

## **To Architectural Interns: Preparing for the ARE Construction Documents Services**

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As an architectural intern who has recently graduated and is entering the profession, you are faced with some formidable challenges on your way to licensure. You have to prepare for and take the Architectural Registration Examinations (AREs), but you also have to meet Intern Development Program (IDP) requirements by working a minimum number of hours on specific professional work activities. If you are like many interns, your role has been limited to preparing presentation drawings and construction drawings. You most likely have gotten few opportunities to get experience in many of the required IDP activities, such as construction contract administration (CCA), project management, contracts, bidding and negotiation, and specifications. Since a good portion of the ARE's Construction Document Services division tests you in topics many candidates are not familiar with, it could be quite challenging for you without proper preparation. Here are some tips to help you better understand some of these topics:

### **AIA Contracts**

The AIA contract documents form the basis for most design and construction contracts. Even when clients write custom contracts (not unusual for large institutional or government clients), the contracts often rely on the AIA documents for much of their language. Since many of the ARE's contract-related questions are based on these documents, you need to be familiar with them.

The AIA provides more than 70 types of documents in the A-series (Owner-Contractor) and B-series (Owner-Architect). However, you don't need to thoroughly know all 70. Instead, you should focus on *A101–Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Contractor*, *A201–General Conditions of the Contract for Construction*, *A701–Instruction to Bidders*, and *B101–Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect*. You will likely be tested on the definitions of various construction terms, such as *addendum*, *change order*, and *submittal*. You should also know the responsibilities of the owner, the architect, and the contractor during the construction phase. Although *A101* is an agreement between the owner and the contractor, you should be familiar with its provisions, since the architect is often designated to be the neutral decision maker when a dispute arises. Similarly, *A201–General Conditions of the Contract for Construction* sets forth the responsibilities of and the relationships between the owner, the contractor, and the architect during construction. The architect's role as the administrator of the owner-contractor agreement and (to varying degrees) as the owner's representative is defined in this document. *B101*, *A101*, and *A201* complement each other and, if used unaltered, should contain no conflicts. Therefore, to function as intended, these documents are ideally executed jointly. Since the *A101*, *A201*, and *B101* are based on the traditional Design-Bid-Build delivery method, you should also have knowledge of the other contracts in the A- and B-series that address other delivery methods.

### **Getting the right resources**

You should also be familiar with such topics as commissioning, building codes, and environmental issues. The International Building Code and the LEED Reference Guide can strengthen your knowledge on these topics. The AIA's *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice* is a valuable resource; its recently

published 15<sup>th</sup> edition completely updates its contents. You should also read publications by other professional organizations, such as the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) and the National Society of Professional Engineers. CSI's *Project Resource Manual* is an excellent single-volume reference book for all the construction documents– and CCA-related topics. It also covers all aspects of project delivery, from project conception to facility management. (Unfortunately, the 5<sup>th</sup> edition, published in 2004, is the last single-volume version of this book. Nonetheless, it remains a valuable resource.)

If you're working in a small office where resources are limited, the best way to learn is to get your hands dirty and ask to visit construction sites. When you're on site, pay attention to details. Take lots of photos for your own reference and compare them to the details in the construction documents. Don't be afraid to ask your mentor questions. Volunteer to participate in construction phase activities whenever possible. Many interns gain their CCA experience by reviewing less-challenging submittals, such as paint and signage. You should read the actual owner-architect and owner-contractor agreements for your projects, to see how they vary from the standard AIA documents, particularly when talking about general conditions, payment applications, RFIs, and submittals. This will help you get familiar with real-life construction situations. (Some firms may be reluctant to share these documents with their project teams, but it's unusual to have sensitive or confidential information in them.)

You can also find valuable resources on the Internet. Be warned, however: answers posted by previous exam takers on the online forums may not be correct (and also violate the confidentiality agreement the exam takers made with NCARB). If you do use these online resources, make sure you verify the accuracy of the information before taking the exam.

Another way to prepare yourself for the exam is to attend local seminars and study groups. Some of them may be quite expensive, but with a little searching you may be able to find free programs, such as the NotLY program in Los Angeles, presented by local, highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to support interns.

The Construction Document Service exam is challenging and can be overwhelming. The key to passing it is to find the right resources and to engage yourself in construction documents and CCA as early as possible.