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A Career in Architecture: Shaping Civilization

[By Roshan Tolani]

“Architecture does not exist. What exists is the work of architecture.” -Louis Kahn

How can we doubt the truth of Louis Kahn’s words when we look at the world around us? It is difficult to ignore architecture’s influence on the ways we live our lives. However, to many, architects are not very different from engineers.

Although the term “architect” refers to a professionally qualified individual, the word broadly defines someone who plans and designs all types of buildings and structures. In the words of Roberts Geddes, the first dean of the Princeton School of Architecture, architecture serves our institutions and expresses the values of our culture.

Architects’ Contributions

In the 21st century, architects will influence several aspects of human civilization while shaping the constructed environments that surround us. Architects design better neighborhoods, safer roads, productive workplaces, and cleaner environments by:

- creating and preserving inspirational ideas in built environments
- communicating clearly and convincingly in their structures values of aesthetic beauty
- creating environments that satisfy the physiological, psychological, economic, and spiritual needs of their users

- making habitats safer and healthier by preserving the land’s natural resources

Architecture’s Occupational Tasks

In a broad sense, architects translate users’ needs into physical, constructed solutions. They are usually involved in every phase of a building project, from planning and designing to the completion of construction.

The following occupational tasks are specific to the career of an architect:

- preparing project reports that include materials, equipment, estimated costs, and construction time
- discussing needs and budgets with clients
- working with engineers, drafters, and others to finalize construction drawings and models
- creating layouts for client approval
- helping clients with selection of appropriate sites
- visiting sites to ensure progression of work according to original designs
- preparing operations and maintenance manuals for structures

Practicing Architecture

In practice, architects usually remain associated with projects from the planning stage to the occupancy stage, and they act as the coordinators of teams of specialists. They are paid to ensure that the work of all parties involved is coordinated and fits well with the overall design.

In addition to complying with design guidelines and other regulations of local and federal jurisdictions, architects must pay attention to economic considerations.

The Skills and Abilities of Architects

The architecture profession requires a combination of creativity, technical knowledge, management skills, and good business practices. The range of work architects undertake is so varied that they need to possess skills relevant to all aspects of built environments. The following skills are significant when it comes to finding success and satisfaction in the architecture profession:

- ability to listen to others, ask questions for clarification, and express ideas clearly in written and spoken form
- ability to analyze ideas and use reasoning to create innovations



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- ability to identify problems and think of solutions
- ability to draw conclusions from extensive information
- ability to remain focused
- ability to use mathematical models and scientific methods to find solutions
- ability to work according to schedule
- ability to motivate and direct others
- ability to keep track of work progress
- ability to foresee needs and requirements when designing products
- ability to evaluate quality and performance
- ability to visualize final products
- ability to determine causes of technical problems and address them

Employment Trends in the Architecture Profession

Most employers look for candidates who at least have bachelor's degrees in architecture and the proper licenses. Licensing and registration practices vary from state to state. Some employers prefer to hire their interns. Candidates with superior computer skills and knowledge of CADD programs will have advantages over others in securing better jobs.

Architecture is an excellent profession for those who care about people and the environment and who are committed to developing socially and ecologically sustainable ways of living and working.

ON THE NET

Career: Architects
www.iseek.org/sv/Careers?id=13000:100011

Shaping the Future: Careers in Architecture
www.careersinarchitecture.net

Becoming an Architect: The Journey Ahead
www.arch.uiuc.edu/admissions/undergrad/archprofession

Architecture Careers
www.aia.org/SiteObjects/files/K12CareersinArchitectureBrochure2006.pdf

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