



Society for Design Administration  
*An Affiliate of The American Institute of Architects*

Orange County Chapter

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## THE COMMENTARY

July 2008 Edition

A Newsletter of the Society For Design Administration  
Orange County Chapter

### President's Corner

By Natalie Newman, SDA



#### The Heat Is On...

The Orange County Chapter is keeping busy this summer. First off is the '25-Year Celebration' of our chapter's formal charter in 1983. I hope that the whole OC membership will attend our anniversary party on Thursday, July 24<sup>th</sup> at the Costa Mesa Marriott. I'd love to meet all the new members and visit with all the long-standing members. This is a great networking opportunity to meet other people in the A/E/C industry, a way to give thanks to our Sponsors, and to learn more about the history of our chapter. Come enjoy a hosted party with appetizers, desserts, and beer, wine & soda.

From September 6 – 21, 2008, the 1<sup>st</sup> Orange County CANstruction Event will be on display at South Coast Plaza in Costa Mesa. All the proceeds go to the Orange County Food Bank. The CANstruction committee will be sending out 'Sponsorship' packets to your firm for the opportunity to support the OC Food Bank too and advertise your company name. We will also be looking for raffle prize donations for the Awards Gala on September 14<sup>th</sup>.

Then, in October, our SDA members will be volunteering at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Project Playhouse in Fashion Island. Funds garnered through this unique event benefit HomeAid, the Building Industry Association's charitable outreach that builds and renovates shelters for homeless individuals and families. Project Playhouse is that special place where imagination and contribution blend to benefit the lives of children from all walks of life.

It's summertime! Time for sun and fun! The best part of summer is the vacation, of course! Whether you're hitting the beaches or taking pleasure in adventurous activities like whitewater rafting and camping, or just taking time to relax, I hope you have an enjoyable summer.

Stay cool and don't forget to wear your sun block!

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### July 2008

- July 2**      **Business Meeting 5:30 pm**  
Meeting will be hosted by  
De Revere & Associates.
- July 17**      **Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**  
"Leins and Lein Law" presented  
by Hal Block.  
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa.
- July 24**      **Orange County Chapter's 25th  
Anniversary Party, 6:00 pm**  
Costa Mesa Marriott  
Garden Room.

### August 2008

- August 6**      **Business Meeting 5:30 pm**  
Meeting will be hosted by  
Steven Langford Architects.
- August 21**      **Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**  
Program will be a financial/  
project management seminar  
hosted by Axium.  
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa.

### September 2008

- Sept. 3**      **Business Meeting 5:30 pm**  
Meeting will be hosted by  
Alliance Engineering Group and  
held at Steven Langford Arch.
- Sept. 14**      **CANstruction Awards  
Reception 6:00 pm**  
South Coast Plaza  
Garden Terrace.
- Sept. 18**      **Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am**  
"BIM/Revit 4D" presented by Rudy  
Tovar (Carter Burgess) and  
Daniel Stewart (Gensler).  
Wyndham Hotel, Costa Mesa.
- Sept. 26-27**      **2008 Western States  
Regional Conference**  
San Diego.

## RESOURCE LIBRARY

**Resource Library:** Books available for members to check out include *The Tipping Point* by Malcolm Gladwell, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz, and *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves* by Lynne Truss. Contact Janet Caprario by e-mail ([jcaprario@jzmkpartners.com](mailto:jcaprario@jzmkpartners.com)).

**Job Board:** Did you know that SDA maintains a Job Board? This includes persons looking for work as well as firms looking for qualified personnel in the A/E industry. Most of the positions are for administrative staff, as AIA maintains its own job board for licensed architects. If your firm is looking for a person with certain qualifications or if you know someone who is looking for a position in an A/E firm, please contact Betsy Nickless by calling (949) 833-9066 or by e-mail at [betsy@sladesign.com](mailto:betsy@sladesign.com).



July 2	Anita Adriano
July 2	Alicia Igram
August 11	Jan Canters
August 12	Tammy Bennar
August 28	Debbie Kuhns
Sept. 22	Jill Griffith
Sept. 26	Kara Kosel
Sept. 29	Nancy Burt

# PROJECT PLAYHOUSE

## OCTOBER 11, 2008—SAVE THE DATE

SDA Volunteers have participated in every Project Playhouse event since its inception in 1992! We have a tradition of working specifically on the last shift of the last day of the event. In addition, several SDA members have worked additional shifts, either with their own firms or helping to fill voids on other days. Please plan to join us in this very special event – we need you! Approximately 20 SDA Volunteers (SDA members, co-workers, friends and family) will be needed to assist at the playhouse display area. It is a lot of fun and not hard to do. Come be a part of this 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Project Playhouse event with your SDA friends and help make a difference to our community. Our day is **Saturday, October 11<sup>th</sup>, from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.**

What is Project Playhouse, you may ask? It is a unique fund-raiser hosted by HomeAid Orange County, an affiliate of the Building Industry Association of Southern California. Local builders and others create fantasy playhouses, designed by architects, which will be on display at Fashion Island from September 6 – October 11, 2008. The public is able to do “peek-in” tours of the playhouses for a small donation. At the end of the display run, the playhouses are

auctioned off to the highest bidders. All monies raised through tours, ticket sales and the auction, go to benefit the less fortunate. HomeAid Orange County is a non-profit organization that builds and renovates shelters for the transitionally homeless in our community.

Project Playhouse was the idea of two Orange County women in 1992. Since the beginning, this event has been bigger and better every year. HomeAid has expanded nationwide, and eight other HomeAid chapters have followed with their own versions of Project Playhouse. In 2007, a special American Girl-themed playhouse was hosted in the National Building Museum in Washington D.C., showcasing an educational, environmentally sustainable playhouse. For more information, please visit [www.projectplayhouse.org](http://www.projectplayhouse.org) or [www.homeaidoc.org](http://www.homeaidoc.org)

To volunteer for the SDA OC Project Playhouse Team, please contact Wendy Woolsey at [wwoosey@bassenianlagoni.com](mailto:wwoosey@bassenianlagoni.com), phone (949) 553-9100 or fax (949) 553-0136. **Come help us continue our tradition!**



# EDSYMPOSIUM08

## MAY 14—17, 2008

### By Betsy Nickless, SDA/C

Thank you SDA/OC for the registration scholarship to this year's annual SDA convention in Boston. I am a regular at SDA's annual meeting, and I truly appreciate the financial assistance this year to once again participate in the highlight of my year, where I get to see old friends, make new ones, attend dynamic and educational seminars, and experience the culture of the host city each year.

As always, the convention starts with a social event sponsored by the local chapter (I still think our host chapter party on the set of *Cheers!* In Los Angeles in 2005 was the best ever...), but the Boston Chapter treated us to a dinner cruise aboard the Spirit of Boston. What a great way to shake off the travel cobwebs and make some new friends while enjoying music, dancing, a cruise of Boston Harbor, and some great raffle prizes.

You can read Tammy's write-up to learn about the many educational seminars, so I will not go over all of that again. My memories of Boston include:

- Bill Truby's keynote speech on the five natural laws of achievement, reminding us to work with, not against, natural laws to achieve personal and professional success.
- The candidate speeches for those nominated for 2008-2009 national office – what an inspirational group of women we will have leading us this year!
- The Awards Luncheon, where SDA/OC won both the jury and members' choice awards for the 2007 Western States Regional Conference.
- PEG roundtables, where we gathered by PEG (I went to Office Administration) to brainstorm and network about issues we all deal with every day
- The duck boat tour of Boston with our guide Jason the Argonaut, who toured us around the city in a World War II amphibious

landing vehicle, and then we splashed into Charles River for a different perspective from the water. (And we learned to count to three in Greek!)

- The always interesting annual meeting where proposed bylaws and standing rules are debated and voted. The only bylaws that passed changed the membership category from "Regular" to "Professional," and a second one formalized the way our annual nominating committee has been operating.
- **THE BANQUET!** This is always my favorite part of every convention. We see each other in our cocktail attire, the educational sessions and business meetings are behind us, and it is time to celebrate our time and recognize our leaders.

We heard inspirational speeches from outgoing national President, Debra Ellis, SDA/C and incoming national President, Stephanie Kirschner, SDA/C, whose office even videotaped a message of congratulations to her.

The **Lifetime Achievement Award** is always a highlight of the banquet – this was previously called the Member of the Year, and it has been recently re-named. This is the highest honor that SDA gives, and I am always excited in anticipation of who has been chosen this year. There is always a big build up, plenty of mystery, and then the winner is revealed. So as I was listening to all the accomplishments of this year's winner, I was so happy for the person and for all they had contributed to SDA and curious as to whom it could be. Suddenly, my picture flashed on the screen, the audience jumped to their feet, and I WAS STUNNED! What an incredible honor – I was speechless (which I'm sure comes as a surprise, since I almost always have something to say!) And then I was rushed to the stage, handed a giant bouquet of flowers, and my new favorite piece of jewelry, the SDA Lifetime Achievement Medallion. I was expected to speak, and I'm not sure I remember what I said, other than, THANK YOU.



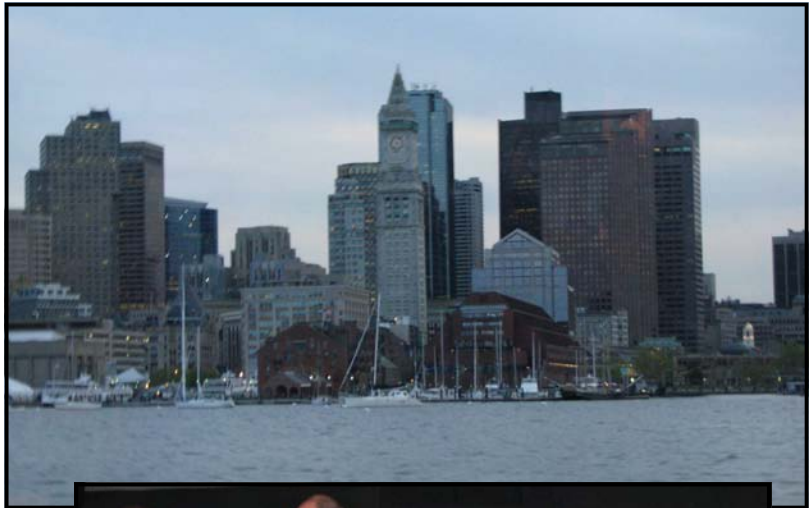
# EDSYMPOSIUM08 CONTINUED

**By Tammy Bennar, SDA**

As a first-time convention attendee, I was honored to represent Orange County members as the National Convention Chapter Scholarship recipient at the 2008 EDSymposium in Boston. Getting there was quite the battle - from firm support, applying for the Chapter scholarship, preparing to be out of the office and the overall excitement of meeting new members I thought "this better be worth it!" And without a doubt it was.

The programs were very informative. In Financial Management with Steve Wintner, I learned what ratios are most important and how they can work for me in my firm. I was very impressed with Marie Gunnerson's presentation on "Project Administration in a Project Management Environment" and hope to be able to implement some of her ideas in my office. And of course, the city of Boston did not disappoint! Sightseeing, the Chapter Host Party and the Duck Tour were so much fun as was meeting all the people from all over the United States and Canada. Everyone was so friendly and inviting.

There are no words that can describe the energy that surrounds an SDA convention. It is just something you have to experience for yourself. I would like to say thank you to the OC Chapter Officers for choosing me as the recipient of the 2008 Scholarship. I am excited about participating more within SDA and attending Western States and National Conventions again next year! Thank you for allowing me this opportunity.









# WHAT IS CANSTRUCTION?

**CANstruction® is the most unique food charity in the world.**

**By Natalie Newman, SDA**

As a foundation of the SDA, CANstruction® is a design/build competition currently held in cities throughout the United States and Canada. Teams of architects, engineers, and students mentored by these professionals compete to design and build giant structures made entirely from full cans of food.

The results are displayed to the public as magnificent sculpture exhibits in each city where a competition is held. This year, Orange County is having its 1<sup>st</sup> CANstruction Event at South Coast Plaza, from September 6 – 21, 2008. At the close of this exhibition, all of the canned food used in these structures will be donated to our local Orange County Food Bank.

After all the competitions are held, local winners go on to compete internationally through submission of slide photography to a panel of jurors that convenes at the SDA/AIA International Convention in the Spring of each year. Winners are announced at the SDA's National Awards Banquet on Saturday evening of the convention week.

CANstruction now has over one hundred individual competitions scheduled to take place during 2008 and since its inception in 1992, ten million pounds of food have been donated to aid in the fight against hunger.



For more information, go to [www.canstructionoc.org](http://www.canstructionoc.org) or [www.canstruction.org](http://www.canstruction.org)

## SDA/OC's 25th ANNIVERSARY PARTY

**By Natalie Newman, SDA**

This July, the Orange County Chapter of the Society for Design Administration (SDA) will be celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The SDA, is a nearly 50-year-old national organization, affiliated with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and comprised of over 1,000 administrative personnel from architecture, engineering and other design-related firms. SDA's common goal is to improve the design profession by educating its members in the related disciplines of design firm administration.

Come celebrate with us on Thursday, July 24, 2008 at the Costa Mesa Marriott.

6:00 – 9:00 pm in the Garden Room.

Hosted appetizers and drinks will be served.

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER

**By Natalie Newman, SDA**

From its inception in 1983, the Orange County Chapter has had one member who has served continuously. Betsy Nickless, SDA/C was unanimously recommended by the jury and presented with the 2008 SDA National Lifetime Achievement Award at EDSymposium08 held in May 2008 in Boston. This is the highest award given to an SDA member.

Betsy's achievements far exceed the basic nomination requirements for this honor and exemplify the finest characteristics of an outstanding SDA member and leader.

Congratulations go out to Betsy for this well-deserved honor!



## THANK YOU LETTER TO OUR CHAPTER

Dear Orange County Chapter,

Thank you for the generous gift card to Nordstrom your chapter donated for the 2008 National Convention in Boston. My name was drawn after the duck tour and I was pleasantly surprised to be the winner of your gift card and was thrilled it was to Nordstrom. My son was born with club feet and though he had surgery to correct his feet, Nordstrom is the only store that can fit his feet properly and will sell us two different sized shoes for the price of one pair, so this will really come in handy. I hope everyone from your chapter who attended convention this year found it as educational and fun as our chapter did.

Thank you again!  
Pam LaValle, SDA  
Edward Farr Architects, Inc.  
Minneapolis/St. Paul Chapter



# MONTHLY LUNCHEON SEMINAR NOTES

## DISC—A Tool To Make Better Hiring Decisions

Thursday, April 17, 2008

Presented by: Doug Gfeller, Renaissance Executive Forums

- DISC is a questionnaire that was developed to assist a firm in determining how an applicant will deal with problems and challenges, people, pace and activity level, and rules and procedures by rating the applicant's Dominance, Inter-Personal Style, Steadiness, and Compliance (DISC).
- Doug recommends that this questionnaire or test be given at the first or second interview if used to assist in hiring decisions.
- The questionnaire is most often referred to as a "Communication Style Analysis."
- Dominance measures how a person solves problems or accepts challenges; Inter-Personal Style measures how a person influences other people or how the person interacts with others; Steadiness measures how a person sets the pace or reacts to change; and Compliance measures how a person responds to rules, procedures, or constraints.
- The test does NOT measure personality, intelligence, skills and experience, values, or education/training.
- The DISC report can be used not only for hiring but also for creating teams, building teams, matching employees to a manager, or for performance reviews to measure specific changes.

## EDSymposium Roundtable Discussion

Thursday, May 15, 2008

Presented by: EDSymposium08 Attendees

Educational Seminars from EDSymposium were discussed, as follows:

- **Financial Management for Design Professionals**—Provided targets for key financial performance indicators: (1) Overhead rate = 150—175% (2) Net Multiplier = 2.75 — 3.25 and (3) Aged AR = 60—90 days.
- **The Hard Talk: Tools for Difficult Conversations**
  - Two statements which must be used together and start every difficult conversation: "What I don't want to happen is . . ." and "What I do want to happen is . . ."
  - This concept is not an easy one to conquer and requires practice.
  - "The measure of success is not whether you have a tough problem to deal with, but whether it is the same problem you had last year." John Foster Dulles.
- **Project Administration in a Project Management Environment**—
  - Good project administration enhances an organization's technical, financial and marketing efforts.
  - PM focuses on goal—PA focuses on details.
  - PM is likely chosen for technical abilities—PA provides complimentary abilities.
  - Clients/projects benefit from lower cost of mix of PM and PA hours.

## Office and Client Etiquette

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Presented by: Chantell Cooper and Julie Miller, OfficeTeam

**Social situations**—handshake should be firm, name tag should be worn on the right side so that it is easily read, giving business cards should be smooth and tactful—never offer your card, but wait to be asked for it. Never interrupt a conversation to give someone a card.

**Internal Meetings**—Only invite those who are relevant to the meeting, send Agenda, stick to it, and stick to the time frames announced. Agenda heading should specify "No cell phones and no Blackberrys allowed."

**E-mail**—Avoid large attachments, reply to all, chain letters, using all caps, using sarcasm, slang, or jargon, Do respond to e-mails in a timely fashion, and comply with your company's policies.

**Blackberrys**—Do NOT use during a meeting, know when to let go, keep messages brief.

**Cell Phones**—Use professional ring tones, know how to turn it off, keep distance when in a conversation, avoid conference calls, don't let it take away from personal interaction.

**Meals**—Guests walk ahead of you to the table, talk business AFTER you order, eat and drink slowly, don't send food back, pick up the tab, do not be rude to the staff/waiters, no messy entrees, no garlic.

**In China**—Conservative attire, do not point, use open palm, tipping and arriving late is an insult.

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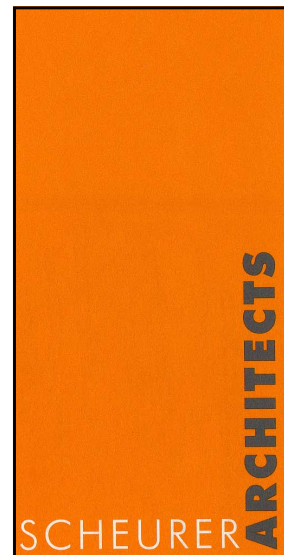


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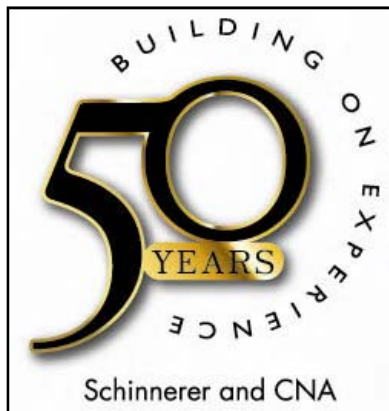
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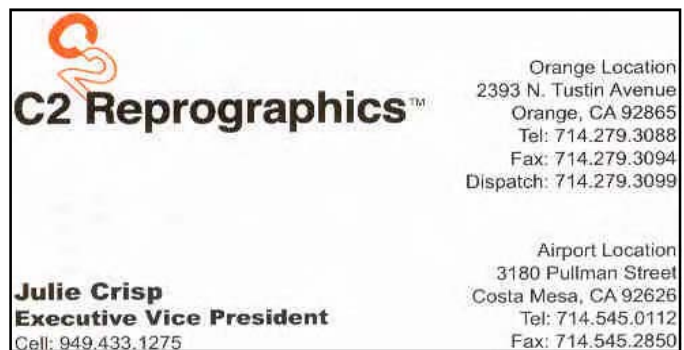




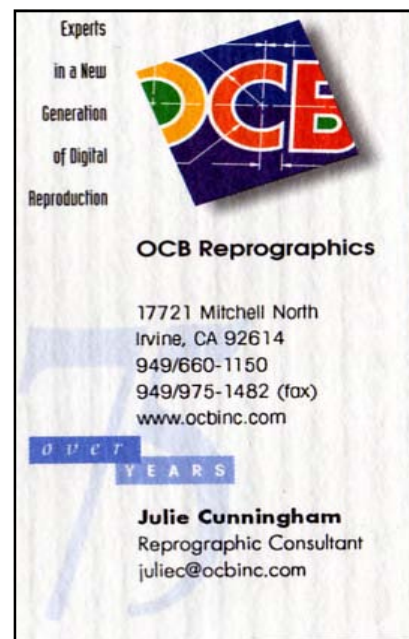
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## **WELCOME NEW MEMBER!**

**Caroline Karazissis  
Rios Clementi Hale Studios**

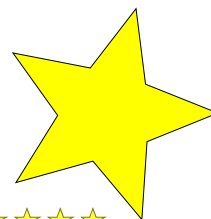
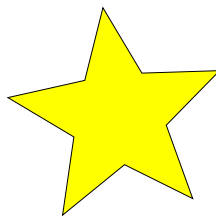
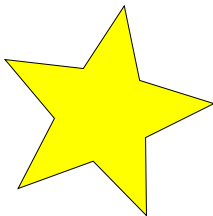
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And thanks to our fabulous proofreader,  
Betsy Nickless!

### **SDA's Mission:**

To promote the  
exchange of ideas and  
educate its members  
in the related  
disciplines of design  
firm administration.



## **The Commentary**

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Orange County Chapter

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