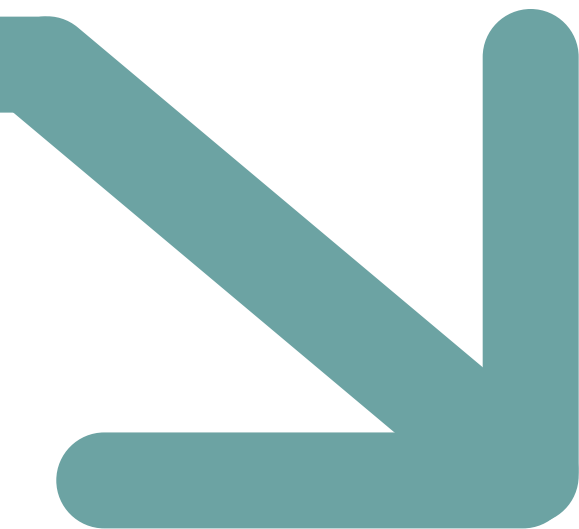


# life- learning long



Interior design's  
continuing education  
opportunities are as wide  
and varied as the field itself.

BY ANNE BROOKS RANALLO



Since its inception, IIDA has always required continuing education of its Members. Now twenty-five states require Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for registered interior designers as well, a number that is growing steadily. “We as designers affect the health, safety and welfare of the people who use spaces we design,” says David Hanson, IIDA, Vice President of Professional Development on the IIDA Board. “It would be very hard to keep up with changes in research, technology and codes without continuing education.”

The ongoing pursuit of knowledge is no doubt necessary, but trying to decipher which continuing education opportunities are worth a professional’s time can be nearly as challenging as the learning process itself. A dizzying variety of resources are vying to serve this market, with choices ranging from traditional seminars and lectures to the less obvious – but equally fulfilling – travel or sabbatical avenues. Technological advances have further multiplied choices by

making it possible to learn from any place with Internet access.

The most efficient course of action should first factor a designer’s intended goal (CEU vs. general knowledge) and preferred learning style (classroom vs. computer). Here *Perspective* explores the educational avenues that lend themselves to your learning style.

#### CEU-ACCREDITED OPTIONS

To qualify for CEUs, a continuing education program must meet the standards of the Interior Design Continuing Education Council (IDCEC), which sets criteria for CEUs in many professions.

Although CEUs are assigned to promote social responsibility, trend awareness and practice management, certain topics dominate within those categories. Educators say the hottest topics – besides the perennially popular color and lighting trends – are sustainability, public health and safety, ADA compliance and computer technology. Heather Jakusz, IIDA’s Director of Education and Professional Development, specifically mentions

the significance of courses in *Viz* software as an option in computer-aided rendering and modeling.

**Home and Online Study.** “One of the biggest changes in CEUs in the last few years has been in delivery methods,” Hanson says. “They always used to be in face-to-face lecture or seminar format.”

Home-based options are especially favored by designers who can’t travel often but want to keep their edge. Mike Freedman, Director of Online Marketing for Tampa, Fla.-based online educator RedVector.com, says that last year, 3,000 individuals took at least one of the 200 online courses designated for architects and interior designers (54 of which are approved by IDCEC). Senior Vice President Lisa Maier says most of their interior design customers have been practicing for at least 20 years and demand increasingly varied subject matter, particularly in “hot topics” such as daylighting – proof that even the most visual of concepts can be conveyed online.

Some designers, however, recommend online study primarily for technical subjects, preferring live instructors for aesthetics. Vivianne Kaharoeddin, Associate IIDA, a sole practitioner in Tallahassee, Fla., found success in courses on building pathology, acoustics for seniors and barrier-free design. She was less enthusiastic about a course in the psychology of color.

For those that prefer a more tactile learning experience, many online sources also offer the option to receive printed materials by mail. The National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) publishes timely monographs, each ending with a 25-question quiz worth 0.6 CEU. IIDA produces

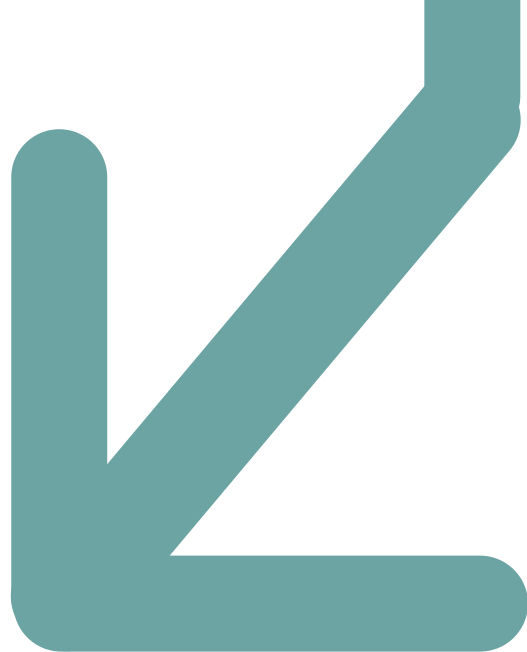
home-study courses consisting of articles that address current issues in the design industry. Many issues of *Perspective* include a CEU-accredited exercise to encourage further thought about an issue. Designated articles from *Interiors & Sources* magazine also qualify for CEUs.

For most designers, however, the Web's speed and unlimited resources are edging out hard copy. "For home or independent study, we typically see around five orders a month," Jakusz says. "For Internet courses, we see around 20 each month, depending on the time of year."

Another electronic option is a Webcast, which offers an engaging

cross between independent study and classroom learning. Webcasts are ideal for professionals who appreciate a human voice and a prescribed pace but have little time to attend seminars.

Interactive virtual CD tours are another emerging format with the unique advantage of allowing the user to visually and immediately compare the use of design concepts around the world. They also show how the interiors relate to the city as a whole, concentrating on design-conscious cities. International Design Educational Study Tours, (IDEST), for example, offers an accredited Berlin tour and is preparing tours of San Francisco, Barcelona and Amsterdam.



**Conferences.** According to Jakusz, conferences and seminars are among the most popular choices for continuing education. These venues offer a smorgasbord of knowledge in a short time span, plus the chance to interact with designers from various practices and regions. Last June, Chicago's NeoCon featured 95 one-hour seminars in 16 practice areas, extended tours and association forums in topics as varied as risk management, government issues and lighting. Similarly, the most recent NeoCon West in Los Angeles offered set design for television, quick-sketching and organizational management among its many seminars.

"I prefer hands-on, large visuals, as in tours, lectures with pictures on large screens and conferences with product available to touch,"

says Linda Lenore, a California-based Interior Design Consultant who teaches CEU classes at ASID and AIA conferences. "The design community is largely visual and tactile. Reading a report or seeing a product on screen doesn't convey tactile or ergonomic qualities."

Lenore recently attended a class on outdoor living and says that had it been given via Webcast, she would not have been able to network and brainstorm.

**Lectures and Discussions.** Design centers and manufacturers sometimes host lectures in their showrooms. Chicago's Merchandise Mart hosts 2nd Tuesday Design Inspiration series, all-day seminars that begin with a business-oriented feature presentation in the morning, followed

by guest lectures and showroom promotions in the afternoon. Many other design centers host similar options.

Museums of art or design also present lecture series and symposiums featuring outside experts or the museum's curatorial staff. These are open to the general public, but only occasionally are eligible for CEUs.

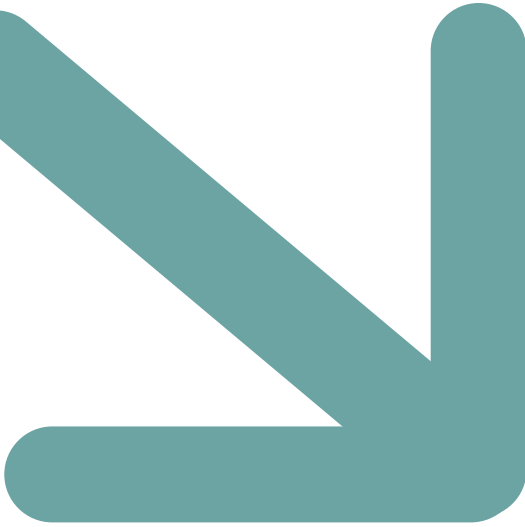
**Tours.** Because many tours are architecturally focused, they are more likely to be accredited for architects than for designers.

On the other end of the spectrum are local tours hosted by cultural or educational institutions. The University of California – Los Angeles Extension arranges two- and three-day tours around Los Angeles to demonstrate restaurant design, residential design and decorative arts.

## Not sure where to begin?

Check out IIDA's Knowledge Center, (<http://knowledgecenter.iida.org>), where you can customize your educational search based on your role in your firm and areas of design interest. Then use the search results as research support for your own professional development or topic ideas for the CEUs you should watch for in your area.






#### NON-CEU OPTIONS

**Travel.** When CEUs aren't the objective, many designers point to travel as the best inspiration. FRCH Design Worldwide, a Cincinnati firm specializing in retail and hospitality, sends its design staff on regular tours of dining, shopping and hotel districts. FRCH's Kevin Dugan says the firm sees the trips not as a luxury but as a vital means to refresh the designers' outlook.

**College Courses.** Most college continuing education programs are for the casual learner, but art and design colleges occasionally serve practicing designers. For instance, Detroit's College for Creative Studies (formerly the Center for Creative Studies) recently developed a class in auto-CAD specifically for interior designers. At \$425 for 30 hours – one night a week for 10 weeks – it requires a substantial commitment. But because only four students attended during its debut, each received ample attention, says Melinda Robbins, Director of Continuing Education.

**Lectures.** Art schools, art museums and design societies present free or

inexpensive lectures by local or visiting designers and architects. The California College of the Arts (CCA) uses this format in bi-annual one-day interior design forums during the San Francisco Design Center's Summer Design Day and Winter Market. The event attracts established professionals from firms of all sizes, says CCA spokesperson Kim Lessars.

Not-for-profit organizations sometimes present lectures to advance a cause. For example, Greenguard Environmental Institute, a not-for-profit that certifies interior products for air quality, has a free one-hour presentation on low-emitting products. It includes case studies, government mandates and a resource list, and it has been seen at NeoCon, design studios and universities. "Last year we reached about 2,500 designers and architects directly and a few hundred through our online course," says Henning Bloech, Director of Communications for Greenguard. The course offers one learning unit for architects but hasn't been qualified for interior design CEUs. 

## Why IIDA?

Your IIDA Membership puts you first in line for a host of educational opportunities.

IIDA certification requires 10 hours (equaling one CEU) by December 31 of every odd year. You can accrue any of those hours through IIDA's own programs, easily found through databases at [www.iida.org](http://www.iida.org). Click on "Education" or "Knowledge Center" to find:

- **INDEPENDENT STUDY:** Six courses are available now, with additional courses in the works.
- **CALENDAR OF EVENTS:** IIDA presents roundtables and panels at conferences like NeoCon, the Hospitality Design Expo and the International Facility Management Association World Workplace. Click on "Education" for a continuously updated calendar that includes these along with events by other providers. It can be searched by date, event type or Chapter. Each IIDA Chapter conducts CEU-accredited programs for Members too.
- **ONLINE TOOLS:** Also under "Education" is an online tool that highlights courses given by IIDA's many partners. The Web site also has a versatile "CEU Search" feature, a database describing hundreds of courses in all media by various providers, all IDCEC-approved. You can e-mail the instructor from the site to ask about the availability of classroom instruction, home study or online study.
- **ONLINE COURSES:** Click on "Members Only" for access to all current resources. Heather Jakusz, IIDA Director of Education and Professional Development, expects the online options to become increasingly popular. "We're expecting the future to bring an increase in online education," she says. "Students graduating now are more apt to accept it."
- **AUDIO CONFERENCING:** This Fall, IIDA will launch a new audio conference series sponsored by Allsteel, providing a new educational option for Members and non-Members alike, regardless of their location or availability to travel.