



FROM THE EDITOR

DESIGN AT THE CROSSROADS

Changes in the economic climate are having a deep, fundamental impact on nearly everything, and the world of design and innovation is at the crossroads of many aspects of this change. But changes are nothing new to our world. We've seen the rise in businesses' awareness of design's powerful impact and its embrace of design. We've seen the elevation of methodologies and tools for collaboration. And we've even seen underlying economic shifts of R&D from some continents to others.

Just as business conditions have caused transformations in the role of design, education hasn't escaped pressures to transform itself. The world expects more from design now more than ever, and design education plays a crucial role in preparing professionals to be powerful contributors from the start. Businesses also want to learn how to better harness the power of what innovation brings to new ideas and thinking. If the market doesn't have access to new graduates who offer greater skills each year, then the viability of our profession to the world will lose ground.

From another perspective, other professions are striving to tap into the wave of opportunity that innovation offers; many look at design as a broad offering that could be subdivided, renamed and grafted onto in some way. A continually emerging group of specializations are tapping into design's historical offering—just like “doctor” has now become neurologist, cardiologist, etc.

What has happened? Is education leading the market for innovative thinking, processes and leadership? Is business pushing innovation and design from its own competitive role to seek improved levels of contributions by graduates entering the field?

Some design schools are pushing to reinvent their programs. Not an easy task! The ones that are changing are often experimenting with approaches to connect the disciplines that cooperate in business situations to create a cauldron that replicates the complexities and benefits that come from building comprehensive solutions. Instead of isolating educational silos, co-located, functioning teams set the stage for educational best practice.

But some design schools have not made the shift. Some have not found their voices and missions in the climate of change. The difference between design education programs today seems to have widened, creating clearer distinctions than were evident in the past.

My thanks to Ed Dorsa, IDSA, the outgoing IDSA education vice president and my co-editor for this education issue. He was instrumental in providing insights and connections to the cross-section of educational resources in these pages.

Join me in this view from inside some of these schools. See what your impressions are of the changes occurring at many and where they might lead.

—Gregg Davis, IDSA
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Letter to the Editor

Very nice job on the *Yearbook for Design Excellence*. It seems like the depth, breadth and quality of the solutions that receive recognition improve each year. I think this is a sign of the recognition of the importance of design, as you say in your editorial, “as a critical partner in a powerful corporate business strategy.” One can clearly see that many companies are spending vast resources on design to compete for the global customer base. This yearbook will inspire me and my co-workers for months. Thanks again.

—Scott N. Barton, IDSA