and research initiatives.

How will the new Knowledge Forum better serve IIDA Members and the interior design profession?

Bulone: The Knowledge Forum will promote the exchange of information, spark fresh and investigative approaches to design thinking, and contribute to the development of a common body of knowledge within our profession. This Forum can feed and collaborate with other IIDA specialty Forums as the facilitator of information. Also, there are many great opportunities for practicing interior designers to become leaders in education, particularly continuing education. The previous "Education and Research" title may have sounded too exclusive and limited to only those engaged in academics. The Knowledge Forum brings together all Members — both educators and researchers, and practicing designers. The new

Forum will also more closely align with IIDA's online Knowledge Center and other educational programs.

What specific goals do you have in mind regarding the Knowledge Forum?

Bulone: I envision the Forum serving as a bridge between traditional research and the practice of Interior Design. IIDA is in a prime position to do that, given the breadth of specialized experiences and opportunities among its Members. Universities and efforts by Interior Design Educators Council (IDEC) provide a venue for critical research. Collectively, we can practice the results of this research in the field and provide the exchange of valuable feedback. Feedback from practicing interior designers can also contribute to the formation of interior design curriculum standards.

The Forum will also work to inspire young designers to seek opportunities in the specialty of interior design education. IDEC studies show there is a decrease in the number of available educators with the appropriate credentials. We are in a position to influence future generations of design professionals. Additionally, I would like to develop a program to promote Interior Design as a career choice for K-12 students, as well as educate their parents about our profession.

Why has interior design research become such a priority?

Bulone: Research allows the designer to bring more value

FORUM FOCUS CONTINUED

to the table. Our clients are more educated, have access to a great amount of information and continue to look for more substance. Research helps us to create more effective environments and gives us an additional tool to market our ideas. Some areas of research that are receiving much attention are sustainability, technology and healthcare.

How will the Institutional Forum benefit IIDA Members?

Reed: The Institutional Forum provides a specific venue for Members who design the interiors of schools, colleges or universities, museums, libraries, recreational areas, family service centers and religious facilities. There was definitely a need to separate this group because we, as designers, have specific issues that other designers may not. We are in niche markets. For example, designers of university buildings have to design facilities that attract and recruit the best students and professors. These spaces have to create interaction while remaining flexible and incorporating the latest technology, which is

constantly changing. This Forum will address those needs for IIDA Members.

What initiatives or events do you have in mind for the Institutional Forum?

Reed: A key project of the Forum will be the biannual Library Interiors Awards in partnership with the American Library Association. I would also like to expand this idea to other areas, such as an awards program for the design of religious facilities or for museum design in alliance with various professional associations. I would also like to see improved communication among Members of the Forum. The IIDA Knowledge Center message boards would be a good venue to increase communication.

But first, we're doing everything we can to get word out about the new Forum. A major goal is to simply raise awareness. I plan to work closely with Chapter Presidents to recruit Members to the Forum. ☐

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