

Getting Publicity

AIA Small Project Forum



METRA Commuter Railroad Station, Prairie View, IL 1997. By Geudtner & Melichar Architects, Lake Forest, IL

Achieving the Level of Publicity Your Small Masterpiece Deserves

*Diana K. Melichar, AIA
Chicago*

Just because you've designed a small masterpiece doesn't mean that everyone will know about it. You have to tell people about it! Look at the number of artists who have died in poverty, relatively unknown in their generation. I'm not disputing Frank Lloyd Wright's genius, but his ability to market himself and his designs was masterful. How do we get publicity for small projects? How do we stop looking around at all the other guys with envy saying "Why did they get published and we didn't?" Below are some ideas that have worked for our firm and others.

Cultivate contacts with the local press I've found the most effective way to get clients and prospects to notice our work is in the local press. Ninety-nine percent of our clients are local, so why not be published in the newspapers they read? I was astonished at how easy it was to call local editors and newspaper reporters to tell them about a neat project we've just completed. Newspapers are constantly searching for home-improvement and human-interest stories. As Sarah Susanka mentioned at last year's AIA convention, "Spin a good story," and someone will be interested: Once newspaper editors know that you are a reliable source for stories, they listen to your ideas. Don't overlook other local print materials that target specific audiences, too, like preservation and home
continued on page 2

PIA



AIA

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Achieving Publicity for Your Masterpiece
- 3 Forum News
- 3 Professional Photography
- 6 Creating a PR Notebook
- 7 Project Publicity
- 9 Free Publicity: Is It Worth It?
- 10 Firm Profile
- 11 Tips and Techniques
- 12 The Power of Publicity
- 13 Publicity: The Big Picture
- 14 Local Commotion
- 16 The Printed Media
- 17 Member Feedback
- 17 Getting Publicity
- 18 Project Profile
- 19 1998 Convention
- 20 Advisory Group

continued from page 1

improvement newsletters, business journals, Chamber of Commerce guides, etc.

Create situations that help other people

I recently interviewed Richard Becker, AIA, of Becker Architects for this article. His firm has been very successful in obtaining publicity, including articles in several shelter magazines, the *New York Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune*. I asked him what helped him to get such attention. He said that he created situations that help other people. This altruistic motivation has given him a great by-product of articles and publicity. Some situations include:

- Since he has cultivated his press contacts, he now helps writers add credibility to their stories by providing supporting examples for them. Once a *New York Times* reporter came to Highland Park, Ill., to look at the teardown problems in the community. Richard offered to chauffeur the reporter and give a tour of the area. Not surprisingly, Richard was cited in the article, and he received much publicity.
- Richard always responds to questions from the public who read articles in magazines and press. Recently, Richard got a call from a window company in Arizona (Richard is in Illinois). They wanted to know how he detailed a window that they saw in a *Better Homes Gardens* publication. Rather than be secretive about his “tricks of the trade,” he faxed them a copy of his detail for their use. In this way, Richard reinforced a positive image of his firm with the public.

- He supports and communicates with other architects. Believe it or not, other colleagues are a great source for publicity and new prospects, since each of us do different types of projects in different locales.

Lecture

I know most people hate it. Polls show that people fear speaking in front of an audience more than almost anything else. Still, lecturing is one way to legitimize your firm and its prominence in the community. Find a topic to talk about, and the audience will come. Some possible lecture topics include:

- Working with an architect. At the Chicago Chapter of the AIA, we followed in Seattle’s footsteps and created our own lecture series. I’ve been giving this lecture now for three years with various AIA partners from my chapter. The audience enjoys learning about the design and construction process, and who knows better about it than an architect?
- Design trends-Realtors love this topic. And realtors are good contacts to cultivate.
- Local history and historical building styles-People are always fascinated by their built environment, but know little about its history or how to “read” it. Give them a little knowledge about building styles, their culture and the time period in which they were built, and you become an “expert” architect to which they refer to others.

Increase your presence with the public

A marketing consultant once told me that our firm’s name should be on the tips of everyone’s lips at cocktail par-

ties. That didn’t mean I was supposed to attend them. (As a matter of fact, I don’t particularly like cocktail parties.) However, his message was clear. To remain in the forefront of potential clients’ minds, you have to remind them that you’re there and available. Increase your presence. Toot your own horn. Here are some ideas that have worked for us:

- One of our new homes was an open house for two occasions, a Chicago Art Institute Tea and a local symphony guild get-together. I took a detail color snapshot of the home, and we produced a little announcement of the events. We sent it to all present and past clients. It was an inexpensive mailing, and the response was overwhelmingly positive. Our manufacturing and residential clients alike were interested in our “other” work.
- Talk. Talk. Talk. One of my best proponents of our work is my dentist. He’s got thousands of clients. One of them is bound to need an architect. My hairstylist has also sent me clients.
- Get involved in the AIA. I can’t stress how helpful the AIA has been for our firm. The Chicago Chapter has a firm resource library for potential clients to browse. We have received several phone calls through this avenue.
- Get involved in your community. One architect in our area is very involved in Habitat for Humanity. The community remembers him for his dedication to all sectors of society, in addition to his practice.
- Give open houses. Realtors give them. Why not architects? This is asking a lot of your clients, but most clients love to show off their new

homes. Invite your past and present clients and prospects to preview an exciting new construction.

- Enter Competitions. If you win, you get great publicity and more credibility with clients. (Don't forget to tell them in your firm write-ups that you won such-and-such award). If you lose, you're much more prepared for the next competition entry. Sometimes you can practically use the same entry for several categories (i.e., Masonry Council, Brick Institute, etc.).

The hardest part about getting publicity is finding the time to make it. Publicity requires an ongoing pursuit of articles, networking, and marketing of your target audience.. Small firms typically lack the money or resources that large firms take for granted. Large firms have staffs of marketing personnel that create press releases, competition entries, and so on. For small firms, it takes extra discipline and an extra effort to reap the benefits of publicity. However, I find that sales calls are easier, and my batting average of winning clients is better. In years where we've stayed on top of our marketing efforts.

Forum News

Cynthia K. Pozolo, AIA

Detroit

Chair; Small Project Forum

As the Small Project Forum enters its fifth year, the challenges and opportunities of our profession are reflected by similar changes in the role of our PIA.

In response to membership feedback, the AIA is focusing on strengthening the bonds among PIAs, component chapters, and the national organization. The Small Project Forum will

join other PIAs throughout 1998 to represent your interests in meetings with the AIA Board of Directors. We have been invited to identify ways that the PIAs can impact the review, development, and implementation of AIA public and ends policies.

Similarly, the Board has been challenged to further the overall objective of each PIA as well as the professional issues facing the architectural profession. Please give me a call or send a fax or e-mail with any issues you would like raised in our May session with the Board. The SPF Advisory Group intends to take full advantage of this opportunity to get our issues in front of the AIA's top administrators.

Speaking of top administrators (though he would hate that title), Donald Wardlaw's term on the SPF Advisory Group has been completed. He was truly amazing in his administration of our PIA affairs, and continues to exemplify his dedication to small project practitioners by assisting us in membership tracking, PIA activities, and-most importantly-accountability to small-project/small-firm practitioners. If you ever received a late newsletter, a rate increase, or poor service from the AIA, it must have slipped past Donald! Thank you, Donald, for all of your work, your vision, and your persistence. You have set our standard for service and performance.

Replacing Donald on the SPF Advisory Group is Edward Z. "Peter" Wronsky, AIA, from Southampton, N.Y. Peter brings the perspective of a sole practitioner to the advisory group, with a wealth of experience in multiple project types. Another change for 1998 is our new director at the AIA, Wainwright Jenkins. Wain replaced Jean Barber, our interim director, in late 1997. Thanks to both of them for their outstanding support!

With our new team in place, we have much to tackle. Wain, Peter, Hy, and I join our local advisor coordinator, Dan Jansenson, AIA, in looking for increased dialogue with you in 1998. Our next opportunity to convene is in San Francisco in May. Please join us at some of the SPF functions, such as the Brochure Exchange or our local-advisor dinner. If you will not be at the convention, please share your expertise by contributing to an SPF report. For 1998, the remaining scheduled topics are: No. 15-Craftsmanship in Architecture and Report No. 14- Contracts & Liabilities Report.

We welcome your input and feedback regarding these reports, since they are our main vehicle of communication within our PIA. We will keep you informed of the status of the Small Project Forum, will count on you to keep us informed of the status of small project practice, and together determine how the two can mutually benefit.

Professional Photography

An Interview with Don F. Wong

*Rosemary McMonigal, AIA
Minneapolis*

RM-I spoke with Don F. Wong about his photography approach. Don received his formal training at the University of Minnesota School of Architecture. After about 10 years of practice as an architect, Don became a professional photographer. His experience in photography extends back about 25 years and is self-taught. Since 1988, Don's photos have appeared in magazines nationally and internationally including: a+u, the AIA Calendar; AIA Journal, Architectural

Record, The Architectural Review, Architecture Minnesota, Architecture, Arquitectura Viva, Art magazine, Baumeister, Blueprint, Business Week, Domus Dossier, El Croquis, El Pais, Housing, Interiors, L'Architecture D'Aujourd'hui, Midwest Home and Design, Minnesota Monthly, Monument, Progressive Architecture, Remodeling, State the Art Magazine, The Sunday Times Magazine, Time, USA Today, and others.
-Rosemary McMonigal, AIA

DW-Architecture covers a wide range of project types, and photography techniques must change to accommodate the project, but some principles hold throughout. The most difficult part of photography doesn't relate to f-stops or filters, but to human interaction and judgment. Photography is subjective. There is no absolute formula for good photography.

Thus, photographers differ widely in their approach to their work. Background, technical expertise, and sensitivities vary, as do results. Photographers apply their own subjective values when creating work; viewers apply their own subjective opinions when judging its merit.

Q: Why should I use photography to promote my architecture?

A: It provides the best value.

It shows your work at its best, since photos present very selective views of your work. Photos selectively show vantage points, carefully controlled lighting, furniture arrangements, and a neat, clean, and fresh environment that hasn't been worn by years of use. Well-kept photos will preserve these views for years. People remember a striking still image.

Also, more people may see your

work through photos than ever see it in person. Conveying concise clear ideas of your designs is most economically done by displaying or distributing photos when compared to any other method (economical in terms of both dollars and hours spent).

Q: What are the advantages of good professional photography?

A: You get high-quality images in less time, with fewer mistakes.

Good photography I'll define as that which serves well the needs of the user.

Good photography invariably takes a commitment of resources (forethought, planning, care, time, and money). The difference between good professional work and ordinary amateur work is primarily the preparation that goes before them. Inspiration, insight, and creativity, even in copious amounts, are poor substitutes for preparation.

Good professional photography happens when there is enough communication and collaboration between the photographer and the architect. It takes time to communicate desires and expectations:

What a good professional photographer does is to ensure that photographer/architect communication takes place and that the necessary logistic preparations are made prior to the photo session. I prefer preparation prior to a session, rather than reshooting.

Q: How do I find a good photographer?

A: Third-party endorsements are best.

But remember that a good photographer is one who does work that you like. Word of mouth and third-party recommendations notwithstanding, a portfolio should stand on its own, under your scrutiny. Photography is highly subjective,

and what may be a good method or result for one person may be unacceptable to another.

The only time you know whether you've found a good photographer is after he or she has done at least one job for you.

Q: How do I make sure I'll get the results I want?

A: Give plenty of feedback to your photographer.

SPEAK UP: Show your photographer photos that you like, and explain why you like them. This gives the photographer insight into your expectations. Explain your expectations. If you're carrying around a mental picture of your project, describe it.

PREPARE: Scout the site together. Often, elements are not as you remembered, designed, or wish them to be. Sometimes there are reasons shots can't be taken as you anticipate. Sometimes better shots will present themselves.

BE THERE: Attend the photo session. Ask for polaroids before committing to film. Attendance at the photo session also gives insight into what can and cannot be done, and the reasons why. Ultimately, it makes you a better photo buyer. This is also the best time to give your most heartfelt feedback.

BACK OFF: Remember that scene when the Sundance Kid was told to stand and hit a target, but couldn't? "Can I move?" he said. When he moved he was a great shooter. Which is to say that when you hire someone to do a particular thing, restricting the method can take away the best shot. Don't be too restrictive in your directions. Navigate but don't steer.

TASTE: Do your own styling (i.e., bring and arrange accessories, furnish effects, props, etc.). Don't expect the photographer to have taste as good

as yours. Photo stylists can be hired, but that's another expense, and then you end up with their interpretation of your project.

GET REAL: Be realistic in expectations. Are you comparing your photos to big dollar advertising photos? If you know anyone in advertising who knows photo budgets ask them about it.

Q: *How can I help my photographer do his job?*

A: I'm glad you asked that.

LEAD TIME: The more time you can give the photographer, the better, to allow for anticipating and solving all the problems.

CONTROL: The best way to get the results that you want is to control as many variables of the photo session as you can.

Hired models can be controlled, passers-by and children cannot. Even willing volunteers can be self-conscious. I tend to shy away from using people in photos at all.

Public facilities in operation often cannot be controlled, so shoot before they're occupied (but after your furnishings have been delivered). Owners change finishes and furnishings over time, so shoot before too much time passes. Shoot before homes change ownership.

There's a reason why filmmakers shoot expensive movies on sound stages: everything is controlled on a stage and fewer errors are made.

OPEN DOORS: To the owner, the designer is a known and trusted friend, and the photographer is a stranger. If the designer is there as an ambassador, doors open and the red carpet unrolls. Shots that owners may be hesitant to allow a photographer are much more likely to be allowed if the designer is there for reassurance. Unforeseen

obstacles presented by the owner that arise during the session can be more easily surmounted by with the help of the designer, Help your photographer by being there.

BYSTANDERS: Large corporate facilities and semipublic spaces have many occupants (employees, security, cleaners, maintenance, users, etc.), who don't have the same enthusiasm for the photo session that you do. They're more likely to help, and less likely to get irritated, if you're there.

QUIET You can intercept bystanders' chit-chat while the photographer gets work done. Everyone who has ever owned a camera is going to ask about which filters to use, or may want to get in on the act. Distractions to your photographer while shooting can cause them to forget a crucial element that can compromise three or four hours of work and all that preparation.

Q: *Why does it take so long just to shoot a few photos?*

A: Because perfection isn't easy, or quick.

There are no small imperfections in still photography, only glaring ones. Time taken to choose vantage points carefully and adjust the camera, the lighting, the furnishings, the accessories, etc., will be rewarded through perfect (or near-perfect) images. Also, the sheer logistics of moving the required gear onto the site, then setting it all up, can be time consuming and exhausting.

Q: *When is the best time to photograph a project?*

A: When your project is at its best.

When the furnishings are new, when the finishes are fresh, when the client still remembers you. When you have plenty of time and can consider more options.

Q: *When is the worst time to photograph a project?*

A: When you're in a hurry.

Right before you have to submit a proposal, enter a competition, or impress a potential client. Photographers need time to adjust schedules, scout locations, coordinate access, prepare or gather equipment and film, process film, edit proofs, order prints, and get it all to you. Not to mention time spent waiting for good weather and then actually shooting the job.

Q: *How do I know which project to shoot, and how much of it?*

A: Round out your portfolio.

Start with the basics. If you pursue a market niche, be sure it's covered before any particular segment of that niche. Don't narrow your portfolio too quickly, since that reduces the potential audience. Do overall shots before details. Consider your clientele. What do they want to see?

At the drop of a hat, can you show potential clients photos that illustrate major aspects of your design philosophy? If you can, you know you've got a good handle on your portfolio.

Q: *When should I thoroughly document a project?*

A: When you've got a real winner.

Especially if you're going to enter an awards competition. If you don't have good photos, don't bother to enter. Since the time allotted to judging each project is limited, and the judges are only human, often a submittal won't be given consideration beyond the first impression. **GOOD PROJECT + POOR PHOTOS = POOR IMPRESSION.**

Q: How do I build an effective photographic portfolio?

A: Adopt a strategy.

Be consistent in your approach, and be persistent over time. Instead of photographing a lot of projects adequately, photograph a few projects well. It's better to have one really good image than a dozen mediocre ones.

Choose subject projects for breadth as well depth.

Organize your photo files; keep track of your photo materials.

Creating a PR Notebook (The Firm's Silent Seller)

Kevin L. Harris, AIA
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

He that tooteth not his own horn, the same shall not be tootethed!

-From "The Kingfish", Larry L. King and Ben A. Grant, Southern Methodist University Press, 1992

Walk into our reception area and you'll find the usual lineup of reading materials; coffee-table books and popular magazines featuring residential architecture and home living. The most popular books viewed by our clients however, are the ones that don't have wide circulation, high price tags, or glossy four color pictures. It's our own homemade show-and-tell books. These albums contain duplicates of magazine articles, copies of news clippings, and newsletters mentioning our firm or its work. We call these binders our public relations notebooks and they are the best way to show our past projects, while highlighting our goodwill and past service to the community.

While seeing our name or project in the press is rewarding, the value of the original mention increases by includ-

ing copies of the item in notebooks. Published materials serve as a third party endorsement. It's not what we say about ourselves, it's what "they" say. Even mentions originating in our office or written by a member of the firm take on more weight when published. We show that we are experts worthy of publishing.

The binders in our reception room act as a "silent salesperson." Often we are told by clients or others who visit our office, "Wow! I remember that project, but I didn't know you did it." The notebooks educate our clients in a way that would be inappropriate verbally.

Additionally, the binders keep all press mentions in top form and ready-for use. Not a minute is wasted looking for the right article to attach to a proposal or letter of interest. The method also preserves and archives the clipping for future use.

The public relations notebook is simple, low-tech, easy-to-make, and relatively cheap. Below are tips for creating your own public relations notebook.

Supplies Needed:

Notebook or other suitable binder:

- *Clear document protection sheets.* While there may be cheaper alternatives, there is no substitute for archival quality, clear polypropylene document protectors. We prefer ones that do not require punching holes in the paper. Document protection sheets are available wherever archival goods are sold. We order TopLoaders™ from Light Impressions (800-828-6216). They run approximately \$14.00 for a package of 50.
- *Two 8 1/2" x 11" copies of the document.*

- *Deacidfyin solutions for treating newsprint.* The deacidifying solution prevents newsprint from yellowing and is available wherever archival products are sold. We use "Book-keeper" spray solutions from Light Impressions.
- *Archival quality box for originals.* Boxes, like paper, can contain acids or chemicals that may make originals change color or deteriorate. For this reason we use archival quality flat storage boxes.

Step 1. Be a hunter/gatherer. Gather all the newsclippings, magazine articles, newsletter notes, etc. that mention or show your firm or its work. We include clippings on our projects even without mention of our name. We also include articles that show the firm or firm members involved in the community, such as a firm member performing a community service or doing volunteer work. No need to wait until you have all your clippings to begin. Start with what you have. As we find articles, we add them to the book since adjusting the order of the sheets is easy. Just recently, after renovating our storage space, we found items that appeared in a magazine 16 years ago. We simply made two copies for the notebook and placed the original in the box for permanent storage.

Step 2. Clone. Regardless of the original size of the document, make two high-quality copies on 8 1/2" x 11" paper, reducing as necessary to caption the mention and the publication information (name and date of publication). Most mentions are on less than a full page, so we cut the mention and the publication information, and copy them onto a single page. Don't worry that the reductions are at different levels. The requisite uniformity comes from

the 8 1/2" x 11" format. When the original is in color, we run two color copies.

One exception to the duplicate rule is where we have multiple tear sheets of the original magazine articles and we use the originals. As an aside, the local newspaper allows customers to order a velox of articles. There is a fee associated with this (around \$40 for a full page with color). However, we find it worth the cost for any special write-up, especially when it's in color. Often we frame the velox of the article.

Step 3. Archive. Archiving the original clippings is an important step in the process. Newsprint turns yellow over time. Before storing the original news clipping, we treat it with deacidifying solution called "Bookkeeper". We then place the clipping in an archival box safekeeping. It is necessary to keep these boxes in the office at the same temperature and humidity as our work environment.

Of course, the most effective way to keep news clippings from yellowing is to photocopy them. While photocopying on acid-free paper is ideal, any photocopy is better than newsprint. It is these photocopies that go into the public relations binders.

Step 4. Assemble. Based on the KISS (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle, we use regular three-ring binders with clear covers. We customize the binders by inserting our stationery with an appropriate laser-printed title.

We find it helpful to arrange our articles in reverse chronological order. Because there are duplicates of each article, one copy can be pulled for copying into the proposal while the other serves as a place keeper. This duplicate method keeps the book in top shape for visitors to the office. For some of the more popular articles we

keep even more copies, so clients or potential clients may take one home.

Step 5. Use and maintenance. It's fair to say that the public relations notebook is the backbone to our marketing effort. Placed in the reception area, it says things about our firm that we can't without braggadocio. We've also gotten referrals and clients from nonclient visitors to the office who viewed the binders.

When it's time to respond to a request for proposal, the binders make it simple to locate support material for the response. For off-site interviews, we often bring the binders with us. If any member of the selection committee wants more information on our firm, we often go to the notebook.

Once created, notebook maintenance is easy. Anytime one of our employees or projects appears in the press, we immediately make two copies of the piece and place them in the notebook. We treat the original with deacidifying spray (if it's newsprint) and place the original in the archival box.

We operate in a reputation-driven market. The public relations notebooks are valuable tools to inform potential clients of our hard-earned reputation and reinforce the firm's reputation to existing clients.

Project Publicity

*Sandra Knight, APR
Detroit*

A competitor's project just received a major article in a popular architectural publication, and you're mystified. "That project is nothing compared to ours. Why did they get the article, not us?" you say to yourself.

Why publicize your work? The third-party endorsement that news

coverage provides increases your firm's credibility among select target audiences or the general public. Favorable news coverage sets you apart from the competition and can even result in incoming new business.

When promoting your projects- and likewise your staff, new services, or firm in general- there are many steps to getting your work published. Almost never does it happen that a reporter from a prestigious publication calls you out of the blue and says, "I heard about your (*blank*) project and I'm going to write a major article about it." In reality, a major project feature is preceded by weeks or even months of work on the part of the firm to develop the "story" of your project, secure the interest of the publication, and take the additional time to work with the writer to bring the article to reality.

So how do you increase your chances of gaining valuable exposure for your project? First things first. Before you commence a project publicity effort, communicate with your client. Make sure he or she is comfortable with the concept of possible media coverage. The worse thing to have happen is to foster the interest of a targeted publication and then have your client pull the plug.

Projects can be publicized at several milestones and with various levels of detail. These can include the contract award itself, the commencement of design and then construction, and finally, upon completion of construction. Because full-blown profiles of finished projects-complete with professional photography-are usually the most gratifying way of gaining favorable exposure for your project (and the most useful to showcasing your capabilities and expertise!), the following basic steps are geared to publicizing a project that is complete.

1. Do your homework: Know your project. In addition to all of the relevant scope information—including area, number of floors, design and construction schedule, construction cost, delivery method, etc.—document why you think your project is newsworthy. For example, state why the project is significant, and identify the owners/clients' goals and how they were realized by your design. Describe your innovative design solution and use of materials, how you overcame challenges as the project progressed, and other key information that tells the editor that your project is indeed worthy of their consideration. Is it a “first” for the owner? A radical departure from the owner's past or their industry altogether? Is there interesting history behind the site? Thoroughly build your case on why this isn't a run-of-the-mill project.

2. More homework: Know the media which you are targeting. If you are seeking to gain a full-fledged project profile, you need to do research into which architectural or design/construction publications publish articles about projects. There are also more general, client-oriented publications that devote special issues on the topic of facilities and profile or refer to a number of projects. Basically, this means you've got to *read, read, read*. Many publications publish and distribute annual editorial calendars; obtaining the current calendar can give you a heads up that you need, for instance, to start talking to them about your health-care project well (often up to six months) before their special health-care issue is to be published. Find out who the deci-

sion-makers are and cultivate your relationship with them, even if they are across the country. Find out their deadlines and when *not* to approach them with your idea.

3. Present your idea. Just like you would with a proposal for an important prospective client, prepare and present your information thoroughly and with great attention to accuracy. Try to think of everything, as often writers don't have the time to track down the information that you left out and may simply decide not to pursue your project because of huge information gaps. Write clearly and concisely, and keep it straight and to the facts. (No flowery brochure-writing here.) Grammar and spelling should be perfect-period.

4. Be specific. State exactly where in the publication you think your idea belongs. This also proves that you closely read the publication. Enclose top quality visuals that are approved for release by your client, ranging from plans to final professional photography. Find out in advance if the publication needs prints, slides or transparencies of your project photos. Don't forget to include general background information about your firm.

5. Call ahead. It is a good idea to call your contact before you mail or overnight your packet, that way you have a chance of he or she looking at yours before it gets buried by the others that arrive during any one day.

6. Follow-up. This is a key step that many take too lightly or neglect altogether. Editors and writers do

not sit around with clean desks just waiting for the next package of information to arrive, eagerly open it, and then decide to pursue it. It is a good idea to politely and briefly call your contact to make sure your information has arrived, and then ask for their recommendation when to call back to obtain their feedback after they have had the chance to make a review. Again, be sensitive to their deadlines. At the same time, find out what else is needed to move your project further down the road to becoming seriously considered for publication

7. Don't keep your success a secret. If everything goes well and your project really has what it takes to be published, and the issue will soon hit the mail or newsstands, don't keep it a secret. Make sure your client and/or owner, your team, and any other key project participants aren't blindsided. If appropriate, ask the editor or writer to expedite a copy or copies of the publication to you as soon as its published so that you can make a quick assessment of your project's coverage. Then quickly disseminate copies (or, at least xeroxes) to your key audiences, with a thank-you note if they assisted you with the publicity effort. With these basic steps understood, who at your firm should undertake such a mission? The answer is easy. It must be someone who has the time and expertise to devote to the effort, because you are kidding yourself if you think it can be done as a “spare time” activity. If you don't have a public relations professional on staff or adequate resources to devote to the effort, it is a good idea to contract an outside PR consultant who has

experience in the industry, the right media contacts, and a good track record of similar publicity..

Obviously, not every editor you approach is going to publish your project. But with a truly newsworthy project and a well-researched and -planned approach, it can be your project (and your firm) that gets the deserved recognition.

Sandra Knight is the manager of public relations at Albert Kahn Associates, Inc., a Detroit-based A/E firm.

Free Publicity: Is It Worth It?

*Laura Montllor, AIA
Port Washington, New York*

With the renovation market booming, it seems home magazines, cables, and satellite TV shows are all clamoring for new material. Who better and more willing to give away material for a chance at the limelight than architects? Here are a few vignettes of our experiences with free publicity:

Press releases: Our first attempts at getting free publicity were press releases. I was already teaching adult education classes on renovation at local high schools when I took some initiative and sent out press releases to several local newspapers. The entertainingly written releases outlined the course materials and included photos. I even diligently followed up with chatty phone calls to the editors. All of this patient effort got *no* response.

The photographer: We decided to hire a professional photographer after we twice attempted to photograph one project ourselves. The project was a large kitchen/family room with a high

clerestory, many windows, glossy granite countertops, and a lot of glare. Our photos were just not doing the design any justice.

- It was not easy to select a photographer; their fees and the quality of their photos vary widely. We finally ended up selecting one on artistic merit alone. The photographer we worked with had a firm idea of what he wanted from each shot. I voiced my opinion (some say I blew my top) when his stylist started putting out cute country-kitchen type props. I definitely wanted a more sleek architectural look. Also, I very much wanted a straight-on elevation shot of the kitchen cabinets. The photographer did not, thinking it was too rigid. We compromised on a few things and he agreed to the elevation shot. Then he sent me out to buy flowers.

The magazine: When the editor of *House Beautiful* called to say she had gotten my name from the professional photographer, I was elated. They were looking specifically for a kitchen renovation and the unique colors of our project attracted them. They needed the 4"~ 4" transparencies from the photographer, and a "before" shot. They asked us to draft very simple before and after room plans, which we did. I was then interviewed by a freelance writer.

After that, communicating with the magazine organization was frustrating. I was given very little information and waited for nine months before getting any definitive response. Even when it was certain our project would be used, I did not know which issue it would be in and no one there seemed to know either. In fact, I did not know that our kitchen had been selected for the front cover until I actually saw the magazine. Imagine my surprise when the cover photo was the straight-on elevation shot that the photographer did not want to take! Inside we got a colorful four-

page spread, but the final text was not like *anything* I had said. The plans had been poorly redrawn by the magazine staff and they omitted several cabinets and columns. My name, the firm name, and location were mentioned correctly. As a whole, the piece was still beautiful. We purchased all the available "tear sheets," because the glossy-paper look was very impressive.

Cable television: Another memorable publicity experience centered on cable television. We began by responding to an ad in the local AIA chapter newsletter from an upstart production company in Minnesota. We got a call from the producer who requested still photos for the "Before & After Show" on the HGTV station. We sent in several house renovation projects. They selected a particularly dramatic transformation that included a whole new second floor and a Victorian-type wrap-around porch onto a small one-story house. They asked for specific interior shots and a narrative, all of which we supplied at no charge. We were not reimbursed for anything, including the cost of enlarging the photos to 8" x 10".

The final product was a short spot at the end of the show. They did not use two of the photos I sent and the voice-over was completely different from my written narrative. Our firm name was prominently displayed (correctly spelled again). The show aired nationally four times last November. Overall, it was very exciting to see our work on TV

All of the national publicity we got was useless in terms of reaching our local market, and, because our practice is primarily residential renovations, our market is very local. Notifying our existing and prospective clients required considerable extra time and money. We did mailings with photos to a list

of over 300 for each event, and ran special ads in the local papers. Once the word 'was out, we received a very positive response from many people. Some even called just to congratulate us.

Although, there have been no commissions as a direct result, publicity is an excellent selling tool. Obtaining national exposure has added a great deal of credibility and accomplishment to our firm's reputation. Another indirect benefit of publicity has been an increase in our standard fees-most people are willing to pay more for a "noted" architect.

Getting good publicity is never really free. It takes considerable effort and attention from the small project practitioner. To make that publicity effective demands considerable extra expense. It is a risk because you have very limited control over the results. The benefits can be very worthwhile, though, to be honest, they are not exactly as earth-shattering as I first imagined they would be.

Of course, national publicity is very, very good for the ego. Seeing our project on the magazine rack while in the grocery store with my two daughters was one of the proudest moments in my life. So go for the limelight-what do you have to lose?

Firm Profile

Scott Wilson, Architect/LLC

Mark Robin, AIA

Nashville, Tennessee

Scott Wilson Architect, LLC is a three-person firm located in Brentwood, Tenn., just south of Nashville. The focus of the firm has been large-scale, luxury homes, with current projects ranging in size from 2,000 to 16,000 square feet and budgets from \$100,000 to over \$3 million. Originally started in 1986 as a

residential design service with general contractors as the primary client base, the firm became registered to practice architecture in 1990 and now devotes itself to custom designed projects.

The experience of working with contractors and having built two personal homes, as well as multiple early jobs in various construction trades, has proven valuable in construction materials and methods. That early experience has also proven valuable to principle Scott Wilson in team building skills. One of the key components of a successful project is the ability to get all of the professionals and owners to communicate freely with each other

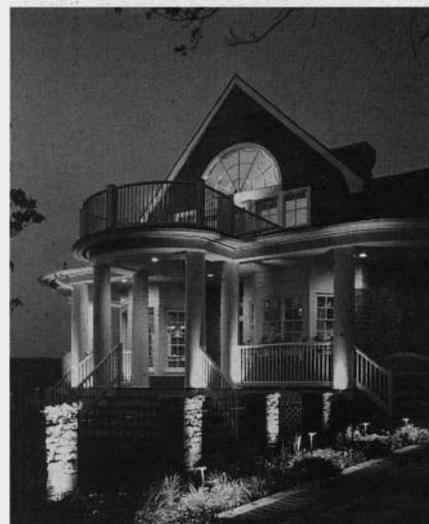


Stone Bridge Farm

during the project and work together to achieve the owner's goals.

Recent projects include vacation homes, several new and renovated homes, clubhouses, a music row studio, and a dentist office, with projects in Middle Tennessee, Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina.

The design philosophy of Scott Wilson has been to involve the owner as a member of the design team and offer choices to encourage the owner's input on the project. This is typically done with sketches presented to the owner after lengthy initial interviews. The owner is given the opportunity to critique various schemes and pick and choose ideas until the design takes shape.



Jackson Lake House

While this approach is uncomfortable for some architects, it has helped Wilson build a solid reputation in Middle Tennessee as one of the top local architects for small projects. He has been honored with several awards and publications. The firm's clients include local business people as well as numerous celebrities, including top pop, rock, and country music entertainers, agents, and producers.

With the use of computers and constant site visits, the firm is able to produce detailed documents and specifications to maintain a high level of control throughout the design and construction process. Once construction begins, Wilson goes beyond the typical periodic site visit and continues the team building process. A mix of individual site visits and group meetings are held, usually followed up with to-do lists to ensure all do their part to keep construction moving along. This is generally appreciated by the owner and also other team members who welcome the faxes and memos as convenient reminders of what they need to do as well as what other team members are doing that will affect them.

While the awards and publications



Stone Bridge Farm

have been great exposure, the typical client is one that has been referred by a past client or a past member of a project team such as the contractor or interior designer. Wilson has found the team approach to be a great way to be creative and to fulfill the client's dreams. And when an architect makes someone's dreams come true, it's one of the greatest feelings any professional can ever experience.

Tips and Techniques

Tips From Scott Wilson, Architect/LLC

Mark Robin, AIA

Nashville, Tennessee

1. Have projects professionally photographed. While this may be expensive, presentation is very important for architects, so it is important to put your best foot forward.
2. Enter design competitions. The more you enter, the better your chances of exposure. Due to the expense and time involved in preparing entries, try to be selective and enter competitions suited to your project.

Scott Wilson's farm is featured in our Firm Profile, page 10 of this report.

Deal With It!

Cynthia K. Pozolo, AIA

Detroit

Despite our best efforts directed at positive publicity, we must, occasionally, be prepared to deal with negative publicity. The more we open our practices up for public (re)view, the greater the likelihood that we will receive unwanted scrutiny.

The avenues for publicity discussed in this report (referrals, publications, marketing materials) can also be avenues for negative feedback and commentary. Be aware of your firm's reputation, and be proactive in keeping it favorable.

- *Don't* give your clients the opportunity to call you unresponsive
- *Don't* take credit for work that is not yours
- *Don't* overstate your qualifications, only to disappoint your clients
- *Don't* ignore negative publicity. Explore its source, troubleshoot it,

respond to it, and somehow, deal with it, before it deals you a bad reputation!

(Sometimes, a positive message works best with a negative 'spin on it!')

Local Publicity

Eugene M. Hollandel, AIA

AIA Connecticut

If you have not tried it, a silent auction is an effective and worthwhile way to generate some local publicity. First, it's a great opportunity to donate to the cause of your choice tax-free. Second, it provides exposure in a pleasant environment with minimal effort on your part. A small display, photo, or model -or simply a written description of your firm and services, plus lots of business cards, is all you need.

For those unfamiliar with this process, you barter one hour or so of your firm's services for a specified dollar amount that is posted next to your service announcement. People stroll about enjoying food and drinks and consider the range of exhibits, which often include such things as dinner for two at a local restaurant, or a particular electronics device offered by a store. Bids are presented privately and the resulting winning bid is announced.

Even if your services are not bid on, you still get a chance to network with the invited guests. Encounters of this kind happen regularly and you can easily select those that fit your schedule. For prospective clients eager to begin their next architectural project, this is a low-risk way for them to get started and a good technique for you to present your credentials to interested parties.

Before and After

*Diana K. Melichar, AIA
Chicago*

A fun and very affordable marketing technique for remodeling projects is the before/after snapshot comparison. Our client portfolios are filled with expensive, professionally photographed works, but more clients respond with surprise and amazement at the transformations shown in our before/after project photos.

When we survey a property to be remodeled or addition to, I'll take a photo from one vantage point that "tells the story." Then, after the project is completed, I go back to the identical spot to photograph the "after."

Guidelines for Publicity

*Charles G. Pool; AIA
Potomac Valley Chapter*

I've noted that many marketing and publicity professionals describe a similar set of guidelines that should be used in initial meetings with potential clients. Kim Gordon in her book *Growing Your Home-Based Business*, discusses the following:

- Meet only with "qualified" prospects, someone who is willing to pay for your services, has a predetermined budget, is clearly and earnestly searching for an architect, and not just free advice or ideas. A "good prospect" could turn into a great client.
- For each meeting, have an objective that moves a prospect one step closer to a professional relationship. Come prepared with the materials, portfolio, brochures, that reflect your professional skills, strengths and unique characteristics.

- Determine a plan for every meeting in advance. Try to find out as much as you can about your client and project before the meeting. Review similar projects that help to establish your expertise for theirs.
- During the meeting, try to make observations that will establish a "connection" with your prospect. Look for some common interest/personal connection that fosters a more favorable relationship.
- Guide the meeting with open- and closed-ended questions.
- Listen carefully and look for problems, concerns, and objections that provide an opportunity for you to describe your own strengths, and turn objections into opportunities. Objections signify an underlying need; lack of objections could mean that a prospect has already decided not to use your services.
- Probe for spoken and unspoken objections using your intuition to empathize with your prospect. Learn to focus all your energy to listen and understand your prospect.
- Having determined needs, try to reach an understanding to an agreed-upon action. This action could range from scheduling a visit to another project, scheduling a visit to your office to see some other projects, agreeing to the time of a next call, simply putting them on a mailing list, or sending them referrals. Describe the actions you plan to take.

Finally, follow up in order to reinforce the positive impression you already have generated.

The Power of Publicity-Free Coverage in the Print and Broadcast Media

*Charles G. Pool, AIA
Potomac Valley Chapter*

Business was slow for our firm in 1993 and 1994, as it was for most firms across the country. We found residential work (our specialty) increasingly competitive as layoffs were prevalent and freelancers sought work wherever they could.

Therefore, the recently formed AIA Chapter Single Practitioners' Special Interest Group decided to focus on an elusive concept to most of us—marketing. How do we market, where do we begin, and what should we do?

Numerous speakers and experts came to help our group, such as Kim Gordon, founder of the Marketing and Communications Counsel and author of *Growing Your Home Based Business*; marketing directors for design/build firms; sales-training agents; and fundraising groups. We often shared our thoughts.

Every one of us understands the necessity of developing a business plan, and, consequently a marketing plan to determine goals, budgets, and plans for action. So we asked ourselves How do we get most of our leads? We kept records and tried to find a relationship between our better projects (meaning we would like to get more of the same) and how we got those leads,

We discovered that the majority of our projects came from referrals from past clients and repeat work, but the quality jobs we desired came more often from publicity. You can have a great practice, but unless your name is out there, no one will know that you exist. We've often received calls from clients years later, prompted by clip-

pings or photos they've saved for a future time when they were ready to begin their dream project.

One of our Potomac Valley chapter meetings was titled "Marketing without Money," presented by Tana Fletcher, an award winning journalist. Her book *Getting Publicity* which she coauthored with Julia Rockier, was available at that meeting. "This book is aimed specifically at individuals and organizations whose ambitions are bigger than their bankrolls," she said. "Our goal was simple: to demonstrate that anyone can learn the skills necessary to profit from free publicity."

Fletcher began by discussing the advantages of publicity:

Cost-It makes use of the media (considerably less expensive than advertising) to reach the public

Size of audience-It can reach thousands of people

Credibility-One is perceived as an expert

Impact-Publicity is persuasive

Versatility-Can place you in the spotlight at any time

Longevity-A permanent record that can be shown to clients, for quotes, or a way to garner more publicity.

After a short test to determine one's publicity quotient, the basic understanding of how publicity works, she leads the reader through "what to publicize, how to publicize, where to publicize, and when to publicize."

A publicity planner (a place and a plan), a filing system to direct your publicity, and a blueprint for action become the center for all publicity-related activities. It should sit side-by-side with accounting, job files,

and other important information so that you acknowledge that it is an equal element of your business-the publicity or marketing department of your practice. In this "place" should be all the files, photographs, biographies, firm profiles, correspondence, industry news, clippings and quotes, promotion ideas, media lists, press releases, media kits, and materials.

Fletcher also presents a form for determining one's publicity goals, suggesting that "one look at several factors, including the audience you hope to reach through your efforts, the amount of media attention one is hoping to generate, and the time one is willing to spend pursuing publicity."

With this in mind, she then discusses finding opportunities for publicity-seeking media attention for your business. The basic rule is that one must do something interesting such as promotional events, seminars, taking part in public events, riding the coattails of a national trend, a community good deed, adopting a charitable cause, setting up a beautification committee, or establishing an award. Also, you could try the back door approach (eventually the press will mention your firm), use a celebrity connection, join clubs, make use of anniversary dates (so many years after an important event), seasonal activities, and publicize any accomplishment. Write informational newsletters, advice columns, or consumer hints. Discuss a specialized project, or be the subject of a trade publication. Any ideas should go into the publicity planner. It will start to grow.

The rest of Fletcher's book describes the details-the press release, preparing publicity materials, the media kit and sending out your message, the media interview, public speaking, polishing your publicity techniques, and implementing a publicity program.

The book is full of worksheets, publicity ideas, and samples. While the book is meant for all, the concepts apply directly to the architectural profession and how to get your name out there in front of desired clients in a sincere, positive way; take it one small step at a time; and snowball it into a thriving process that feeds your practice by "capitalizing on the power of publicity."

Publicity: The Big Picture (A Mosquito's Perspective)

*Lisa Konie Stacholy, AIA
Atlanta, Georgia*

The Mosquito

The small firm should be in charge of its own destiny, with no excuses. That's a pretty big bill to fill, especially in large markets with page after page of architects in the phone book and regular appearances in the newspaper and local glossies. For our small firm, getting publicity for projects and the firm is a small component of a larger marketing effort. Because our firm is not one of the big dogs in town, we approach the publishing concept differently. Rather than starting from the perspective of "We did this, We did that, We're so big, We're so good, You (the client) need us to grace your project with our presence," our firm considers the client's perspective as the point of beginning.

Research

Our firm formulates a research document with a two-part series of questions:

Part one-What is important to the client? What do they want to accomplish? And what are the main goals typically sought for their projects?

Part two--How can our firm help the client clarify their priorities? How can our firm incorporate the client's objectives within the confines of small projects? And how can our firm use past experiences and resources to attain project goals?

Rather than using this research as reference on only one client; we consider it a living document subject to reinform, update and amend as suggested by on-going client relationships and project experiences. The two part questions strive to take the "them" of the client and "us" of our firm to make a collective "we" that has the ability adapt to different players and criteria as projects dictate. In short, our firm tries to know our clients well enough to consolidate the right place, time, and answers. We try to make it easy for the client to want to call on us again and again. The document is the first stop resource for future marketing and "we" building.

Gather Information

Knowing our clients has been indispensable for our firm. When visiting our clients' offices, we try to notice what trade journals are lying around (both those that are dog-eared from use and those that have never been opened). This goes back to trying to find out what is important to our clients. The list of journals and trade magazines gives us a starting point of targets for our publicity efforts. We'll then get on the mailing lists of these journals. The purpose is threefold: a) to help keep informed of what our clients are learning, b) to formulate a method or plan of where to get projects and ideas published, and c) to receive alternate journals (I think mailings lists are "sold" to others-after a while, we receive journals from allied fields).

Put it to Use

After collecting research information and finding the correct, media or conduit, our firm tries to match up projects or experiences in our office with the right media for exposure. For example, we designed a two story residential addition with a foot print of only 400 square feet. The design featured large scale spaces with a dramatic four-vault gable (for the kids in the house) that was balanced by cost-effective but high-impact materials, such as pine wood floors, wood casement window walls, and fabricated cementitious rock exterior. We looked at the project from the perspective of magazine/journal editors to determine what features would likely sell the project to publishers. In short, we were looking for the "wow factor" to hook the publisher. We found a nice match between wood materials (doors and window walls) and the wood door/window manufacturer's trade journal. Lucky for us they were sponsoring a competition for new and renovated projects. We prepared an entry package, sent in the fee, and waited.

Three days after the winner's notification deadline, we received a phone call. No, the project didn't win, but the editors really liked it. Apparently, the match between the photos and project description supported the goals of the magazine. "We would like to feature the project in our winter issue," they said. "Is that okay?" We replied, "Sure, where do we sign?" Although we were disappointed not to receive their award, being published in that issue has given us more credibility than a portfolio without publications or glossies.

Be Consistent

Like marketing, it is really tempting to allow the priority of getting published to slide, relative to other aspects of

running a small firm like project deadlines, invoicing, AIA continuing education, and cleaning the office. But, if tackled in small increments, getting published can be manageable and an enjoyable diversion from the daily grind. That is what is nice about getting those trade journals delivered on a periodic basis-they remind us to stay informed and keep an eye out for matches between our projects and various media. It seems like the more open our eyes are to the possibilities, the more possibilities we see.

We also try to make a habit of photographing projects at all phases. When publishing opportunities present themselves, we're prepared. Matches between in-progress projects and journals may also exist. For these opportunities, we've had some success with a letter to the editor approach, referring to a past methods and materials article and describing our alternate solution (remembering to include those in progress photos and detail drawings). After all, if the magazine can include more for free it will likely get included; and you'll likely get more of your work published.

Local Commotion

*Donald Wardlaw, AIA
Oakland*

One route to publicity runs through local AIA chapters. I know of instances where AIA architects have collaborated to publicize and promote their work, and I'd like to report on a couple of instances at my own chapter.

I have managed to discuss the matter of collaboration with architects from around the country (AIA convention is a real opportunity for this kind of networking), and I find that it works well at many chapters and doesn't work as

well at others. At some chapters the competition between architects is too pronounced for collaboration on publicity (or for exchanges on practice methods for that matter). At other chapters the competitive environment allows collaboration.

My chapter (one of predominantly small firms) has been one where competition for work does not inhibit our willingness to collaborate. I speculate that this is because of a couple of things. First, we are not stumbling over each other trying to land the same clients. The basis of hiring tends to be relationships and reputation, so the visibility of our competitors, or comparisons with them, do not threaten the basis of our opportunities. Second, many among us share a view that if we as (AIA) architects have a more visible and positive profile, it will expand our opportunities for work by increasing the demand for architects. This, of course, is dependent on our ability to render services that meet public expectations; and, therefore, collaboration on practice methodologies is in the interests of both the profession and our individual firms.

In describing our work with two local programs, I acknowledge that our experience will seem useful and applicable in the context of some chapters and not others.

Our first program, Architecture Week on College Avenue, took place in April 1994. College Avenue is an important avenue running between Oakland and Berkeley, and its buildings hail from all parts of the modern era (that is up to 100 years old—admittedly not the truly ancient ages found among buildings in the Midwest, or the Neolithic remains of New England). It is a slightly upscale urban area with a thriving pedestrian-scale commercial district (all arrayed along College Avenue). It is an area

with a continual demand for architects for urban renovations, and, demographically, its inhabitants look a lot like those many of us call clients.

Our program took five people four months to develop. It consisted of a self-guided walking tour, a lecture on the history of the neighborhood, and an exhibit of the work of firms in our chapter. We found a resident historian whose consuming hobby was charting the history of the College Avenue area. Hobby does not connote amateur work, only that she was not getting paid for it. Her research included the basic facts of the buildings on College Avenue: when they were built, who built them, who paid for them, who designed them, and what they were used for. We put this information into a Filemaker Pro database and then printed out placards with this information, including the date of construction in large type. Of course; they all noted that the event was sponsored by the American Institute of Architects. We mounted them on thin blue colored railroad board and then went around to the merchants along the street and asked if we could put the placard in their window for a week. Most were eager. These placards created a form of street decoration and sense of event as one traveled from one end of the street to another (about 2 miles). After creating a map which we distributed via merchants, we had the basis for a free self-guided tour.

We then borrowed the sanctuary of a church in the middle of the avenue, which happened to be designed by Julia Morgan, a regionally famous architect who had her office and did much of her work in the Oakland-Berkeley area. There we sponsored a free lecture with slides on the history of the area by our historian. It was a standing-room-only event.

Oh, I almost forgot about the publicity part. We also borrowed a couple of vacant store spaces for the week. We set these up as galleries, with displays of work by the firms in our chapter. And we worked with local journalists to publicize the event. One headline in the *Oakland Tribune* went something like, “College Avenue Revival Led By Its Architects.”

Our second program was developed over about 2 years by 6 people. The stimulus for this program arose in our Small Firm Forum where a few of us thought we could (and should) make some effort to shape public perceptions about what we do and the value of our services. We forgot to name it, but it evolved into three parts: a book, a display library, and a seminar. The book was inspired by one produced by AIA San Francisco’s Small Firms Great Projects program.

The book includes brief narratives on what the AIA is, what an architect does, and how to hire an architect. This is followed by text and photographs describing the work of participating firms. It also includes complete contact information for each firm.

Since we advocate the hiring of professionals like architects, we thought it correct to hire a professional graphic designer for our book. Our designer prepared layout templates and worked with us on setting the criteria for submitted text and photographs (number, size, length, ktc.). We spent almost \$6,000 on the designer and another \$8,000 to print 750 copies (with black and white photos). Our designer worked with us, like an architect would, to ensure that printing was done at a fair price by competent technicians using properly specified materials.

We sold facing-page spreads to member firms for \$200 each. This covered a bit less than half our expenses.

I think after seeing the final product most would have been willing to pay a bit more. (I wish we had charged more). We sell the book to bookstores for about \$12, to AIA members for about \$17 and to the public for about \$20. We did name the book: *Local Architects: Inspired Work*.

We also developed what we call the Display Library, which is a collection of 30-inch-square boards created by participating firms, about themselves. Unlike the book where we controlled the graphic arrangement, kind and length of text, and quantity of photos, with the Display Library anything goes, except that size is specified, and a 3-inch-square space in the right-hand corner is reserved for an AIA identity which we affix. Like the book, member firms subscribe to the Library at \$50/hoard. This helps to offset some of our costs. We encase each board in a metal frame. These can then be mounted in a demountable framework created with PVC pipe and fittings. We created a database to keep track of the boards, where they get displayed, etc. We have, thanks to a heroic spousal contribution, denim bags emblazoned with the AIA logo for carrying around the boards and the framework. A display can be set up in about 30 minutes. We spent about \$900 on the framework. Metal frames in quantity run about \$15 each.

The final piece in our program is a seminar entitled "Making the Right Start." For this we drew on the experience of public seminars held by AIA Chicago and AIA Seattle. This is the most difficult part of our program to get working right. We are still experimenting.

AIA Seattle holds monthly seminars for home owners at their chapter office. They have been doing it long enough to where it has become a regular known

event. I believe they draw about 15 on average. We designed our program to travel. We also have given it a different emphasis than the Seattle or Chicago programs. Instead of providing an overview of the entire process of working with an architect, we focus mainly on the beginnings of the process through preliminary design. We thought the value of an architect in preparing drawings was understood and credible. We wanted to impart an awareness of how early decisions are crucial to the quality of the end product and how the skills of an architect, employed from the very beginning, can make the difference between success and muddling through.

I should note that our chapter area covers about 30 communities each with their own, often bewildering to the home owner, rules and guidelines for development. So we designed our program to provide attendees with practical information on the planning process 'in their communities. In fact, we went so far as to incorporate participation of local planning departments' as cosponsors and copresenters.

We devised an outline script that sets out the main talking points. They occur in a six-part organization: an introduction of the program and presenters; an overview of what zoning is; a more detailed overview of the role of zoning in the particular community (provided by a member of their planning staff); a discussion of how home owners can manage the process of preliminary design and securing zoning approvals; a discussion of how an architect manages these matters; and finally, an overview of the big picture, the value of design and its role in creating a comfortable place to live.

Each seminar is presented by two architects and takes two hours. There are slides at the end of the zoning

overview (neighborhood scenes) and at the end of the program (examples of well-designed, and not so well-designed, homes, spaces, and additions). We charge \$30/household. Good attendance is an audience of 10 to 12, less than what we imagined. We hand out prestamped post cards for evaluating our program. These cards show that our program is received with real enthusiasm.

I almost forgot the publicity part again. Remember that the people who come to our seminar are at the very beginnings of a home-building or improvement process. Typically they are thinking, "where do I begin?". But they are all going to build something.

The first thing they see when they arrive is our display library which is very nice to look at and says: think architect. At the conclusion of the program we hand out a resource packet. In addition to the handout materials provided by the planner, they also receive a bibliography, an ALA brochure, bios on the speakers, and a copy of our book.

This is what we have done. I'm of the mind that a little commotion is a good thing.

The Printed Media

*Eugene M. Hollander, AIA
AIA Connecticut*

Most of us focus on a half dozen or so national publications when we think about getting our work published. It's natural, after all, we have all grown up with those familiar icons of the architectural press. But consider that over 23,397 magazines and newspapers are published annually in the United States. Of these, 8,403 are exclusively devoted to trade and professional areas. In the field of construction the number

approaches 350 titles--and these numbers are conservative!“Many think the universe is twice as large. In Connecticut alone, there were 110 newspapers and 265 magazines published last year. In New York State, 809 newspapers and 2,129 magazines.

And what’s to say that the construction press is the exclusive or the most appropriate place to get the best coverage of your work? After all, architects (not prospective clients) read the architectural periodicals. Most of us want to get published to attract new work from the largest possible number of prospective clients.

I decided to look at what my clients read in the way of magazines and newspapers. This encouraged me to define my target audience (young couples with children moving from apartments in the city to suburbia, for example) and select local media that they might find interesting. The vast majority of newspapers and magazines are local and regional, not national, so this focus provides abundant publication choices.

Once your selections are made, contact the local editor. You will be surprised to see how eager most are to consider your story. What we often forget is that magazines and newspapers are dependent upon good content to attract loyal readership. Stories of local people, their experiences and accomplishments, make good reading. It is what distinguishes them from the big nationals. If your specialty is residential, as mine is, you may find the seasonal home editions in your local town paper a worthwhile place to start. Call up the newspaper and request a schedule. They plan these editions far in advance and generally feature only a few such articles.

Usually, all you need to interest an editor is a short description of the project together with a photo. If they

decide to use it, they will probably shoot their own photograph and will surely write their own story. You will generally be contacted by phone for all the details. And do not forget to get your clients’ consent. Most are happy for the attention and are proud of their homes. Testimonials from satisfied locals in the community, with photos of the family using the new spaces, make for tremendous, low-key, credible publicity, and remember it’s all free!

Member Feedback

*Laura Montllor, AIA
Port Washington, New York*

In Report No. 112 Time Management, issued August, 1997, Hy Applebaum issued an SOS. Hy sent his SOS to help him eliminate his other SOS (‘Stuff On Stuff’). Thank-you, Laura, on behalf of Hy and his assistant, for this neat submittal!

In specific response to Hy’s SOS:

I am also a compulsive pile maker. This habit showed itself when I worked for other firms but was kept at bay by a very effective secretary. When I opened my own office, the piles got much worse because all of the space was mine, and there was no one to stop me.

I only have two recommendations:

- Behave as if someone else will be finishing your work tomorrow.. This will force you to organize, take clear, complete notes and messages. Every piece of paper should have a date, project number, and/or title. Your assistant can then file fairly quickly.
- Decide on a time of obsolescence for articles, product literature, etc. In the upper corner, write “garbage” and a date, either months or years in the future. This allows someone else (a ruthlessly efficient person) to

throw out all garbage from files without your supervision. As a crutch, I sparingly use “garbage=never” for items I just can’t part with. We even do this with our computer files, since much correspondence is hard copied in our project files.

Using these two methods’has helped considerably, making the transition from a solo practice to an office with employees easier.

I also still make piles freely in my personal life.

Getting Publicity

*Heather McKinney, AIA
Austin, Texas*

Getting publicity is often a function of being in the right place at the right time-in others words being prepared and able to capitalize on opportunities. For example, we had great success this year with a tiny project that has garnered more than its fair share of attention.

The project was a 300 sf guest house and breezeway addition to my own little 1956 house (little as in less than 800 sf itself). The project was completed April 1997 and we immediately had a great local photographer, Paul Bardagjy, photograph it. (Although it didn’t happen in this case, we have been placed in national publications by our photographers who have contacts in the trade and who are often paid by the magazines for the use of the photographs in an article.)

The second thing that we did was to prepare a presentation site drawing and floor plan of the project. We then used these materials to submit the project for the Austin AIA Homes Tour and Design Awards.

We were accepted on the Homes Tour which attracts about 1000 people

over a two-day period. The Tour was in October and has already generated several active projects in our office. It also attracted the attention of a freelance writer, Lisa Germany, who wrote a book *Harwell Hamilton Harris and his ve& interested ih 50's architecture*. She used our photos and wrote an article which was accepted for *House Beautiful* (coming Spring 1998) Winning a local design award got us in the Austin paper and got the attentidn of one df the jurors, Reed Kroloff, who is an editor for *Architecture* magazine. He too is now in possession of our little slide packet of photos and drawings.

Sometimes even failure brings dividends. We submitted the project for the Texas Society of Architects Design Awards, and although we didn't win an award, we attracted the interest of the Texas Architect editor, Susan Williamson, and the project ended up as part of an article written by Val Glitsch in this month's issue.

After a while these things can take on a life of their own. We are currently being considered for *Lynette Jennings's Style*, a highly rated show on the Discovery Channel. Next stop-Hollywood (just kidding).

We were surprised that we got so much exposure from such a small project-apparently size and cost are not good indicators of what people found newsworthy. Each of them had different angles that they wanted to explore and all of them wanted our drawings and our photographs (ASAP). Having multiple packets saved us.



Interior view of new living space

Project Profile- A Treehouse Cast in Granite

*Lisa Konie Stacholy, AIA
Tucker, Georgia*

"Our objective was to provide additional living space for an expanding family," recalls architect Lisa Konie Stacholy of Tucker, Ga. "The scale between the existing house--built in the late 1920's of Stone Mountain granite-and the addition was a concern because of the sloping wooded site and creek."

The owners wanted a screened porch and a direct connection to nature. Wood windows and doors were specified for the job because they provided the necessary transition between the living areas inside and the outside without

severing or isolating one from the other.

"High and sloped ceilings, wood skylights and window composition expand the addition beyond traditional limits to a 'treehouse-like' character," Stacholy explains. "The natural quality of wood easily relates to the inherent qualities found in the wooded site. The wood windows and doors afford an additional layer of pattern and texture for the interior and exterior views."

The residence is located in Roswell, Ga., near Atlanta. Two floors were involved: a 20 x 19 foot addition, a 15 x 15 foot kitchen, and one bedroom, making four bedrooms in all to tie in with the stone mountain granite, a cement panel material that simulates granite was used for the new siding along with glulam beams. The addition was framed conventionally, with a gypsum wallboard interior finish. Flooring is pine strip.

1998 Convention- Building Bridges

Cynthia Pozolo, AIA
Detroit

Check out the following events at the 1998 Convention, May 14-17, in San Francisco. Activities listed below are just a few of several which are of particular interest to SPF members.

Workshops

(Note pre-convention date)

**Small Project Firm Marketing:
Architecture as a Contact Sport!**

May 13, 8:00 a.m. -Noon

James R. Franklin, FAIA

**Fourteen Traits of High-Impact
Project Teams**

May 13, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

Frank A. Stasiowski, FAIA:

Seminars

**Project Team Bridges for Small
Firms: Forming the Team to
Effectively Manage Project Risk**

May 14, 1:45-3:15 p.m.

Mike Meyers, CPCU; Barbara Sable

**Sidekicks or Saddlebags-
Choosing Business Partners
Who are Right for You!**

May 15, 8:00-9:30 a.m.

Maria Ort

**Blueprint for Successful PR:
Strategies for Small Firms
and AIA Chapters**

May 15, 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Hymes; Uppert; Reopke

Networking

Brochure Exchange and Reception

May 15, 5:30-7:00 p.m.

Bring your-marketing materials for some feedback from peers and professionals! Always fun and informative.

Sole Practitioner's Breakfast

May 16, 7:30-8:30 a.m.

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If you would like to report on issues relevant to the Small Project Forum from your area on a regular basis, we invite you to join our network of local advisors. Please call Daniel Jansenson, AIA.

www.aiaonline.com