

APPENDIX 4

Beginning Design in ACSA Schools

Paper & Survey Summary

HOW MUCH DESIGN ?

A survey and analysis of design requirements in ACSA* schools with emphasis on 'beginning design'.

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Abstract

A two part survey was conducted throughout the ACSA to gather information about Design in the Degree Programs and 'Basic Design' courses that were offered. While the survey results amply demonstrate that the majority of institutions offer a variety of options for obtaining a professional degree, the B.Arch. program was found to be the most prevalent degree offered (72.7%). The years of design required to gain any degree corresponded very closely with the total number of years of study for that degree.

Finally Basic Design courses were found to be available in 78.4 %of the institutions, while 76.8% required such a class as part of their programs. Several issues related to Basic Design have been identified and are presented for discussion.

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Introduction

During the spring of 1986, an extensive survey was conducted throughout the ACSA, in order to provide base information for discussion of revisions which were being proposed to the design program at the SALA*/University of Minnesota.

Questionnaires were sent to all of the participating members of the ACSA. The objectives of the survey, as outlined in the letter which accompanied the questionnaire, were:

- 1) To identify the degree programs available in the institutions contacted
- 2) To determine the number of required years of design per degree program.
- 3) To identify the extent of 'introductory design' (basic design) training available through the programs of those institutions
- 4) To gather information and curriculum material from a wide range of sources in order to both support an argument in favor of incorporating Basic Design into the curriculum at the University of Minnesota and to help in outlining such a course as a concrete teaching proposal.

85.4% of the institutions responded to this first survey (88 out of 103 schools contacted).

After analyzing these responses, a second contact was made with those institutions during the spring of 1987 to verify our results and thus avoid any possible misinterpretations of the received information. 52.3% of these schools sent us their second responses in this verification procedure. The final results of this two part survey are presented in this paper.

B. General Considerations

We considered the degree programs in the following fashion:

- the Non-professional degree as that undergraduate program (generally 4 years) which results in the B.A., B.S. or B.E.D.
- the professional degree undergraduate program (generally 5 years) which results in the B.Arch.
- The professional degree, graduate program which results in a M Arch. as either a 1st. or

* School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture

2nd. professional degree. In the survey, when other degrees were offered or accepted as part of the requirements for masters degree, we only considered the remaining years necessary to complete such a degree as the length of the program.

The survey portion related to 'introductory design', produced an unexpected difficulty which related to the lack of clarity regarding the term 'Basic Design'. At issue was the 'stereotypical' as well as 'pejorative' meaning that 'Basic Design' aroused in certain people, as a course devoted to 'pure' design issues lacking elemental environmental concerns (behavioral, social, etc.), and therefore associated with 'Modernism'. As a result several schools have avoided the use of the term 'Basic Design' for their beginning courses in design and have rather preferred to name them as 'Introductory Design', or 'Foundation Design', etc.

This lack of clarity in interpretation was also evident in the varying responses about course content. While some schools reported a class which included design theory and the connection of design to environmental awareness, other defined 'Basic Design' as either a graphic skill, a 'Bauhaus' type course, or interpreted 'Basic Design' to mean the 1st. year of architectural design studio.

To make the compatibility of these different interpretations possible and thus obtain a meaningful reading of the survey results, it was necessary to examine the contents of the courses defined as 'Basic Design' by the responding institutions and to establish a common conceptual framework around which to organize them.

We found that the contents and objectives of those 'self-defined Basic Design' courses could be categorized into three major topic areas which covered all the subjects considered to be part of 'Basic Design' by the contacted schools and which allowed us to interpret and analyze the survey information in a more precise way. The three areas were:

- I. Attitude/Awareness; which dealt with theory and principle of design,
- II. Methods/Process; which comprehended analytical thinking and design itself and,
- III. Skills/Media; which considered tools and techniques of representation and expression.

As a conclusion to the study of contents, we should mention that Basic Design was generally found to have a very comprehensive curriculum regarding a broad spectrum of issues and concerns. This is particularly true in the year long Basic Design courses which composed the large majority of those surveyed.

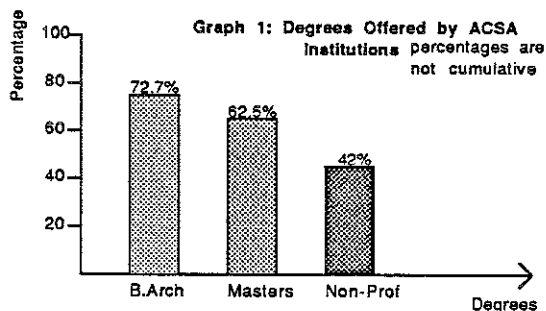
Furthermore, the results of this survey indicated that there was a widespread consensus among the schools of architecture of the need for a course to introduce students to design-oriented thinking, and that Basic Design had already been introduced into most of the institutions traditional curricula causing an increase in the required years of design per degree in an almost exact correlation to the length of the degree in years.

Turning to the results of the survey.

C. Degree Programs

The most commonly offered degree among the responding institutions was the B.Arch. degree. (5yr) 72.7% of the schools contacted offered that degree as well as other degrees. Of the schools that offered only one type of degree program, 80% of those programs were B.Arch. degrees.

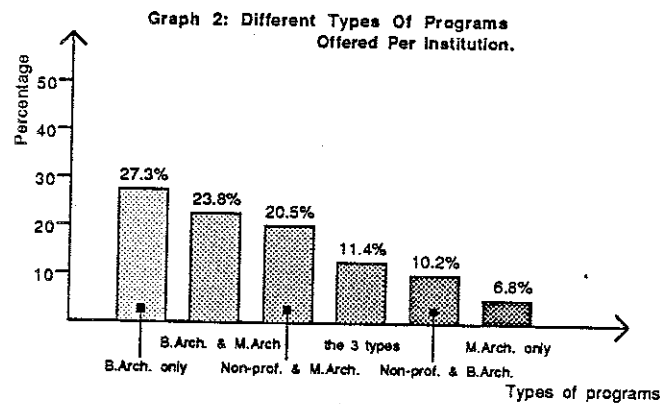
42% of the responding schools offered Non-professional degree program (4yr) as well as other programs. No U.S. institution offered the 4 year degree as the only available option, the only cases of this were found in Canada, since these degrees were listed as professional (B.Arch), they have been considered within the group of B.Arch. degree programs.



The masters degree programs offered were quite varied in length, depending upon the number of years taken prior to entry into a particular program. In effect, there was a direct relationship between the years of study required in the masters program and the undergraduate degree which the student had to hold as an admission requirement. Most schools assumed that the previous years of study would be acquired at their institutions, although they generally accepted that previous years of study could be acquired elsewhere.

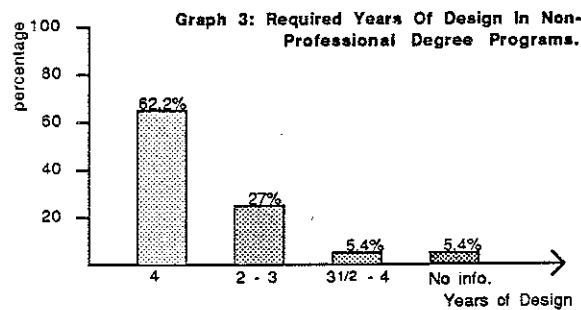
62.5% of the institutions offered some type of masters program, as well as other types of programs. 39.9% of the schools offered more than one type of masters program, with varying years of study per degree: 55 institutions offered a total of 86 masters programs. Just 10.9% of the institutions which offered masters degrees offered only that degree, (i.e.: not as part of a 4 -2 program).

Of the different types of program offered by the schools surveyed, the most prevalent was the B.Arch. degree only (27.3%) which was followed by schools that offered the B.Arch. degree and M.Arch. (23.8%), the Non-professional degree and M.Arch. (20.5%), the 3 types (Non professional, B.Arch. and masters) (11.4%), the Non professional and B.Arch. degrees in combination (10.2%) and finally the M.Arch. only (6.8%).

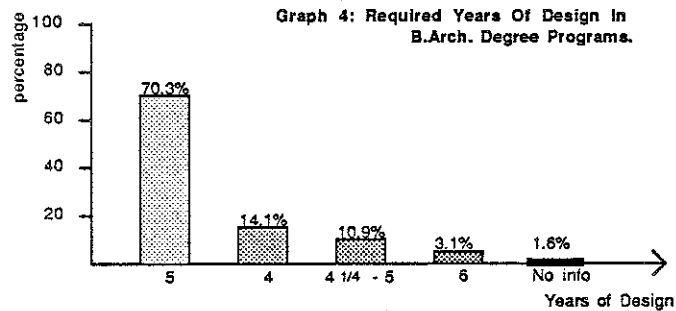


D. Years of Design per Degree

The years of design required to gain any degree corresponded very closely with the total number of years of study necessary to obtain that degree. For instance, 67.5% of the programs required more than 3 years of design in the Non-professional (4yr) degree program while 84.3% required more than 4 years of design in the B.Arch. (5yr) degree program. More specifically, 62.1% of the institutions offering Non-professional degrees required four years of design.



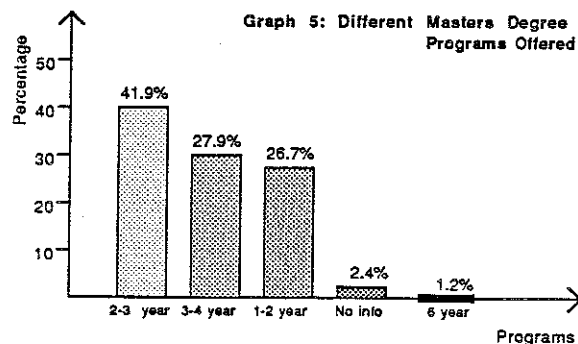
This high correspondence was also found in B.Arch. programs: 70.3% required five years of design. Only 14% required 4 years of design for the B.Arch.



In the masters programs, the required number of years of design was always coincident with the number of years of study.

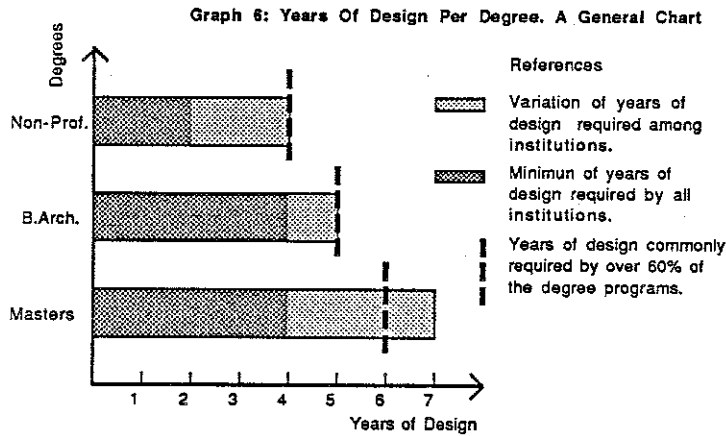
The most commonly offered type of masters degree required 2 - 3 years of design (41.9%) and required a Non-professional degree as an entry requirement. 75.7% of the institutions which offered a Non-professional degree also offered a M.Arch. program in combination, creating a 4 - 2/3 year length as a total professional program, that meant between 5 and 7 years of design in completing this degree.

The 3 - 4 year masters program was required when no related architectural training was involved in the undergraduate degree of an entrant and counted for the 27.9% of the M.Arch. programs offered. In general this program required at least 1 or 2 years of design background as an admission requirement which meant between 4 and 6 years of design to complete these programs.



The third most commonly offered masters (26.7%) was the 1 - 2 years length program which is usually called a 2nd. professional degree because it requires a previous B.Arch. degree for entry.

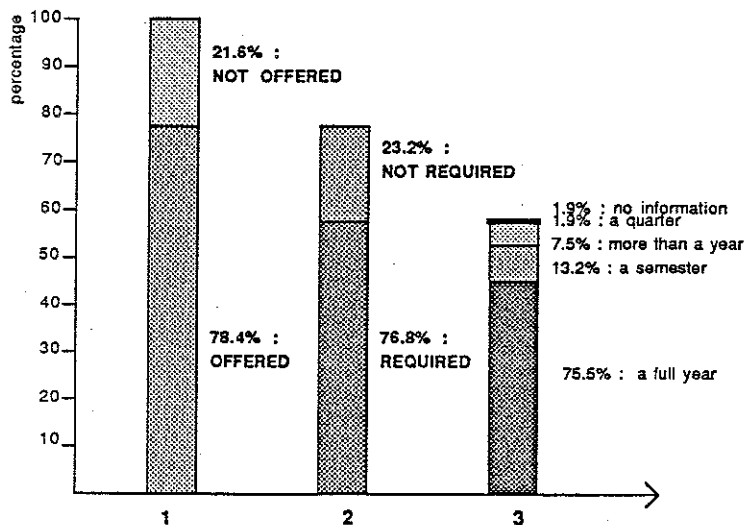
48.4% of the institutions which offered a B.Arch. degree program, also offered a 1-2 year M.Arch. program in combination. This type of masters implies 5 and 7 years of design in total. Therefore the M.Arch. degree, as a total study program, required a minimum of 4 yrs. and a maximum of 7 yrs of design depending on the type of program, 6 years being the maximum, in over 60% of the masters programs surveyed.



E. Basic Design Courses

Basic design courses were examined in terms of their content, duration, and status as a requirement. 78.4% of all responding institutions offered some type of basic design course. Of those, a majority (75.4%) offered the course as at least a full year sequence. Only 16% offered the course of study for less than a year.

Graph 7: Basic Design Survey. Synthesis



References

- 1 Basic Design within the Curriculum of the responding institutions.
- 2 Requirement of Basic Design in the institutions that offered it.
- 3 Length of the Basic Design course in those institutions where it was required.

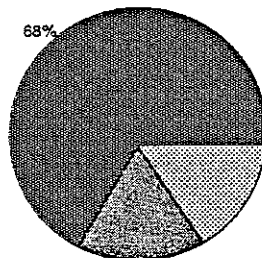
The Basic Design course or courses were required study at 76.8% of the schools which offered them. In 75.5% of those institutions where Basic Design was a required course, its length was a full year.

There is a clear relationship between the required years of design per degree and Basic Design as a required course. In 54 programs, whose B.Arch. degree, of curricula had more than 4 years of design studio (4^{1/4} to 5yrs.), 65% had Basic Design as a required course. In the Non-professional degree, considering a total of 25 programs whose curricula required more than 3 years of design (3^{1/2} to 4), 68% had Basic Design as a required course.



83% of these programs offered a Basic Design Course.
17% of these programs did not offer it.

Graph 8: Basic Design Within The Non Professional Degree With More Than 3 Years Of Design

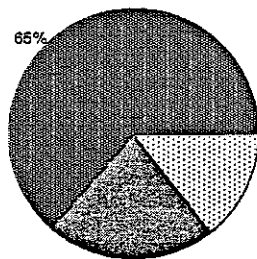


References

- Basic Design is a required course.
- Basic Design is an offered but not required course.
- Basic Design is not an offered course.

16%

Graph 9: Basic Design Within The B.Arch. Degree With More Than 4 Years Of Design



References

- Basic Design is a required course.
- Basic Design is an offered but not required course.
- Basic Design is not an offered course.

18.5%

The conclusion seems obvious: in those programs whose required years of design were close to the actual years of study for a degree, Basic Design was incorporated as a required design studio in at least 65% of the cases while over 83% of those institutions offered it either as an elective or a required course.

F. Issues for further investigation as related to Basic Design

Because of the original objectives of this survey, detailed specifics about the courses were not requested as part of the response to the questionnaire. In spite of receiving much unexpected information which was very helpful in preparing course materials, it was felt that there was not a sufficient quality nor quantity of information about course content, that would permit us to go beyond a superficial analysis. The importance of the issues involved suggests the necessity of further study focused on these issues in the future.

In spite of these limitations, supporting arguments for the need to add Basic Design courses to the Architectural curricula were made clear after this study. It was also apparent that Basic Design courses are generally focused on resolving conditions that schools of architecture are facing regarding the educational background of incoming students. In effect, most of the students entering the 'Design Curriculum' are totally unprepared in terms of Skills /Attitude /Knowledge, in the 'Language of Creativity'. It is understood by those involved in teaching design that the educational system, K through 16, generally does not provide an adequate preparation, (in terms of either skills or attitude), to students who may want to enter a 'Design Curriculum'. The consequences of these deficiencies in the first year of professional design have been several, the most important being that, much of what could be treated in the 1st. year of professional design is either dealt with inadequately or not at all and therefore the theoretically 4 years of design in the B.Arch. degree program, for instance, turns out to be just a 3 year effective professional design training. (D. Grebner, 1987).

Another important theme uncovered from the research was that Basic Design might have two different kinds of audience. It could be either offered as a first and essential career training course or as a 'liberal arts' kind of introductory-formative course.

Further discussion should be devoted to clarifying whether Basic Design should be thought of only as an introductory course to architectural (professional) education and its allied design disciplines or also as a general public (liberal arts) education course. The possible union of these two approaches into a unique course may be the subject of some controversy and probably implies complex difficulties in its actualization. On the other hand to accept a complete incompatibility between them seems to accept the loss of an extraordinary chance to bring 'the public' and 'future designers' together.

The results of the survey showed that Basic Design was broadly understood as a foundation program which belonged to the main structure of the architectural professional program although not necessarily dealing with just pure and specific architectural issues. In this sense Basic Design was located within the formal educational curricula of the Design professions and its relation to other 'sister' disciplines (Landscape Architecture, Interior design, Product design, etc.) not only encouraged but required as a way to make the students aware of the different fields of design. The advantages of such a view are promising because it deals with four parallel and difficult issues by:

- 1) strengthening the design background and capabilities of all degree candidates;
- 2) clarifying and reinforcing admission criteria to schools (this is a very important concern in public institutions);
- 3) giving students an overview of design as a whole and letting them define their study objectives better;
- 4) perhaps serving as a 'community outreach' course to introduce design.

Finally, it should be pointed out that for our purposes we defined 'Basic Design' as that curriculum which "...provides the Design Pre-Professional student with an 'Integrated Course Sequence' [that] offers Experiences / Information / Exercises in the Basic Skills / Knowledge necessary to the successful conduct of a fully rigorous Professional Design Training" (D. Grebner, 1987, pp.2). In this sense and in light of the information gained from the survey, the term 'Foundation Design' seems to be perhaps more appropriate term for this introductory course because it does not have the problematic connotations that 'Basic Design' has and because it reveals its intentions of providing the essential basis for any further design education.

What began as a search for information in support of the need for additional design training has produced several concerns about 'Foundation Design' that perhaps now need a broader debate among ACSA schools, these are;

- The role of these courses in the curricula,
- what and how much they have to teach and achieve,
- who they serve, how much time should be devoted to them,
- what philosophy of education should be applied to them, etc.

G. Bibliography (Course Material Source)

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