

QUARTERLY OF THE INDUSTRIAL DESIGNERS SOCIETY OF AMERICA **SUMMER 2016**

INNOVATION

The State of Design

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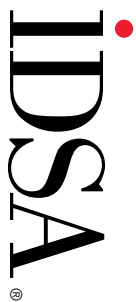
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THE STATE OF DESIGN

CONSULTANT

- 18 **A Design-Led Future** by Simon Kidd, I/IDSA
- 19 **Change As It Ever Was** by Scott Stropkay, IDSA
- 20 **The Good, the Bad and the Enduring** by Donald Strum, IDSA, and Rob Van Varick, IDSA
- 21 **Leadership By Design** by Patricia Moore, FIDSA
- 22 **Adapting to Change** by William Cesaroni, IDSA
- 23 **Maintaining a Proper Vision** by Paul Hatch, IDSA
- 24 **Surprise & Delight** by Julie Heard, IDSA
- 25 **Digital Disruption** by Scott Henderson, IDSA
- 26 **Is the Sky Falling?** by Jonathan Dalton
- 28 **Trash Talk** by Pip Tompkin, IDSA
- 29 **Behind the Inevitable** by Elijah Wiegmann, IDSA

EDUCATION

- 31 **How We Make Makes the World** by Rama Chorpash, IDSA
- 32 **Equipping Future Change Agents** by James W.R. Fathers, IDSA
- 34 **Design Problems for Design Educators** by Sooshin Choi, IDSA
- 35 **Without Boundaries** by Peter Haythornthwaite, IDSA
- 36 **The Discovery of Wisdom** by Owen Foster, IDSA
- 37 **Innovation Integration** by Angela Yeh, IDSA
- 38 **Art of the State** by Lorraine Justice, FIDSA
- 39 **Classroom Disruption** by Tucker Viemeister, FIDSA
- 40 **A Road to World Peace** by Dr. Noel Mayo, IDSA
- 41 **The Big Bang** by Craig M. Vogel, FIDSA
- 42 **An Abbreviated Design Methodology** by Allen Samuels, L/IDSA
- 43 **The Need to Formalize Design Knowledge** by Patrick Whitney, IDSA
- 44 **The Broadening Sweep of Design Education** by Ann-Marie Conrado, IDSA
- 45 **The Human in the Center** by Dave Richter-O'Connell

CORPORATE

- 46 **The Method Designer** by Michael Paterson, I/IDSA
- 47 **Educating T-Shaped Designers** by Ken Musgrave, IDSA
- 48 **Building a Successful Innovation Program** by Matt Eyring
- 49 **Design Streams, Teams & Vision** by Jim Kendall
- 50 **Generalist & Specialist** by Kevin Shinn, IDSA
- 51 **Preparing for Practice Now** by Robert T. Schwartz, FIDSA
- 52 **The Evolving Role of Design** by Hina Shahid, IDSA
- 53 **Think Small** by Rotimi Solola, IDSA
- 54 **Persistence Becomes Pervasive** by Lou Lenzi, FIDSA
- 56 **Maximum Strategic Impact** by Paul Magee, IDSA
- 57 **The Sweet Spot** by Eric Quint, IDSA
- 58 **Full Circle** by Megan Neese, IDSA
- 59 **The Need for Prudence** by Farrell M. Calabrese, IDSA

IN EVERY ISSUE

- 4 **IDSA HQ**
by Daniel Martinage, CAE
- 6 **From the Editor**
by Mark Dziersk, FIDSA
- 8 **Design Defined**
by William Bullock, FIDSA
- 10 **Beautility**
by Tucker Viemeister, FIDSA
- 12 **Book Review**
by Mark Dziersk, FIDSA
- 14 **A Look Back**
by Russell Flinchum
- 60 **Showcase**

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Advertisers' Index

- 7 Autodesk
- 30 College for Creative Studies
- 5 Eastman Innovation Lab
- 1 Essential
- 16 IDSA International Conference 2016
- 16 IDSA Medical Design Conference 2016
- c4 LUNAR
- c3 Mixer Group
- c2 Pip Tompkin
- 17 solidThinking
- 13 Thrive

EDUCATION





EQUIPPING FUTURE CHANGE AGENTS

The question posed was, What is the state of education today: the good, the bad and ugly? If you remember the film of the same name, each of the three main characters was trying to get to the hidden loot first. What are we trying to get to? What's the goal? I would suggest that it is, How to change industrial design education so that it's relevant for the industry both now and in the future? How do we get there? Hopefully by good change, avoiding bad change and limiting ugly change.

One of the keys is to prioritize and leverage the holistic student experience. It's not enough to just think about what happens in individual classrooms. We can add so much more value by considering how we can facilitate emerging designers to leverage the whole university experience: studying abroad, business, humanities, art, technology, internships, etc.

Educators and institutions also have to become more agile to remain relevant. It is vital that we adapt and develop new curricula that respond to changes in the industry so that we can equip our graduates with the skills and competencies they will need.

Students in industrial design are developing a fantastic mix of transferable skills that will enable them to respond to the changing context of practice and to address the needs of roles that have yet to be invented. But do they know this and can they sell these skills effectively to employers and clients?

One of the challenges is that it's sometimes tough for graduates with a diverse mix of skills to demonstrate them to employers who were educated in a different era and have different expectations from a portfolio.

I remain convinced that an education in industrial design is the best preparation for being a critical change agent to help society address the increasingly complex challenges we face.

Can designers save the world? No, of course not, but we can help!

—James W.R. Fathers, IDSA
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Fathers joined Syracuse University in 2013 as the founding director of the School of Design. Prior to this he spent 15 years as a design educator in the UK and 10 years before that as a designer in manufacturing and a consultant to small and medium enterprises on innovation and design.



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