

## Some Remembrances of the August 1996 Meeting of Building Technology Educators in Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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July, 1996

The conference took place in the three-year old Architecture and Urban Planning Building located on the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee campus at the beginning of August 1996. Milwaukee's signature building, the Art Museum by Calatrava, was still three years away from being built. UWM was known as an "ink-on-Mylar" school and the computer was still a fairly novel addition to our curriculum, especially given the budgetary constraints of state institutions. The conference was organized primarily by fax, since E-mail existed, but wasn't widely available.

The cover of the August 1996 Architecture magazine (PA had recently met its demise) featured Eisenman's Arnoff Center at the University of Cincinnati. In that same issue was an interesting debate pitting Robert Gutman advocating for "Redesigning Architecture Schools" against Reed Kroloff noting "How the Profession is Failing the Schools." The central point of contention in that discussion was indeed over "technical proficiency."

Gutman wrote "that the building process often goes more smoothly by circumventing the architect and dealing directly with contractors and construction managers....Architecture schools have contributed astonishingly little to the relief of this divided fate." To which Kroloff essentially responded, "The profession, it seems, has long been confused about the difference between education and training."

While not exactly the impetus for the conference, that series of thought pieces in Architecture magazine accurately summarize the background against which the conference was set. The convening of the conference itself was actually the brainchild of Ed Allen, Linda Sanders (at the time Dean of Cal Poly Pomona), and Richard Kellogg (emeritus professor from the U of Arkansas), with some help from Gil Snyder who was then Chair of the UWM architecture department.

The idea was to bring together educators in architecture schools to discuss strategies for integrating design and technology in the curriculum of their schools. To accomplish this task, the conference was divided into workshops and presentations. The workshops were purposefully hands-on, while the presentations were selected to showcase teaching pedagogies and examples of design and technology integration. Everyone showed slides, if they didn't use overheads.

There were three demonstration workshops. Ed Allen gave a spectacular workshop on Graphic Statics that had everyone in the room convinced they were Gaudi by the end. Mike Utzinger from UWM helped Ed out with that presentation that involved "hands-on" plotting and drawing.

Fuller Moore's presentation centered on the use of physical models used to elucidate structural principles. The most memorable

moment was his use of a “shake table” to simulate earthquake loading.

We had to make special arrangements for the third workshop presenter, who came fully loaded with computer models of structural behavior, a decided rarity at the time. I remember having to contact the central Audiovisual Department of the University to obtain the “special” equipment Chris Lubkemann required.

Interspersed among these three workshops were a series of presentations dealing with methods for effectively integrating design and technology into architectural curricula. These presentations were excellent, and focused generally on the teaching of structures.

By way of example, Gary Black’s presentation on structural behavior in bridge design took everyone’s breath away. He showed us a digital model of one of Maillart’s bridges, demonstrating how stiffness in the deck on the top of the assembly took away bending even with pin connections. His presentation was a harbinger of things to come in many ways.

Dick Kellogg spoke about the efficacy and economy of demonstrating structural behavior with simple models made using polystyrene foam (PSF). I still have my copy of “Demonstrating Structural Behavior” that Dick made available at the conference. Mike Utzinger’s integration of structural design with architectural design in a series of problem sets he developed for teaching advanced structures at UWM were a big hit.

Some discussion related to building construction was held, but generally within the context of its relationship to the teaching of structures. There were also two presentations on design/build studios.

A general exhibition was mounted in the main floor hallway of the architecture school. Both presenters and participants displayed teaching materials here for the assembly. We set up a small photographic copy stand in a corner of one of the presentation rooms for general use over the course of the conference in sharing slides by copying them. That was a popular activity.

Discussion was lively and everyone was very excited by the meeting. I can’t be sure, but I think we took everyone for bowling and beer at Landmark Lanes towards the end of our time together. After some invigorating days sharing teaching techniques and speculating on future directions, we had all earned a “tall cool one.” It’d be hard to leave Milwaukee without doing that.

(As remembered by Gil Snyder, with some help from Mike Utzinger and Jim Dicker. Apologies all around for omissions and declining memory.)