
CIDA

FUTURE VISION

2014

Four and a half decades ago, the first interior design programs were accredited in North America¹;

today 184 CIDA-accredited programs educate over 20,000 interior design graduates eager to contribute to the field and society.

These new graduates, representing interior design programs in 41 states and four Canadian provinces, can and should be positioned to be part of the positive change taking place in the world. What does the future hold for these interior design professionals? What is the outlook for the field? Which drivers of change will define interior design in 2017 and beyond?

And how does the profession, in turn, influence its reach?

Monitoring emerging factors influencing practice and higher education is an ongoing process at the core of the Council for Interior Design Accreditation's quality assurance and standard-setting mission.

As such, collecting and analyzing information about the future is a primary component of CIDA's current Standards Development Project, which will culminate in quality assurance standards for interior design higher education in 2017 and beyond. Future Vision 2014² plays a major role in this project and was intended to synthesize results of environmental scanning into aspirational priorities for professional-level interior design education.

In preparation for Future Vision, participants reviewed and reflected on environmental scan and community survey results and considered whether macro-trends impacting interior design resonated with their worldviews and professional experience. The CIDA survey, completed by nearly 1,000 respondents, identified seven major areas of influence, without hierarchy, anticipated to be significant change agents affecting different design sectors to varying degrees in the future. These seven areas were: Expanding Professional Reach, Impact of Globalization, Worldwide Urbanization, Enhanced Building Performance, Human-Centered Design, Professional Challenge, and Deep Design Process.

During Future Vision discussions and the analysis of results, the interconnections among trends became abundantly clear. The seven trends identified through the environmental scan were refocused into five over-arching drivers of change. Expanded Professional Reach and Professional Challenge were combined as two sides of the same coin, representing the interconnection between opportunities and challenges surfacing in the practice of interior design. Likewise, Deep Design Process was integrated with Human-centered Design, recognizing the inextricable link between content and process. The five emergent themes are summarized in the following report.

Future Vision was co-hosted and facilitated by CIDA and Steelcase and central themes were documented using a content analysis methodology. The CIDA Standards Committee is charged with integrating a wide range of information, including results of Future Vision, into proposed quality assurance standards for interior design higher education. In 2015, community stakeholders will be engaged in honing and refining the content and expectations included in CIDA Standards. Proposed CIDA Standards will be vetted with community stakeholders through surveying and review and comment. Final Standards are slated for publication in January 2016 and for implementation in spring 2017.

1. In 1970 the Foundation for Interior Design Education and Research (FIDER) was formed and in 2006 the organization was renamed the Council for Interior Design Accreditation (CIDA).

2. In 2014, the CIDA Board of Directors issued a call for nominations and selected individuals from education, practice, and industry to partner with the organization to explore the future of the interior design field during a facilitated session on November 6-8, 2014 at the Steelcase Learning and Development Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In preparation for the session, CIDA commissioned environmental scanning and a survey of key stakeholders about future factors influencing the field of interior design. Summary results served as a springboard for discussions at Future Vision. Summaries of these findings as well as further information about the CIDA Standards Development Project are available at [CIDA Standards Development](#).

A Summary of Central Themes

TRENDS

Expanded Professional Reach

Human-Centered Design

Enhanced Building Performance

Urbanization

Globalization

Expanded Professional Reach

Shifting towards a more dynamic range of influence, future interior designers will need to consider how interior environments support multiple modes of use. Evolving and overlapping market sectors require designers to be increasingly creative, adaptable and flexible in considering design fundamentals, **calling designers to:**

- Recognize interconnections between the built and natural environments.
- Capitalize on innovations in materials, construction processes, and technologies.
- Acquire a liberal arts education with the necessary creative, critical and strategic thinking skills as well as the development of empathy toward others, and the knowledge base to inform design thinking.
- Commit to the on-going process of learning and idea exploration in collaboration with others.
- Develop an openness to crossing traditional design boundaries.
- Be experimental and take calculated risks inherent to the creative process.

In the future, the role of the interior designers will become less narrowly defined as they operate in more integrated, team-driven projects. The scope of work will include clear cut tasks yet also will involve more open-ended types of problem-solving. Opportunities for innovation will increase through participation in interdisciplinary teams. Additionally, interior designers of the future must be well positioned for leadership as they demonstrate strategic and tactical skills. Further, a more diverse range of mentorship models will define interaction between entry-level and more senior designers in the future (e.g., where more experienced designers mentor junior designers and vice versa). This trend is **calling practitioners to:**

- Work effectively with clients whose expectations may not be realistically aligned with budget and timeline for completion
- Negotiate the escalating mass of information to create thoughtful design solutions informed by research.
- Understand and apply data-based decision-making, requiring some degree of analytical skills and statistical aptitude.
- Cross traditional design boundaries (between design market sectors for instance)
- Engage in risk-taking (and potential failure) to arrive at remarkable solutions.
- Become technically savvy and willing to partner with consultants.
- Apply innovations in materials and technology to design solutions.

Honing business acumen and the skills necessary to articulate the value of design will become increasingly important to communicating with clients and the public. “Push(ing) design to the mass market” will require a heightened spirit of entrepreneurship. Further, “proprietary” interior design knowledge will become democratized and measurable. Information advances the field as a whole. The ability to be able to quantify design’s impact surfaced as important and was expressed by one participant who empathically stated, “Metrics are key!” An expanded professional reach calls for the willingness to engage in an evolving design process coupled with the acquisition of new skills and content knowledge.

Human-Centered Design

In the future, Human-Centered Design (HCD) will evolve as a deeper knowledge base strengthens design applications. HCD principles can be studied and adapted to reflect global, cultural, regional, and local contexts. The focus in interior design must be first and foremost on people, expressed as a comprehensive “understanding of the human experience.” This requires focused study and anticipation of the needs of those who live, work, study, recreate, heal and find restoration in the spaces created by professional interior designers. A HCD approach not only supports the quality of life for humans, but also considers the well-being of the total eco-system **calling designers to:**

- Recast their professional identity: giving more weight to problem identification in balance with problem solving and resolution.
- Engage in a deep design process to better meet human needs through the social and natural sciences that may involve employing applied research findings applicable to practice.
- Guide design decisions through an understanding of research methods and findings.
- Communicate the essence of relatively complex data and research results verbally and graphically to clients and collaborators.

Tomorrow’s designer will need to be better equipped to become a “global citizen,” one who is socially responsible and respects cultural norms outside of their own experience. Engaging in human-centered design necessarily begins with curiosity, and developing this mindset was viewed as teachable. Problem identification also calls for interdisciplinary collaboration. Knowledge derived from the social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc.) can and should impact design. Consequently, the “end user” can be better defined and supported through design.

“Hand processes,” such as sketching and drawing, were supported as having a role in design development, ideation, and communication. At the same time, technological advances made possible through 3D printing and prototyping also will expand design experimentation and customization. The reality of big data means that designers have increasing opportunities to communicate complex ideas visually. For example, infographics were cited at Future Vision as extremely useful in communicating complex ideas. The ability to “speak the client’s language” was critical, especially in the case of making a “difficult sell.” Learning to craft a compelling business case to clients was viewed as increasingly important. In a related way, this necessitates the ability to craft a persuasive argument to the client, and the importance of the art of persuasion resonated with leaders at Future Vision.

Storytelling was discussed as one way for designers to not only describe the concept (what), but to communicate a contextually rich and authentic message (why and how). Being able to do more than cite facts also was a point of agreement in the discussion at Future Vision. A holistic vision of design requires the ability to draw on both art and science, and seems necessary to engage the values of clients and organizations.

Enhanced Building Performance

According to participants, a new paradigm for understanding buildings shifts from thinking about first-time costs and predicted energy use to considering a building's life-cycle purpose and the impact on users and community over time. One discussion at Future Vision focused on a new level of expectation for sustainable design and referenced the "Living Building Challenge"³ and on-going expectations of Integrated Project Delivery (IPD).

"A high performance building needs a high performance team," which necessarily includes interior designers. Ideal teams for designing this way were described as "interdisciplinary" with expertise crossing energy, building systems, and the human interface. Assessment of building performance (e.g., LEED) will increasingly shift responsibility to end users. The language of green design will change to reflect the new bar of up cycling (e.g., EPA's chemicals of concern to constructs of biophilia). Greater accountability measures will encompass issues such as end-user control, community growth planning, and climate change issues with impact on building performance and interior space. The argument was made that interior designers will need to "feel ownership over sustainability, rather than leaving this to engineers."

This trend has implications for the design of interior spaces and places "people" at the center of the design process, **calling for designers to:**

- Be ready to design with higher performance criteria for healthy interior environments.
- Become familiar with the base of knowledge on sustainability and undertake a holistic approach to sustainable environments.
- Understand and apply appropriate research methods to guide design decisions.
- Be able to discern factual information about sustainability from marketing propaganda.
- Leverage innovations in green materials and technology in design solutions. Be able to effectively utilize experts from other fields in the design process.

3. The Living Building Challenge™ is cited as the International Living Future Institute as the "built environment's most rigorous performance standard" for more information living-future.org/lbc

Urbanization

In the future, the macro notion of the city also recognizes the micro notion of more intimate connections between people, space, and place. For example, increasing urbanization calls for design that is “sensitive to human needs and a building’s impact on the community.” Yet, issues of “social stratification” and associated “inequities leading to anger and frustration” disenfranchise us from one another in “small scale and large scale urban contexts with little middle ground.” This well-documented growth encourages a response from the interior design community, **calling designers to:**

- Consider interior spaces as a part of a system of spaces crossing the built and natural environment.
- Support adaptability, resiliency, scarcity of resources, and the connection of interiors to green spaces within the urban environment.
- Collaborate with fields impacting the urban landscape (such as urban planning, business, government, and law) in order to address pressing issues in urban settings.
- Cultivate empathy and social sensitivity to the widening gap of human inequality, including homelessness.
- Consider scale, proximity, and density within the urban environment.

This trend indicates that “place” as a container should be reconsidered to be “place” as a system designed for flexibility and change. Within the urban environment, opportunities exist for interior designers to consider issues of “disparity: social, economic, generational” and “alienation” that will increasingly require empathy, observation, and new ways of considering how interior design can support resiliency within the urban landscape. Compared to rural communities, within the urban context, “increased density requires a different kind of design” and necessarily engages a different set of critical thinking and questioning (e.g., how do crowds form and navigate between interior and exterior spaces?) Participants at Future Vision referenced ideas of “refuge and prospect” in relation to increased urbanization, and emphasized the need in the future to link interior design with new alliances and ecological stewardship.

Globalization

In the future, the context of interior design will reflect a broad, networked approach. Practice, once defined by bricks and mortar, is now a virtual network. Practice, once drawing on precedents or a pool of curated knowledge, will transform into a virtually unlimited wellspring of information---this was referred as a “fluid migration of knowledge.” Yet, this knowledge varies in relevancy and worth. Greater discernment will be needed to design satisfactorily in a global context. Further, a challenge associated with the globalization of goods and services is recognizing the interconnection between global and local, referenced as “glo-cal”. More is not necessarily better and information for designing in the future needs to go beyond the shallow -- what one Future Vision participant described as “nine miles wide and two inches deep.” Several leaders recommended the efficacy of the STEEP analysis tool (i.e., social, technological, economic, environmental and political) to gauge how factors in the external environment will impact the performance of a given company’s or organization’s strategic plan. Others spoke to the importance of gaining a solid grounding in business practices (e.g., legal issues, liability, I.P. codes, budgeting, negotiations, time management etc.) Future globalization requires a nuanced understanding of variations in culture, climate, indigenous materials, or any factor with significant impact on design and health or well-being, **calling designers to:**

- Be knowledgeable about cultural differences and values to support adaptability and resiliency within the global environment.
- Develop an awareness and, when called for, an acumen in international business practices.
- Be ethically responsible and maintain professional integrity.
- Consider materials, construction, and space in the global context of social sensitivity.

In a global context, the designer of the future will need to be aware of quality of the materials, construction methods, and levels of performance standards in different parts of the world. Also, being conversant in a range of international business conventions, having some language skills, and being responsive to non-verbal communication will be useful. Learning how to best manage and work more seamlessly with global expertise also will increase in importance in the years ahead. Cultural sensitivity will be necessary for both designing on a global scale as well as a willingness to partner with collaborators worldwide.

Importantly the ability to cultivate respect toward multiple cultures was voiced strongly at Future Vision. This necessitates an ability to design within the framework of the cultural values and beliefs being represented. Designers in the future should not privilege North American principles and ideals when designing for other cultures both inside and outside its boundaries.

Conclusion

Priorities established at Future Vision and other research conducted during the Standards Development Project position CIDA to begin drafting criteria for the next set of quality assurance standards for professional-level interior design education. In 2015, CIDA will begin surveying and gathering community input leading to consensus about accreditation criteria that integrates the five themes discussed in the preceding report.

CIDA is grateful to the leaders who participated in Future Vision and who contributed their time, expertise, and serious consideration to the wide array of opportunities, complexities, and emerging realities facing the interior design profession in the future. The willingness of experts and thought leaders to engage in CIDA's quality assurance mission positively influences the education of thousands of students enrolled in CIDA-accredited programs, and future interior designers. CIDA also sincerely thanks Steelcase and ASID whose contributions were integral to the success of Future Vision.

CIDA GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES
FUTURE VISION PARTNERS & SPONSORS:



Future Vision participants were selected through a widely publicized nominations process stewarded by the CIDA Board of Directors and Standards Committee. Further information about participants and the Future Vision session is available on the CIDA website at: CIDA Standards Development.

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