UNDERSTANDING THE DESIGNER'S INFLUENCE
IN A REGULATED FIELD

Today's interior designer is a blend of technician, artist, sociologist, and psychologist. Interior designers must master the ability to bring facets of all of these elements to their work. They must have detailed technical knowledge of construction and codes, as well as a thorough understanding of health and safety issues, as they pertain to the built environment. In addition, the interior designer must be capable of recognizing cultural changes and how they relate to the welfare of society.

To date, interior design has not been adequately acknowledged as a profession that requires a distinct set of core competencies that extend well beyond simple decoration; nor has the broad social and economic impact of the profession been recognized. Yet the increase in product testing, codes, ergonomics issues, environmental issues, civil rights legislation, and other government mandates testify to the increased level of knowledge and implementation skill required of the interior design professional. The prominence of these issues in laws, regulations, and among the public underscores the need for legal regulation of the interior design profession.

Driven by cultural and societal changes, economic developments, and technological advances, the practice of interior design has become more cognizant of, and responsible for, public health, safety, and welfare. Even the most fundamental design service, such as space planning, which requires attention to corridor and aisle width, in addition to reach dimensions, is critically concerned with the health and safety of the public

Consumer Demands and the Need for Designer Education

Today, we are living longer, and enjoying better health, than at any other time in history. Along with this longer life comes the need for more specialized interior environments. The graying Baby Boomers of today are more demanding and expectant of interior environments that not only provide for their health-care services but also fulfill their cultural and social needs. To provide a viable professional service to these clients, today's interior designer must specialize, diversify, and develop more breadth in both education and experience.

Now that workers use the computer more and more, they perform more and more work tasks in office environments. Those office interiors create very specialized environments. The interior designer must be aware of the nature of these environments, and have a familiar working knowledge of such things as illumination, acoustics, ergonomics, and indoor air quality, along with the ability to properly plan space, interpret codes, and plan for barrier-free design.

Design professionals can address these tasks only by developing knowledge bases through education, examination, and experience. And they must address these tasks, for their application is paramount to the protection of the health and safety of the public, and to the successful completion of all design projects.

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