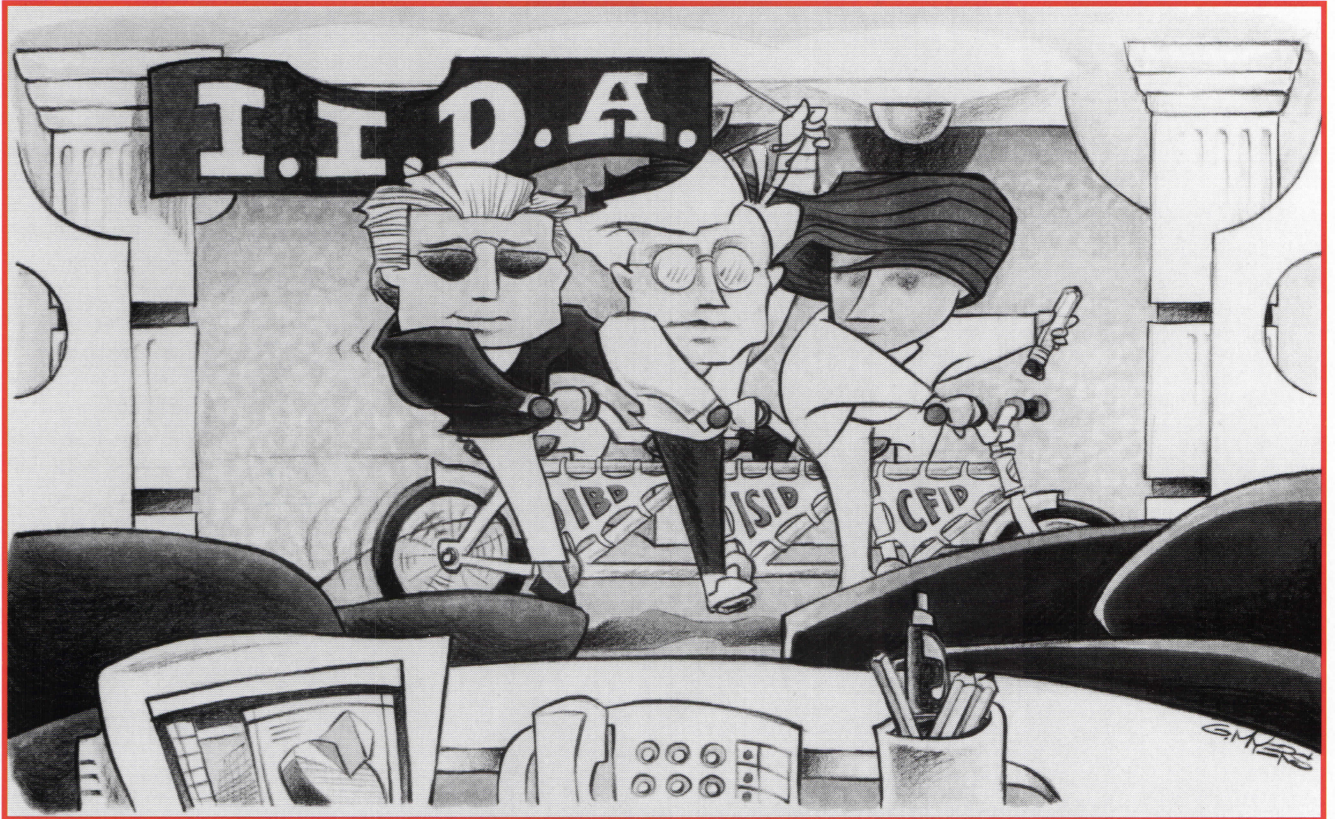


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INTERNATIONAL
INTERIOR DESIGN
ASSOCIATION



Working in Tandem

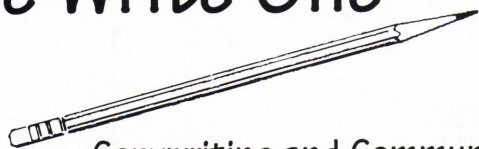
by Cynthia Scanlon

illustration by Greg Myers

Color, lighting, function, flexibility—all these design elements must work together to create balanced interiors for business and residential settings. So, too, a myriad of interior design organizations must work together to create a balanced and functional industry. It's this philosophy that brought three interior design associations together to work as one. ►

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The Write One



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What was once the Interior Business Designers, the International Society of Interior Designers and the Council of Federal Interior Designers has now become the International Interior Design Association (IIDA). The new association has chapters throughout the United States and the world.

"Over the years we've developed all these splinter groups that represent interior designers, says Jeffrey Rausch, president elect of IIDA and principal of Miller Rausch in Phoenix. "Some were residential and some were commercial. We decided we have more in common than we do in difference, so let's get together and use our joint powers."

A unified task force was put into effect several years ago to study the possibility of merging the myriad of professional design associations throughout the United States. These various associations seemed to fragment the industry, skewing focus and splintering membership. It was thought that combining the associations would enhance the industry as a whole.

"It's easier for us to focus in the long run on the motivation of professionalism

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in the community if there is one organization," says Terry Dunn, IIDA's new president and owner of New Life Interiors. "Those of us that have merged into IIDA felt we could do what we were doing individually as one group. So that's what we set out to accomplish."

The merger took place July 1, 1994, creating a 9,000 member association worldwide. The international headquarters is located in the Merchandise Mart in Chicago. Arizona and New Mexico share a chapter, with Phoenix being the chapter seat. This Arizona-New Mexico chapter has more than 200 members.

"The whole objective was to unify the profession of interior design so that it spoke as one voice in North America," says Michael Kroelinger, coordinator of the interior design program at ASU at the College of Architecture and Environmental Design.

The organization is structured so that membership is represented through

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regions and through "specialty forums" or specialties of practice. These specialty forums cover such areas as commercial, government, education and research, residential, health care, retail, and hospitality. The mission of the forums will be to provide an environment for the mutual development and exchange of knowledge within specific areas of practice. Professionals are entitled to participate in two specialty forums.

"It's now possible for members to network, interact and participate in programs directly related to the specialties of their practice," says Kroelinger.

Rausch adds, "These specialty forums will make sure each of the specific interests are satisfied."

Commercial forums will include financial institutions, offices and car dealerships. Government forums will include fire stations, courts, and prisons. The hos-



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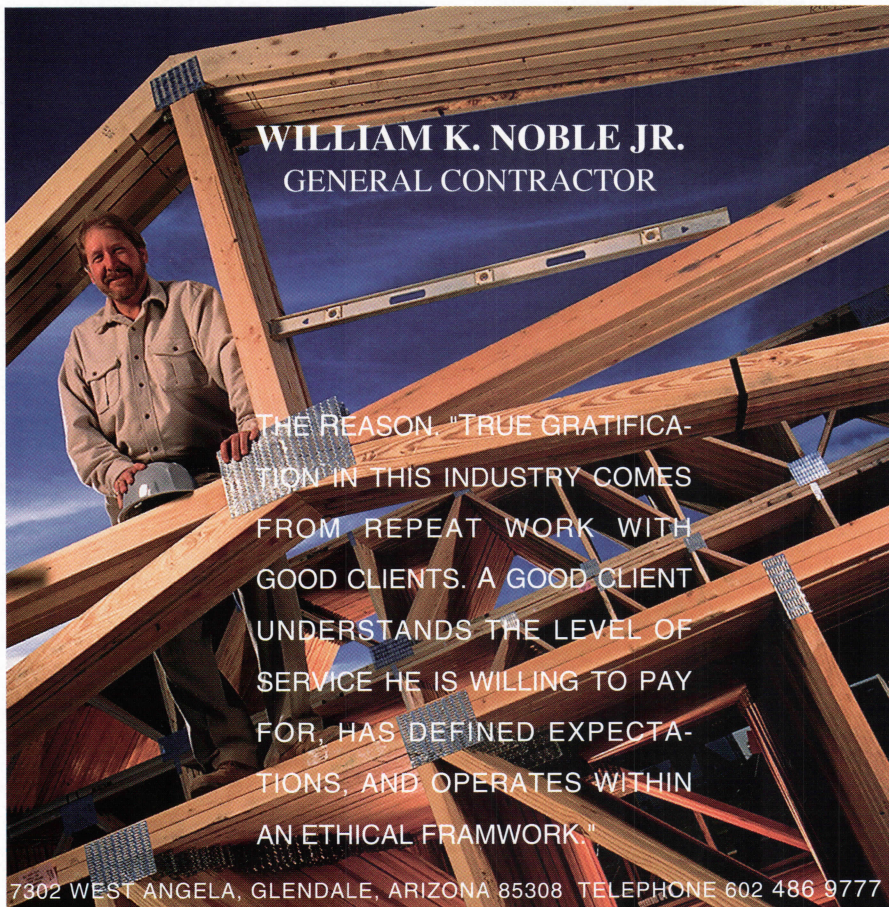


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pitality forum will encompass hotels, restaurants, cruise ships, amusement parks and casinos.

The Research and Education forum's focus is slightly different in that it will promote education and advocate the pursuit of scholarly inquiry through discussion and creative performance. This forum also provides an avenue for interaction between educators and practitioners.

Putting together the merger was anything but easy. A committee was formed to handle all of the logistics with each state making sure its interests were cov-



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ered. "We basically dissolved three old organizations and created a new one, which has been very complicated," Rausch says.

Dunn adds, "Every organization had its own leadership and its own ideas that they didn't want to give up."

According to Sally Nordahl, director of interior architecture at HNTB, the merger is a positive move for an industry that she says has changed dramatically. "We're moving more from planners to facilitators," says the former IBD president. "We are going from designers to people who can not only design, but who also pull together projects and work with contractors, owners, consultants, trade people, and vendors. It's a lot of coordination, but interior designers need to tie all those elements together, and I think we're going to be seeing more of that."

Nordahl uses telecommuting as one example of the changes that interior

designers face today. "We are now designing offices out of the home," she says. "How do you design a home office? And what if they have another office outside the home? What types of spaces do you provide for someone at an outside office who isn't there all the time? These are issues facing the designer today that didn't exist several years ago."

One of the advantages of belonging to the new organization is the opportunity to network between fellow professionals nationwide and worldwide. The organization will sponsor conferences and other ways for professionals to interact and exchange information and ideas.

Interior designers looking to join the organization professionally must pass the National Council for Interior Design Qualification exam. This testing measures competency in the field.

Overall, the new association wants to enhance the goals and unify the profession of interior design. With only one organization, it is hoped that it will be responsive to the needs of members, nurture and encourage specialization, foster exchange of information and ideas, encourage excellence in the field, and nurture the development of a body of knowledge in the interior design field.

The organization will also encourage excellence in universal interior design to special environmental needs of vulnerable population groups such as children, older adults, and persons with dis-

abilities. Now that the Americans with Disabilities Act is law, this will become even more important in the future.

Nordahl is excited about the new merger because she feels it will bring designers with different backgrounds together to raise issues and meet challenges facing the industry head on.

"Designers need to be problem solvers for their clients," she says. "They need to look at a client's resources and needs rather than trying to impose ideas onto a client. We need to really understand a client's objectives and then work within their budget and schedule to achieve a successful project."

IIDA will also support legislative programs that promote the legal recognition of the profession. The association will involve itself in issues such as the registration and licensing of interior designers. Rausch says Arizona interior designers are not required

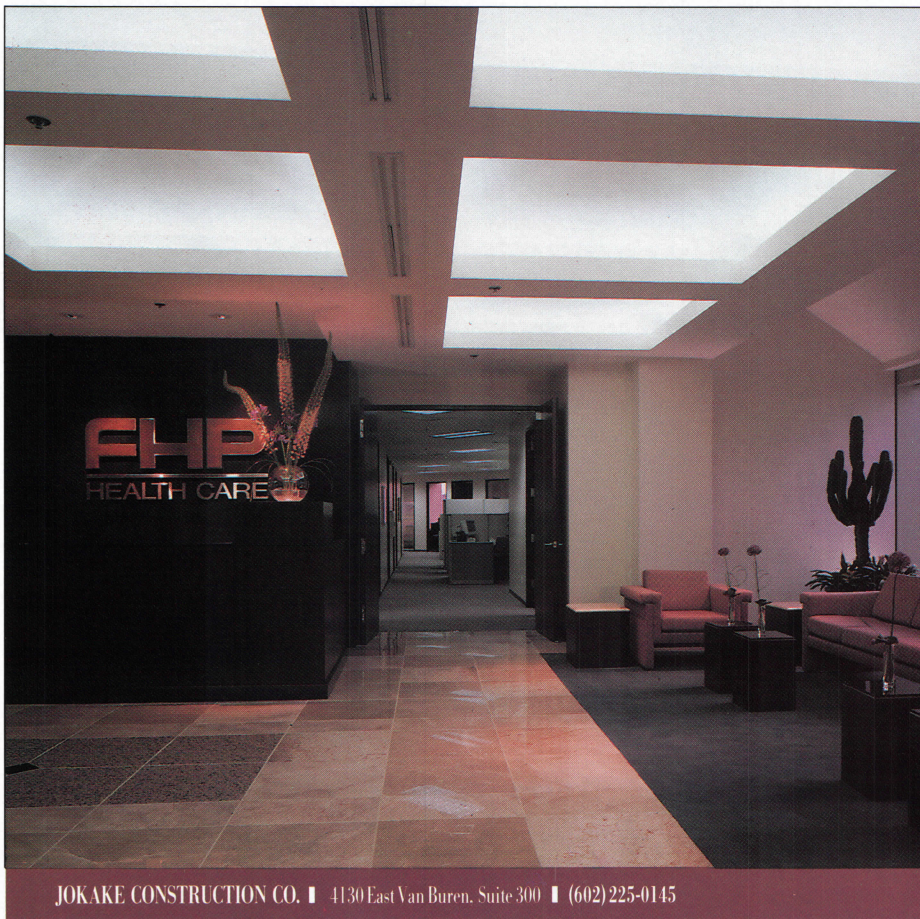
by law to be registered now, but he sees that changing in the future.

"The new organization will promote the profession as a whole," he says. "And members will be allowed to use the designation IIDA behind their name, which signifies a higher caliber professional."

AB


Cynthia Scanlon is a Tempe-based freelance writer.

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