



***INTERNS IN ARCHITECTURE
COMMITTEE***

OF THE

***MANITOBA ASSOCIATION
OF ARCHITECTS***

**2005 SURVEY OF ARCHITECTS'
VIEWPOINTS
OF THE
INTERN IN ARCHITECTURE**

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MAA Interns in Architecture Committee

2005 employer/architect survey of Interns in Architecture, architectural graduates and architectural student issues.

OVERVIEW

Dear Members:

In spring of 2005, the MAA Interns in Architecture Committee (IAC) developed a survey called the Intern Career Satisfaction Survey that intended to establish a snapshot of the Interns position within the Profession. This survey is now complete and is issued as part of this package. What the framers realized in creating the Intern Survey, however, was that a survey of solely Intern opinions would only describe part of the Intern experience. It seemed necessary that any views concerning the Interns should also encompass the opinion of the Architects and firms that interact with Interns every day, who watch them develop as individuals and professionals, and who are unique amongst our colleagues in that they have already achieved the goals that Interns seek to attain.

METHODOLOGY

In designing the survey, we had a number of fears – amongst them that the survey results could be representative of only a small number of architects and firms in an equally small jurisdiction. This survey was promulgated to 141 individuals of which there were 11 surveys returned. Of the returns, six surveys were responded to by firms, while the other five were solely individual responses. Response rate for our survey was only 8%, which, truly, is a fairly poor response rate for a blind mail-out survey. In comparison, the Intern survey had a 28% response rate to a similarly constructed blind mail-out.

Nonetheless, the data, while not necessarily being representative of all architects, was of interest in a number of ways, especially given the accord between the responses of a number of members.

COMMENTARY

Interns and architects do not always unite on various issues, but this is not surprising given their different career goals. Comments in this survey revealed that practitioners are clearly focused on the growth and success of their businesses. In order to plan for the futures of their business, the Architect seeks clarity from Interns regarding the direction of the Intern's career; they are curious to know the short and long term goals of the Intern, and want to discover what the Intern aims to contribute, if hired. Many Interns, however, may view a state of complete honesty with their employers as perilous – who would want to jeopardize one's present job by revealing that they really would be rather working somewhere else, on another project, or that they do not wish to make a long-term commitment to the company they are with currently?

Employers consequently have the difficult task of evaluating their staff, and trying to anticipate who may leave, and who may stay. This may generate a level of distrust between employers and Interns, simply on the basis that Interns, who are the beginning of their careers, are not set on their path, and may have no concrete goals other than "getting experience."

The distrust is felt from both sides in the issue, however, as many Interns have had a fairly uneven employment history. Looking at the Intern stats, 48% respondents to the Intern survey had been laid off; 14% more than once. Thus, an Intern may consequently have a perfectly good reason to have little trust or faith that the employer they have today may not lay them off tomorrow. Again, statistics from the Intern survey indicate that amongst respondents, the average Intern has had 4.55 employers, while the most widely employed Intern has had 11 different employers.

So who are today's Interns, and what are their aims? Interns spend a minimum of seven years in University only to come out armed with a Master's degree that may earn them somewhere in the \$8-\$15/hour range. They are told that they have unreasonable salary expectations, that they actually know nothing about the profession that they hope to join, and that they must start at the very bottom rung of their chosen field. Having spent 7 years in university, the architectural grad is, at a minimum, 25 years of age, (although the average Intern age is 38). As such they may feel neither compelled nor willing to swallow their pride (after all, they did graduate from a degree programme specifically designed to weed out as many of them as possible. Who doesn't remember sitting in first year classes and being told to look to the right, then to the left and then to ignore those two people as they weren't going to last the year, and it wouldn't be worth making friends with them anyways?)

Highly trained to do nothing practical in the eyes of their profession, these grads are filled with big attitude and big ideals but typically have no real skills other than the ability to do fancy computer renderings. Unfortunately, most arch grads know fellow professional graduates from law, medicine, engineering and pharmacy who leave school fully formed, who can start working and contributing right away, and who can earn salaries of 40-60k per year. (Or how about that computer science non-grad, who after dropping out in second year, joining a computer company and being given a chair, a desk and a box of Lego on their first day were still playing with Lego the day the company was bought by Microsoft, and are now retired in Whistler?) Expectations are subsequently, high, while the realities are quite a bit more down to Earth.

The most difficult thing about being an Intern comes after a few years of working for a good employer and mentor. By then, one is somewhat capable, and has absorbed a good deal of knowledge; it is then that one realizes that, indeed, they somehow managed to come out of their professional program without any knowledge of actual practice. While all may agree that the whole education should not revolve solely around practice, a basic working knowledge of how architecture is actually performed would certainly help Interns on their way.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Now follows a brief summary of some of the results of the Architect's Survey.

Significant are a number of consensus comments. For example, questions 25 and 26 show that a majority of respondents indicated that the Interns that they have seen are not necessarily more competent for having earned a Master's degree. Moreover, there were a few interesting comments concerning the perception that Interns are not as dedicated today as they once were (see questions 24, and 27).

We've pulled a few comments from the survey that seemed to reveal that the education process is letting Interns down, in the minds of the Architects. This, unfortunately, was an opinion also echoed by the Interns' survey. The Architects approach for the issue derives from the business/practice viewpoint, but nonetheless, the theme is the same: that at least part of the discontent felt by Interns is created by a misleading educational process...

- If Interns and graduates have unreasonable expectations, can you speculate on what may be causing these unreasonable expectations to be formed in the first place?
 - **Lack of guidance and information at the university level. Lack of interaction between educators and practitioners.**
 - **Lack of initiation during the school years**
- Do you feel graduates are adequately prepared for work in a firm by their education?
 - **Design is too much emphasized. Design appreciation is important but from a fee perspective, it only generates 25% of the work. Why is there not support for excellence in the other 75% of practice? We don't mind teaching them, but an attitude adjustment is required to make them useful on non-design tasks; the profession would be better served by having excellent practitioners. Not having these skills slows down their income stream and that of practices.**

Our survey of Architects also reveals another issue that is affecting the profession: there are a number of individuals who are working in firms today as Interns who are, in fact, Architects who have been professionals in other jurisdictions. They may be unable or unwilling to undergo the extensive process to see their registration process through, and thus, will languish in the Intern programme for years, abnormally increasing the "on-paper" population and making it appear that Interns are unwilling and unable to become registered.

The survey results also indicate that some firms are indeed taking an active interest in promoting registration by offering incentives to the Interns who seek registration. Question 5 shows that of the six firms that responded, all of them provided at least one benefit to encourage the registration of their Interns.

LESSONS LEARNED

Interns are not necessarily aware of the possibilities that can await them, and perhaps sometimes forget that one can rely only upon one's self to make opportunities happen. What is clear from our Intern survey data is that Interns are not a monolithic demographic; issues that are important to some, are not important to others.

As for dedication, or the perceived lack thereof, is it any surprise that the Interns of today may truly be less dedicated to an unrewarding process, that at it most generous, may provide for an uncertain future gain, especially given the somewhat sporadic employment history of some of the Intern respondents, the many personal obligations they may have, and their advanced median age? Many Interns have invested as much time in other aspects of their lives as they have in the process of registration, and it may just be that they are as equally dedicated to the other half of their lives as they are to their profession. As such, it may just be that Interns today are choosing to achieve a greater balance between their professional and personal commitments than current Architects were willing to do when they were Interns. This may be especially true when we acknowledge that many of the Interns of today come from a two-income family, where the spouse or partner can easily contribute 50% of the household income. If one's spouse or partner is responsible for half of the family income, it would seem prudent to ensure that the spouse/partner is as happy as the employer.

These surveys show that there are a number of specific issues that are impeding the career aspirations of a large number in Interns. It can be surmised from the general concern held by professional bodies that administer the profession that these identifiable impediments that are standing in the way of registration for a large number of Interns are having an equally negative impact upon the industry as a whole. Presumably, fixing some of these issues might make a great difference to the attitude, on the whole, of Interns, and as a consequence, will have a benefit that is cascaded through the entire profession.

Our Intern survey shows that many Interns are willing to work the long hours it takes to succeed, commit to continuous continuing education and self-education, and volunteer for professional committees in the pursuit of a profession that can offer the potential for day to day discovery and reward. It can be noted that Interns are not looking for a "free ride" from anyone in terms of being able to find their own place in the profession, and being able to build their careers. The Intern survey indicates that Interns still remain generally positive about the profession when speaking with peers, colleagues and friends, and family, despite the fact that 57% of respondents would not enter architecture if given the chance to start again. As an acknowledgement that most Interns likely feel that they are too old to want to start again, we should be working harder to make the architectural profession more rewarding, especially as we look ahead, and we should start addressing the issues that are impeding the progress of the careers of those who will be Architecture's future.

RESPONSES: PART I

This is the section of the survey where employers were encouraged to provide their opinions on Interns and their place within the profession.

1. How many Interns in Architecture do you presently employ?
Max=13, min=1, average= 5.6 per responding firm.
2. How many have been Interns in Architecture for 3 years or less? **41%**
 - More than 3 yrs? **59%**
3. How many Interns are U of M grads? **67%**
 - Other Canadian grads? **9%**
 - Foreign Grads? **24%**
4. Does your company feel there is value in encouraging Interns to become registered?
100% of responding firms indicated that there is value in encouraging Interns to become registered.

5. How do you typically support architectural Interns: (Please check all that apply):

Mentoring of outside Interns	Contribute financially to study material	Paid time off for writing of NCARB exams	Paid time off for study of NCARB exams	Partly pay NCARB exam costs	Fully pay NCARB exam costs	Move Intern through required logbook areas of practice	No support
5 firms	2.5 firms	2 firms	0 firms	4 firms	2 firms	5 firms	0 firms

6. Does your company employ any individuals who were registered architects in other countries, but who are now working as Interns/graduates to re-register with this province?
66% of responding firms said they employ such individuals.
7. How many architectural graduates do you presently have employed? **Max-11, min-1, average - 5**
8. How many were educated outside Canada? **33% were educated outside of Canada.**
9. How many have been out of school 1-5 years? **26%**
 - More than 5 years? **74%**
10. How many are U of M grads? **43% are U of M grads.**
11. Does your office actively encourage these individuals in internship/registration?
 - **5 firms responded yes.**
 - **1 responded "so-so."**
12. Would your firm be willing to hire a CO-OP student for a term?
100% say they would be willing to hire a CO-OP student for a term
13. How many do you typically have in a summer? **Average is 1.4 students per firm amongst responding firms.**
14. How many are presently from U of M? **63% are from U of M.**

End of Responses: Part I

RESPONSES: PART II

This is the section of the survey where all architects, including those responding in part I were encouraged to provide their opinion on Interns and their place within the profession.

15. What are the qualities that you look for in an:

<p>Intern in architecture:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Enthusiasm: should know what they want to learn so they are responsible for helping to shape their own development. Must communicate their needs well and let us know when they aren't getting it; but are hired generally as gophers so need to keep it in perspective.</i> • <i>Ambition – technical agility – comfortable with others</i> • <i>Computer and design skills/good attitude. Determination, team player/previous architectural work experience</i> • <i>Intelligence and creativity/ collaboration skills/ design and production skills</i> • <i>Eagerness to learn/ conscientiousness / interested in current architectural issues/ willingness to explore/ good command of English</i> • <i>Maturity/professionalism/ experience/ flexibility/ adaptability/ independence/ reliability</i> • <i>Eagerness to learn the various skills needed to get the job done/ ability to assist and enable their team/ enthusiasm in completing their registration</i> • <i>Take on responsibilities/ take charge/ investigate as required/ self-study/ participate in design/ documents/ meetings</i> • <i>Computer capability/ core knowledge/ desire to learn more about the profession</i> • <i>Varies on the task required/ diligent, good judgment/ clear headed/ cheerful, reliable</i>
<p>Generally speaking, do you find that Interns have these qualities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Most are willing to do anything for the experience and are less demanding than architectural graduates.</i> • <i>Yes, however they have limited previous work experience, if any</i> • <i>Few have all qualities (Maturity/professionalism/ experience/ flexibility/ adaptability/ independence/ reliability) some have only one or two</i> • <i>Generally speaking, yes</i> • <i>Some more than others – a lot has to do with self-confidence.</i> • <i>No – poor core knowledge</i> • <i>Yes but not always – prima-donnas do not always come to work on time</i> • <i>Three respondents answered a simple “Yes.”</i>
<p>Architectural graduate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Want to know what interests them. Design isn't for everyone but it is very hard to discern other skill sets because of the emphasis on design. Want someone who is clear (honest) in their objectives and what they want to learn. There are opportunities for people regardless of their intended tenure. We can use someone well for 2 weeks, 2 months, or 2 years if we know how long they will stick around. Very frustrating to have someone to be plugged in to a key role they do not intend to follow through on.</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ambition – technical agility – comfortable with others</i> • <i>Technical skills (CAD and Building science)/Coordination skills/interpersonal skills</i> • <i>Varies on the task required/ diligent, good judgment/ clear headed/ cheerful, reliable</i> • <i>Eagerness to learn/ conscientiousness / interested in current architectural issues/ willingness to explore/ good command of English</i> • <i>Take on responsibilities/ take charge/ investigate as required/ self-study/ participate in design/ documents/ meetings</i> • <i>Computer capability; core knowledge; desire to learn more about the profession</i> • <i>Enthusiasm/ flexibility/ adaptability</i>
<p>Generally speaking, do you find that graduates have these qualities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Usually. Occasionally people go off on a tangent and miss crucial skill development opportunities.</i> • <i>Yes, with various degrees of success</i> • <i>Generally speaking, yes. However, I feel that the internship program guides recent graduates to a better understanding the profession, and t a heightening of their abilities.</i> • <i>Depending on experience gained between years; lack a working knowledge of the practice</i> • <i>No – poor core knowledge</i> • <i>Yes but not always – prima-donnas do not always come to work on time</i> • <i>Four responded with a simple “Yes.”</i>

16. Would you say that the registration process adequately prepares Interns in Arch. to be registered members?

- *Yes, but the whole thing is too long.*
- *Process is onerous; title is humiliating*
- *Generally yes, but it takes a long time*
- *I think so*
- *No, exams are too American based*
- *Yes (four respondents)*
- *No (one respondent)*

17. Would you say the registration process is deficient in any way?

- *It takes way too long to get fully registered, although the resulting skill set is desirable.*
- *An interview to assess the quality of the Intern's experience may be useful (But I'm not sure how)*
- *Takes too long; costs too much*
- *No, I think that the process is thorough and systematized*
- *No it is up to the Intern*

- *Too onerous*
- *Yes – practicing architects could not pass the test if they had to sit them today*
- *ARE exams require too much knowledge of US issues that aren't particularly relevant to Canadian practice. Not sure that most newly registered architects are truly capable of practicing on their own.*
- *No (one respondent)*
- *Yes (one respondent)*

18. Expectations: Do you find that Interns in Architecture have reasonable expectations of the profession (both responsibilities and rewards) or unreasonable expectations of the profession?

- *Unreasonable (two respondents)*
- *Interns are okay*
- *Reasonable (one respondent)*
- *Often unreasonable*
- *Yes/no*
- *I think that the profession could better communicate expectations*

19. What about graduates?

- *Often no one has prepared them for the potential salary range possible. They sometimes see themselves as able to deal with technical situations that are way beyond them*
- *No difference*
- *Reasonable (one respondent)*
- *Unreasonable (three respondents)*
- *I think that the profession could better communicate expectations*

20. If you feel that there are aspects of the profession where Interns in Architecture/graduates have unreasonable expectations, please list those areas:

- *Unrealistic about what money can be made*
- *Ability/opportunity to “design”*
- *They are naïve about their ability to immediately contribute – they overestimate their skills and capabilities*
- *Work ethic, focus required to succeed, discipline required to succeed*
- *Remuneration/ responsibility for design*
- *Some graduates expect unrestrained design freedom. Some have trouble understanding contract document production*
- *Do not realize that they are still going to school*

21. If you feel that Interns and graduates have unreasonable expectations, can you speculate on what may be causing these unreasonable expectations to be formed in the first place?

- *Glossy magazines and the "star" system*
- *Lack of practice related experience, training and coursework*
- *This is a generational issue*
- *Societal stereotyping of the profession*
- *Lack of guidance and information at the university level. Lack of interaction between educators and practitioners.*
- *Lack of initiation during the school years*

22. Do you feel graduates are adequately prepared for work in a firm by their education?

- *Design is too much emphasized. Design appreciation is important but from a fee perspective, it only generates 25% of the work. Why is there not support for excellence in the other 75% of practice? We don't mind teaching them, but an attitude adjustment is required to make them useful on non-design tasks; the profession would be better served by having excellent practitioners. Not having these skills slows down their income stream and that of practices.*
- *Yes/no*
- *Yes, considering the junior position they will be taking at the start*
- *No – there is a disconnect*
- *No (six respondents)*

23. Do you feel that the expectations of graduates would be better served with having to take a CO-OP term as part of their education?

- *Co-ops have their place, but should be an alternative- not the only way.*
- *Yes definitely, professors should do the same*
- *Yes (seven respondents)*
- *No (one respondent)*

24. How would you characterize an Intern in architecture of today with your own experience as a young Architect/Intern? (Are the experiences comparable? Did you feel more, or less prepared by school when you graduated? Are expectations different? Is the profession substantially different? Etc

- *The registration process is more rigorous and orderly, so there is a greater certainty that people at a given level are equally skilled. The professional demands (once registered) are likewise more onerous. Today, people are generally less dedicated to their work, which can be a problem. People who are otherwise honest and respectable seem to have a me-first attitude when it comes to employment conditions – such as pitching in when overtime is needed (we pay them for it) or providing adequate notice when they decide to leave for whatever reason.*
- *Comparable, but too little technical and structural training today*

- *Current Interns have less building technology knowledge and skills. There appears to be a lack of a clear design process in the current Interns' skill set*
- *Overall experience is similar – I think I was better prepared due to Co-op program*
- *Less prepared by school than now, but work ethic is also less rigorous than in past – Interns have more obligations outside of work so cannot be as dedicated*
- *As a recently registered architect, I don't think that much has changed in the last ten years.*
- *More prepared*
- *Interns spend too much time learning the computer applications than on learning the design process, core knowledge and technical issues. In the past we spent more quality time in design studios actually figuring out buildings. I find that we get good graphics but that they are from computer programs and not the designer's hand.*
- *I don't think that Interns are more valued than architects who were gaining experience, recording it and gaining registration on the basis prior to NCARB exam process. This really is an unreasonable process with no commensurate reward at the end.*

25. Today, Interns often graduate with a Master's level degree. Are Interns more accomplished for having a Master's degree? (Y/N)

- *They should be, but it is not clear*
- *Same*
- *Yes (one respondent)*
- *No (five respondents)*

26. Do you perceive there is value is having an architecture graduate hold a Master's degree?

- *No. What you can do is all-important. No client or contractor looks at your credentials once the job has started.*
- *There should be*
- *Only in perceived prestige on the part of some clients.*
- *Some*
- *As opposed to what?*
- *Yes (one respondent)*
- *No (two respondents)*

27. If you employ or work with Interns in architecture and graduates from both Manitoba and abroad, how do the Manitoba trained individuals compare with those trained abroad (including other provinces)?

- *Foreign trained individuals are at a huge disadvantage and take years to catch up. U of M is a good school but there are subtle differences between graduates of all Canadian schools that dependent on the task may make other school's graduates more interesting. The registration process takes care of the differences in the end.*
- *Less technically inclined or trained*
- *The foreign trained individuals seem to be more determined and dedicated to the profession – which is an attitudinal quality that is not easily taught*
- *Manitoba grads are better trained than architects from abroad*
- *Manitobans better acquainted with local culture and practices*
- *Trained abroad have better technical knowledge*
- *Local Interns and graduates are as good or better than those from out of province*
- *Manitoba could be lagging behind technically*
- *Similar*

28. Overall, are you pleased with the Interns in architecture in your employ, or with whom you work on a daily basis?

- *Yes (seven respondents)*
- *Somewhat (one respondent)*
- *No (one respondent)*

29. Graduates?

- *Yes (six respondents)*
- *Somewhat (one respondent)*

30. Students?

- *Yes (six respondents)*
- *Somewhat (one respondent)*

31. Additional comments:

- *We are careful in our hiring practices, however, our experience is that the range of skills and capabilities is highly variable and that minimum expectations must be adjusted depending on the role/tasks we are trying to fill/accomplish*
- *Discard NCARB exams for an experience record book; implement Co-op education and a better interface with practicing professionals as teachers, not just academics. Come up with a better name for arch graduates that are not registered; the name Intern-in-Architecture is humiliating and unworthy for a graduate of six years of education.*

- *Test practicing professionals with NCARB exams to confirm that this system is a good test of professional competence. I suggest that the majority would fail.*
- *All of our Interns over the years have been good.*
- *I think that university architecture students could benefit from more exposure to real-world practice (IE contract documents, project coordination, etc). They might also be exposed earlier to the content of the NCARB examinations.*
- *Pleased with some more than others.*

End of Responses

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES

Many of the questions for our accompanying Intern Career Satisfaction Survey were modeled on similar surveys issued by AIA National Associates Committee with ArchVoices.org, the California Architects Board, the Intern Committee of the AIBC (now defunct), the Intern Committee of the AAA, and the Ontario Association of Architects.

The following surveys and websites were used as reference for this study.

www.archvoices.org

www.aia.org/nac

www.membersurvey.com

http://www.aibc.bc.ca/member_resources/registration/committees/IA/IAC%20Survey%20Results.pdf

These results are available at the MAA in hard copy format, along with the other surveys that were used as reference. We are also hoping that these results will someday be posted online on a link from the MAA website.

Thank you for participating in the MAA IAC 2005 Survey of Architects' Viewpoints of the Intern in Architecture