

## Getting a Life

From AIA President Kate Schwennsen, FAIA

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AIA President

As I write this, it's the first day of the fall term. It's a beautiful late summer day, and the respectable laziness of deep summer is being replaced by the industry of fall. It's my favorite day of the year, even better than commencement. There is not another time with as much energy and potential and optimism as the day when new and returning students as well as faculty and university staff come back to campus to pursue their own personal missions and the mission of the university, which is engraved in our Memorial Union:

*"We come to college not alone to prepare to make a living, but to learn to live a life." –M.J. Riggs, 1883.*

The message is as powerful as the words are simple and direct. It speaks to the importance of values, values I try by word and example to pass on to my students.

### Not by bread alone ...

Now don't get me wrong. "Making a living" is an important component of "living a life." My Carnegie Doctoral/Research Extensive Land-grant University and I prize the abilities of our graduates to make their livings. We wouldn't be fulfilling our responsibilities if our students didn't have employable skills.

But, for a university, turning out students who can only make a living, well, you can't live, really live, by bread alone.



What does this have to do with the AIA? Our organization's responsibilities to its members are not dissimilar to those of a learner-centered university. Or as M.J. Riggs might have said: "We become members of the AIA not alone to learn to make a living, but to learn to live a life as a professional." Making a living and learning to live are critically important to AIA members if we are to provide value to the clients and public we serve.

**"We become members of the AIA not alone to learn to make a living, but to learn to live a life as a professional."**

### Redesigning our communications

To understand more clearly how well the AIA is communicating both sides of this values equation, staff commissioned a communications audit. Completed last March, "The Stratton Report" surveyed over 1,200 members about AIA national communications in general and surveyed almost 1,000 members about AIArchitect specifically. What was learned proved to be invaluable. Members told those conducting the survey that although

they receive a lot of communication from the AIA, most of the information is only moderately useful.

However, being architects, those responding to the survey went on to design the framework of what they wanted to read in the Institute's primary communications vehicle, AIArchitect:

- More information members can use in everyday practice
- An easier format through which to navigate
- Brief, more concise reporting with shorter stories
- The ability to use AIArchitect as a gateway to other information, and as a vehicle through which members can communicate with each other.

### Give us your feedback

We listened and, with the design specifications in hand, launched a new AIArchitect, with the goal of making this primary communications resource a "must-read" publication. "Must-read" is code for providing value to members to be true to the promise of the AIA's mission: "To be the voice of the architectural profession and the resource for members in service to society."

Read the next few issues of AIArchitect with particular care. Does it meet the design specs identified by the audit? Are we delivering on the promise of being the best source of information to help you learn to make a living and to live a life?

It's a new day, a day filled with energy, potential, and optimism. Let's make the best of it. Let's hear from you.