BEYOND Y2K: A LOOK AT ACADIA’S PRESENT AND FUTURE

Peter Anders, ptr@mindspace.com

The sky may not be falling, but it sure is getting closer. Where will you when the last three zeros of our millenial odometer click into place? Computer scientists tell us that Y2K will bring the world’s computer infrastructure to its knees. Maybe, maybe not. But it is interesting that Y2K is an issue at all.

Speculating on the future is simultaneously a magnifying glass for examining our technologies and a looking glass for what we become through them. “The future” is nothing new. Orwell’s vision of totalitarian mass media did come true, if only as Madison Avenue rather than Big Brother. Future-booster’s of the ’50s were convinced that each garage would house a private airplane by the year 2000. But world citizens of the 60’s and 70’s feared a nuclear catastrophe that would replace the earth with a smoking crater. Others - perhaps more optimistically - predicted that computers were going to drive all our activities by the year 2000. And, in fact, they may not be far off...

The year 2000 is symbolic marker, a point of reflection and assessment. And - as this date is approaching rapidly - this may be a good time to come to grips with who we are and where we want to be.

What’s true for individuals is also so for organizations such as ACADIA. Who are we now? And do we want to be? In the roughly 20 years of its existence ACADIA has taken a number of forms and a number of roles with respect to the architectural profession. Its constituency has changed as well, as is evidenced by the topics covered in twenty-odd years of conferences. ACADIA’s founders focused on creating software to help architects in their practice. Computer-aided design, as we know it, is indebted to many early ACADIAns. By the late ’80s CAD software was prevalent in profession, and many ACADIAns became involved with installation of CAD and computers in architectural classrooms at universities. Now - with the increasing use of the Internet in both the classroom and profession - many of members are concerned with telecommunications in the profession and how it will impact not only the design of buildings but very program of architecture as well.

And these concerns overlap. If we look at ACADIA’s proceedings over the past 20 years, we see papers from varied backgrounds and interests ranging from the development of software to electronic media in the practice of architecture. This implies that the constituency - the mix - of ACADIA has also changed. Whereas ACADIA originally owed its membership to the ranks of educators, it now includes members of the architectural profession, the software industry and the international community.

Quebec 1998 Conference

In order to assess ACADIA’s goals in the light of its changing membership, I arranged a symposium and brainstorming session. "The year 2000 is symbolic marker, a point of reflection and assessment." This date may or may not be far off...

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