

their legitimacy, and driving toward new value propositions. Individual designers owe it to themselves to understand the history and value of the professional associations and the factors they should consider when deciding which association is the right one for them.

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### **COLLABORATION IN DESIGN—FROM BUILDING STRUCTURES TO BUILDING A PROFESSION**

# Professional associations

Professional associations may seem like a modern phenomenon, and a specialized one at that. For centuries, however, design professionals have practiced in close connection with other trades and other design professionals. Historically, “association” in design appears in different modes, involving different degrees of hierarchy and control. “Association” has also been a tool for different purposes, from the creation of buildings to the enhancement of social prestige to the betterment of design as a profession. But across these modes, design practices have three things in common: socialization, cross-disciplinary connections, and professional collaboration.

It is not commonly understood that prior to today’s professional interior design associations, there existed near-invisible enclaves of designers within the arts and architecture community who gathered socially and for the purpose of idea sharing. Most of this history is impenetrably difficult to access. However, we are able to pull together threads of early activity at the Architects Club founded in 1791 and the London Architectural Society founded in 1806. These societies included interior design in their discussion programs and often emphasized the importance of interior elements and decoration. The London Architectural Society was a learned society whose members were obliged to read an essay and exhibit an unpublished design each year or pay a forfeit. Some of the records of these early European initiatives are currently housed at The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) in London. After visiting the RIBA Library, one comes away with an awe-inspiring sense of the talent, sensitivity, and power of interior design during the last three centuries in Europe.

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## ASSOCIATED TALENTS FOR INTEGRATED DESIGN

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Throughout the preceding centuries

Throughout the preceding centuries, interior designers were increasingly motivated to come together to discover key issues and understandings of the practices and policies of the day and also to put into place initiatives to enhance and protect their practices and to advocate for good design.

By the middle of the eighteenth century, property owners in Asia, Europe, and America could avail themselves of loosely integrated building and design services, including architecture, interior design, and decoration. At that time, it was quite common for the architects, or master builders as they were also called, not only to decide on the structure of the buildings but also to choose the interior finishes. For instance, in the mid-1700s, one of the exceptionally talented design leaders of the time, Robert Adam, was commissioned to design residences, churches, institutions, and general-use projects, including, in many cases, the furniture for his buildings, which was frequently made by Chippendale. Robert Adam ordered the silk damask for the walls, he designed the furniture, and he designed the floors, whether stone, wood, or fabric. Adam was an interior designer. He was also an architect who was designing, creating furniture and furnishings, and decorating spaces that defined the tastes of the era.

This loose association of services continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In America, the architect Thomas Jefferson designed both buildings and furnishings. While working as the U.S. Ambassador to France, he was fascinated with interior elements that could be placed in such a manner as to substantially enhance a room's spatial quality. In England in the 1820s, William Porden rebuilt Eaton Hall for Earl Grosvenor, designing the exterior and interior architecture as well as the furniture. Daniel Marot worked in Holland, England, and France, and almost always took responsibility for the architecture, interior design, and decorative detailing and placement. During this period, design professions were loosely defined by their specific functions, but they also commonly embraced all rolls, which provided integrated services and a unified vision for their private and public clients.

Another significant early association model in the history of design evolved from independent project collaboration initiatives into collaboration on the