

A Year of Change

Many of you already know that this profession is slow to change. When talking to colleges I am more likely to hear a fellow architect tell me about the way the things used to be rather than the way things will be. Today is not one of those days. I am happy to share with you some details of the first major change I have seen to the organization since the time I first got involved in 2006.

I'd like to start by talking about what has been referred to as the Member Service Plan. AIA National has recognized that every chapter weather National, State, or Local is different and that because of size, funds and other factors the member experience varies. The goal of the Member Service Plan is to provide every member, no matter their location a standard level of services ranging from CEU's to communications. We are lucky to be in a chapter that already provides a high level of services, third in the state in fact... and in some respects second only bested by the Philly chapter. That being said it is likely that with the new direction from National you will see some increased services, including minimum CEU offerings, enhanced member services, and a more direct and clear advocacy plan.

Additionally the AIA announced that they are embracing new technologies that will increase connectivity and the overall membership experience. Some of these have been rolled out already including the AIAU, the online CEU center. Others have been presented to us at the Grassroots Leadership Conference in more abstract terms, but with the promise that they will increase connectivity, communication, and collaboration between our members and their chapters. AIA National's goal is to have all of the technologies available for members to enjoy within the next two years.

At the local level our most noticeable change in 2015 will probably be our online presence. Our chapter has been functioning with an antiquated webpage for quite some time. It is a relic of the 90's and I wouldn't be surprised if someone were to tell me that it was created using a dial-up modem. All joking aside it is due for an overhaul and a committee of past presidents and future leaders has been formed to address this task. We are currently exploring different models for this transition ranging from maintaining our own website to partnering with the state to create a new online presence. Whichever path we choose I assure you that the content, communication, and general aesthetics will be drastically improved.

The other change that I am happy to report on is the changing face of leadership. As I mentioned earlier I've been involved with our chapter's board since 2006. I've had the honor of serving on all levels of the AIA; local, state, and national through various boards and committees. Back in 2006 it didn't matter what board I served on, I was the only young professional in the room. Over the years our own board has been evolving and I am proud to say that we have at least seven Young Architects and Associates as voting board members. It was encouraging to see this trend reflected across the state at Grassroots. Leaders representing Bucks County and the Philadelphia chapters were also Young Architects. Furthermore I was excited to be present at Grassroots for the first ever Young Architect and first Associate members campaigning for elected positions on the AIA national board. I find it encouraging that the next generation of architects are taking the charge as leaders and aren't simply sitting in the back seat. I believe Pauline R. Kezer said it best when she wrote, "Continuity gives us roots; but change gives us branches, letting us stretch and grow and reach new heights."

Thank you,
Seth H. Wentz, AIA, NCARB