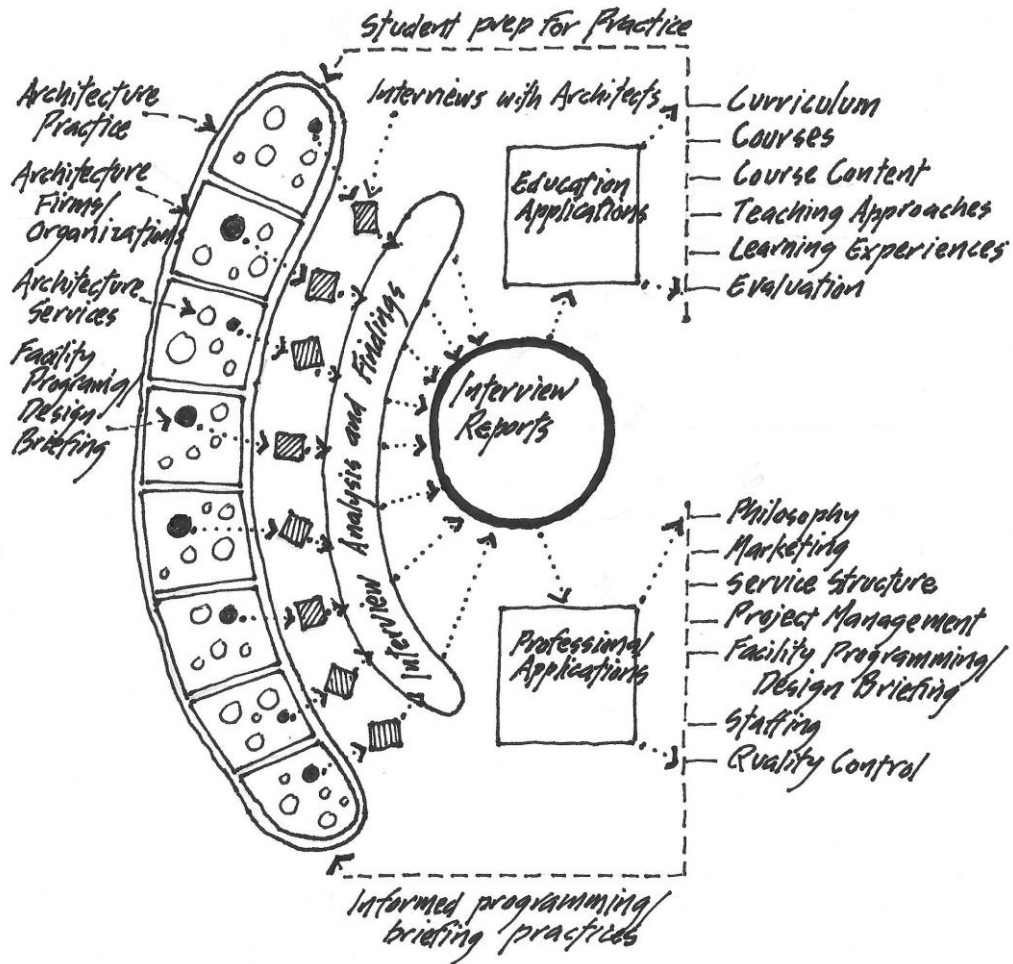


DESIGN BRIEFING IN ENGLAND

INTERVIEWS WITH ARCHITECTS



EDWARD T. WHITE



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Design Briefing in England: Interviews with Architects

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INTRODUCTION

This publication presents the results of a nine-month project involving face-to-face interviews in England about design briefing. The project is intended as a companion study to a similar effort in 1983 involving telephone interviews with architects in the United States about facility programming. It is the intention of the author to conduct studies of this kind in other countries and to ultimately compare predesign activities across several different cultural contexts.

Forty-eight interview sessions were held with fifty-nine individuals in forty organizations in England. In several cases more than one respondent from an organization participated in a given interview. The organizations are located in fifteen cities and towns, and most of the interviews were held at the respondents' offices. Those interviewed included twenty-three architects, nineteen faculty or researchers at educational institutions, seven representatives of various government authorities, five representatives of professional organizations, three consultants, and two clients. These individuals were selected for their briefing experience, research of the briefing process, and/or the opportunity they have, because of their position, to observe briefing activity from a unique perspective.

There are twelve distinct question areas used for the interviews and thirty-seven total questions in the set. The question areas are briefing definitions; relation of briefing to the architecture profession; types of projects; timing; cost; briefing method and content; relation of briefing to design; briefing participants; briefing strengths and problems; state-of-the-art in briefing; briefing education; and other briefing contacts and resources.

GOALS OF THE STUDY

There were several goals for undertaking this study:

1. To learn about attitudes, values, and perceptions regarding briefing in England across several types of organizations and from several perspectives.
2. To understand the fundamental concepts of briefing and how briefing fits into the building delivery context in England.
3. To identify those in England known for their work in briefing theory and practice.
4. To collect written material about briefing.
5. To contribute to the content of coursework in project programming at schools of architecture.
6. To provide supporting information for a forthcoming book on project programming.
7. To serve as one component of a long-term study of project programming in several countries.

All of these goals were achieved in the study.

METHOD

The study was carried out as the principal component of a sabbatical taken by the author during the 1986-1987 academic year from the School of Architecture, Florida A&M University.

Identification of Respondent Sample

The list of people and organizations to be contacted for interview appointments evolved over time. The initial list resulted from the author's prior knowledge of people and organizations in England known for briefing expertise. This list was expanded through letters and phone calls to people in the United States who were known for their expertise in project programming. When the list was completed, letters and sample programming material were mailed from the United States to the potential respondents in England asking for permission to conduct interviews. Once the study in England was underway, the potential respondent list grew considerably because the author asked each respondent who else in England should be interviewed. Most of the frequently mentioned briefing experts were interviewed by the author. Virtually all those contacted agreed to be interviewed. All respondents resided and worked in England with the exception of Thomas Markus of the University of Strathclyde in Scotland.

Formulation of the Question Set

The question areas and specific questions resulted primarily from the author's interests in specific aspects of facility programming. The question set was also influenced by suggestions from those contacted in the United States about the respondent sample and by an intention to have the question set for the England study of briefing generally correspond to the earlier study of facility programming in the United States. It should be noted that the question set was adjusted again after the pilot interviews were completed. These adjustments occurred in the form of the addition of questions to certain question areas and the deletion of questions from other question areas. The questions used for the interviews can be found under *Question Set*.

All the questions were open-ended and there was no effort to force respondent answers onto a quantitative scale. The author was interested in learning as much as possible about briefing rather than in testing hypotheses or searching for correlations between narrowly defined briefing factors.

Appointments with Respondents

On arrival in England, the author contacted each respondent by phone to make arrangements for interviews. In most cases the interview location was at the respondent's office. The author was less concerned with the particular occupations of the respondents or their geographic distribution than with their reputations in relation to briefing. The distribution of the respondent sample turned out to be interestingly located across several occupations and, not surprisingly, also happened to be primarily centered in the London area.

Conduct of the Interviews

All the interviews were face-to-face with the author taking notes. The interviews were not tape recorded. In many instances the questions were asked several ways to help the respondent understand the intent of the questions. The questions were asked in the same order each time. The interviews generally lasted an hour. The abbreviated notes were rewritten longhand after each interview, and these notes served as raw data for the analysis of results in this report.

Analysis and Aggregation of Results

There were five steps in the analysis and aggregation of the interview results.

- The first step involved reading the responses to each question and counting the number of times similar answers were given. This required the judgment of the author regarding the relative similarity and dissimilarity of the responses. The result of this exercise is expressed in the report under *Frequency of Responses* for each question. The number indicates the number of times an answer was mentioned. The comment expresses the generic idea of the response, and the comments in italics and parentheses provide specific examples of the generic ideas.
- The second step was the identification of particularly well-expressed ideas by the respondents for each question. These were taken from the interview notes and can be found in the report under *Selected Comments from Respondents*. Part of the pre-interview agreement was that no respondent would be identified with his/her interview comments.

- The third step was to make observations about the overall distribution of the responses to each question using the *Frequency of Responses*, and to calculate the percentages that the most frequently mentioned responses occupied within the total number of responses to that question. The observations involved noting the total number of responses to the question, the number of groupings into which the responses had been sorted, and the number of groupings that contained only 1 or 2 responses. In some cases, the rate at which the number of responses dropped off was also noted. This exercise permitted later observations to be made about the extent to which there was substantial agreement among the respondents on questions or the extent to which answers to questions were diffuse and scattered. The results of this step are under *Response Distribution* for each question.
- The fourth step was to take the *Frequency of Response* lists and to aggregate the list for each question into fewer and larger response categories. This again was a judgment process by the author involving decisions about the similarity and dissimilarity of the responses and the choice of appropriate super categories for aggregating the responses one more time. Like the judgments that produced the *Frequency of Responses*, these decisions reflect the author's personal taxonomy and organizational biases toward facility programming. The outcomes of this process are also under *Patterns* for each question.
- The fifth step involved rereading the *Frequency of Responses* and *Selected Comments from Respondents* to identify unusual, surprising, or especially well-put comments about briefing. This additional distilling of ideas beyond the process that identified comments for *Selected Comments from Respondents* was intended to ensure that key ideas not be lost in larger bodies of text and to prioritize concepts expressed by the respondents. Again, this presentation was a matter of the author's judgment. Results of this step are found under *Notable Ideas* under each question.

Summary of the Findings

This was the final step in working with the information. For each of the questions, the Patterns were studied and summarized in the form of a brief paragraph. As the reader proceeds from the Summary of Findings to the various divisions in Responses to the Questions, there will be greater detail presented on the responses to the questions. It is understood that this pyramiding of findings from a diffuse base of interview notes to fewer, tighter, and hopefully more meaningful observations is as much an expression of the author's perceptions about briefing in England as the actual objective state of briefing in England. The author is confident of the value of this human process of creating as well as finding order and hopes that the subjectivity of the analysis process will not diminish the value of the book for the reader.

LIST OF RESPONDENTS AND LOCATIONS

The list below presents the organizations, locations, and the people interviewed. The organizations are grouped by type with the individuals interviewed in parentheses.

Architects

1. Aldington, Craig, Collinge. Haddingham. (John Craig).
2. ARUP Associates. London. (Brian Carter).
3. Austin-Smith Lord. London. (Peter Lord).
4. Bickerdike Allen & Partners. London. (William Allen).
5. Tim Bruce-Dick Architects. London. (Tim Bruce-Dick).
6. Building Design Partnership. Manchester. (George Baines, Robert Greenslade, William Pearson, William White).
7. D'Arcy Race Architects. London. (Steve Race).
8. Duffy, Eley, Giffone, Worthington. London. (Francis Duffy, David Hyams, John Worthington).
9. Foster Associates. London. (Spencer Grey).
10. GMW Architects. London. (Gunter Puechel).
11. John R. Harris, Architects. London. (John Harris, Christopher Mitchell).
12. Llewelyn-Davies Weeks. London. (J. R. Weeks).
13. Robert Matthew, Johnson-Marshall and Partners. London. (David Howard, David Lloyd-Jones).
14. Scott, Brownrigg, Turner. London. (Michael Kellard).
15. Trickett Associates. London. (Terry Trickett).
16. YRM. London. (George Young).

Academic and Research

1. Bartlett School of Design. London. (Bill Hillier, Allen Pens, Martin Symes).
2. University of Bristol. Bristol. (Jeff Bishop).
3. Kingston Polytechnic. Kingston upon Thames. (Sue-Ann Lee).
4. Medical Architectural Research Unit, Polytechnic of North London. London. (Rosemary Glanville, Margaret McCutcheon, Carole Rawlinson).
5. Oxford Polytechnic. Headington. (Brian Goody, Roland Newman).
6. Portsmouth Polytechnic. Portsmouth. (Geoffrey Broadbent, Graham Brown, James Powell, Jonathan Sime).
7. Royal College of Art. London. (Keith Critchlow).
8. University of Strathclyde. Glasgow, Scotland. (Thomas Markus).
9. University of Surrey. Guildford. (David Canter).
10. Tavistock Institute. London. (Barry Poyner).
11. University of York. York. (Douglas Wise).

Government Authorities

1. Department of Education and Science. London. (Michael Hacker, Geoffrey Hughes).
2. Department of the Environment. London. (Elliot Levy).
3. Department of Health and Social Services. London. (Tony Jones, Jeff Mayers).
4. Oxford Regional Health Authority. Headington. (Jon Gibbons).
5. Property Service Agency. London. (Fred Levy).

Building-Related Institutions

1. Building Research Establishment. Garston. (Ron Brewer).
2. Construction Industry Research and Information Association. London. (Michael Powell).
3. Royal Institute of British Architects. London. (David Barclay, Rod Hackney, Peter Melvin).

Consultants

1. John Brandenburger, Consultants. London. (John Brandenburger).
2. Building Use Studies. London. (Sheena Wilson).
3. Peter Ellis Consultants. London. (Peter Ellis).

Clients

1. IBM-UK. Eastleigh. (Colin Jackson).
2. Lloyd's of London. London. (Courtenay Blackmore).

QUESTION SET

1. Definitions and paradigms
 - A. What is your short definition of briefing? Essentially, what is briefing?
 - B. Generally, why are design briefs produced? Why does briefing exist as a distinct component in the building delivery process?
2. Relation to the architecture profession
 - A. How important is design briefing to architects in England?
 - B. Does the RIBA place appropriate emphasis upon design briefing as an architectural service?
 - C. Is briefing generally considered part of the basic architectural service for building projects or is it an additional service?
 - D. What has been the general evolution and history of design briefing in England?
3. Types of projects: For what types of projects is design briefing most likely to be done especially carefully, formally, and systematically?
4. Timing: Is briefing all done before design begins or is it a continuous process throughout the project?
5. Cost
 - A. Is briefing typically covered by the basic architectural fee for design services or by a separate fee?
 - B. If you were hired to do a briefing study, how would you go about estimating the fee for the project?
 - C. Are you aware of any short rules of thumb for quickly estimating the probable cost of briefing for a project?
6. Method and content
 - A. Generally, what are the steps involved in good briefing? In particular, what are the important preliminaries (early work which launches the process), what is the heart of the process, and how do you close the briefing process successfully?
 - B. What kinds of project information would you expect to be addressed in a good briefing effort?
 - C. How common or varied do you think briefing methods and content are across architecture firms and other organizations involved in briefing?
 - D. How are the results of briefing efforts usually packaged?
7. Relation to design
 - A. Generally, how would you describe the attitudes of designers toward design briefs? How do designers use briefs in design?
 - B. In what kinds of design decisions and for what aspects of building form are design briefs most influential? Where do design briefs primarily impact building design?
 - C. Beyond informing design decisions, do design briefs have any other role or value in the building process?
8. Participants
 - A. Within an architectural firm or briefing organization, who usually is primarily responsible for the briefing?
 - B. What personal skills, qualities, and knowledge are important to good briefing?
 - C. Do you think most clients understand and appreciate the importance and value of briefing?

9. Strengths and problems

- A. Generally, what do you think briefing can be counted upon to do well? What are the strong and reliable points of the process?
- B. What do you personally enjoy most about briefing?
- C. What are the critical aspects involved in making sure that briefing is done successfully?
- D. What are the typical shortcomings of briefing? What often goes wrong during this phase of the project?
- E. What do you personally dislike about the briefing process? What aspects of it don't you look forward to?
- F. What kinds of things seriously jeopardize the success of a briefing effort?

10. State-of-the-art

- A. Where do you think the best briefing is being done in England today?
- B. Who are the current champions of briefing in England?
- C. Are the findings of the building research community used in the briefing of new buildings in any meaningful way?
- D. Is there any connection between the lessons learned through building evaluation and the briefing of new buildings?

11. Education

- A. Do you think briefing should be taught as a topic in architecture schools?
- B. Are there any schools which pay special attention to briefing in their coursework?
- C. If you were in charge of planning briefing coursework, what would be the main components of your approach to teaching this topic?

12. Other contacts and resources

- A. What other people or organizations should I interview about design briefing while I am in England?
- B. Are you aware of any publications or other literature about design briefing?
- C. Do you have any reports, articles, forms, or promotional material that I could have to augment your answers to these questions?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The responses to each of the 37 questions are summarized below. Comments address the predominant ideas provided by the respondents as indicated by the *Patterns*. The numbers correspond to the question numbers under Question Set above. A more detailed account of the answers to each question can be found in the next section under Responses to the Questions.

- 1a. Design briefing is the process of producing a statement of what the client needs. It is both an expression of project requirements and a learning process. To a large extent briefing activity is integrated with design activity. An important aspect of briefing is its role in facilitating the cultivation of human working relationships during the project and in the overall management of the job.
- 1b. Briefs are produced primarily to ensure a good fit between buildings and their purposes. They are tools for thinking, communication, and human interaction. Briefs provide an opportunity for clients to clarify their thinking and for architects to understand the client. The brief serves to inform design, to guide project management, and to assure a quality building. The design brief may be used as a yardstick for measuring the success of the new building and as an instrument to make the job proceed more efficiently.
- 2a. Generally, architects are positive about the briefing process and its importance in project delivery, although there is concern and even resentment about briefing by some private professional architects. The positive or negative disposition of architects toward briefing depends, in many cases, upon the client and the project. Those positive toward briefing see it as an essential component of the planning process, and those negatively disposed see it as restricting creativity.
- 2b. The Royal Institute of British Architects covers briefing adequately in its literature but does not place any significant emphasis upon briefing. Critical comments deal with the fact that briefing is covered in the literature but the information is out of date or emphasizes the wrong things. Many feel that briefing warrants more importance in the RIBA literature.
- 2c. Briefing services are typically considered part of the general architectural service on projects, and, as such, are covered by the overall architectural fee for the job. It is also the case that the normal amount of fee and time within this context is not sufficient for a thorough briefing effort. In many government projects, the client assumes all briefing responsibility. A small number of architects treat briefing as a separate service with separate contract and fee, especially for complex projects involving special briefing work. Some say that briefing is always part of the basic architectural service and fee because briefing simply describes the interaction between architect and client.
- 2d. Most believe that briefing has evolved gradually toward more sophistication over the years and will tend to continue to do so. Some feel that the high point of briefing sophistication was in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s when large construction volume, concern for sociological issues, and attention to building failures drew attention to the importance of briefing. Others feel that briefing has evolved in the government sector and in large architecture firms but not elsewhere. Still others say that certain aspects of briefing have evolved but other aspects have not.
- 3a. The kinds of projects where briefing is most likely to be done well are complex building types and projects where the contextual situation surrounding the project is especially complex. Demanding or difficult clients, government clients, demanding functions, and new building types also put pressure on the briefing process.
- 4a. While the brief as a product is likely to be produced at the beginning of a job, briefing as a process is likely to continue throughout the project. Most believe that briefing is an activity of exploration that is integrated with design.
- 5a. Traditionally, briefing is covered by the basic architectural fee, although most point to the inadequacy of the normal briefing fee to do a good job. The normal fee covers simple projects but not complex ones. To some

RESPONSES TO THE QUESTIONS

This is the most lengthy and detailed section of the report. It contains several kinds of information that pertain to each of the 37 questions. These are briefly described below, and then the results of each question will be presented.

QUESTION AREA TITLE AND QUESTION

The question area (e.g., *Definitions and Paradigms*) is listed first, and then the specific question that was asked of the respondents is given.

PATTERNS

In this section the author takes the information in Frequency of Responses and aggregates it into larger clusters of responses based on similarities in the Frequency of Responses. For example, in question 1a all the answers (in Frequency of Responses) that pertain to briefing as a management tool are gathered, counted, and calculated as a percentage of the total responses to the question. In this case, that percentage is 16%. This exercise is an effort to simplify the responses into fewer categories so that a sense for the direction of the responses can be more easily had. It is, in effect, a summing up of the Frequency of Responses data.

Some of the example responses of each aggregated response cluster are then given, together with the percentages that they occupy of the total responses to the question.

NOTABLE IDEAS

Here the author collects particularly interesting, telling, or provocative concepts from the Frequency of Responses and the Selected Comments from Respondents. They are not necessarily widely-shared views of the respondents but impressed the author as especially articulate, revealing, or indicative of a unique, creative, or insightful value position in briefing.

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES

This section is produced by reading the notes from the interviews, sorting the answers for each question by similarity into response categories, and counting the number of times a similar answer was given to the question. Where appropriate, examples of the answers from the interview notes are included in italics within parentheses.

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

These are excerpts from the interview notes that illustrate representative answers given by the respondents. These are in no particular order or hierarchy, but rather are a potpourri of well-expressed ideas. They are not direct quotations from the respondents but are from the author's notes taken during the interviews. It was the author's intention during the interviews to accurately record the ideas of the respondents and to avoid the insertion of personal observations or editorial comments.

Neither the *Frequency of Responses* nor the *Selected Comments From Respondents* are assigned to their sources as this was a condition under which the respondents agreed to be interviewed.

DEFINITIONS AND PARADIGMS

What is your short definition of a design brief and design briefing? Essentially, what is briefing?

PATTERNS

The response categories for this question can be sorted into four larger groupings. These are:

- **Briefing defined as a statement of requirements or learning process (54%)** including statements of client requirements in client's terms (38%), opportunity for architect to learn about the client's organization (4%), and architect's expression of what he/she thinks the client needs (4%). Other ideas include architect's effort to find out what the client wants done, setting down information that is constantly changing, opportunity for the client to find out what he/she really wants, information the architect learns by living with the client, and delineation of government guidelines.
- **As a process that is design-integrated (16%)** including exploratory process integrated with design (11%) and inspiration for design (3%). Additional example responses listed are mechanism for applying research to design and client preferences teased out through preliminary design proposals.
- **As a management tool (16%)** including process that spans the whole project (8%) and architect's first opportunity to add value to the project (3%). Other responses include management tool, a way in-house corporate architects make the building process responsive to the company's business plan, preparation for strategic planning decisions, and value engineering of requirements to discover important issues.
- **As facilitator of human working relationships (14%)** including opportunity for architect and client to get to know one another (8%) and exploration by architect and client working together (4%). Also mentioned is preservation of power structure in the client's organization by the powerful.

A second pattern has to do with the issue of who controls the briefing process. 43% say that the client controls the process, 27% say it is the architect, and 12% say it should be an equal partnership.

NOTABLE IDEAS

- The brief is the first opportunity for the architect to add value to the client's project.
- Briefing is the way that the powerful in the client's organization preserve and protect their position and status.
- Briefing is the mechanism employed by the client to ensure that the client's company building program is responsive to its ever-changing business plan.
- Briefing is the one opportunity for the client to exert control and direction in the project.

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES

- 28 **The brief is the statement of what the client needs in the client's terms.** It is a communication to the design team about the building requirements. For the design team, it is the information they need to produce the design.
- 8 **Because it is (or should be) integrated with design, briefing is an exploratory process** which studies the interrelationships between what's needed, what's wanted, what's architecturally possible, and what's feasible.
- 6 **Briefing is an opportunity for the client and architect to get to know one another.** It is an interactive process and a working relationship.

- 6 **Briefing is not an event but a process** which actually spans over the whole project and even extends beyond client move-in. It can even serve the client as a facility management manual.
- 3 **The brief is an opportunity for the architect to learn** about the client's organization, its culture, and what makes the client tick.
- 3 **The brief is the architect's manifestation of what he thinks the client needs.** In this sense, the architect is the expert about the client's requirements.
- 3 **Briefing should be an exploration of the potential of the project** by the architect and the client working together. It is an opportunity for the architect to creatively contribute to the definition of the client's problem.
- 2 **A good brief is a catalyst and inspiration for design.** It is enabling and stimulative rather than technical and quantitative. It should involve the designer in issues that extend well beyond the "problem-as-given."
- 2 **The brief is the architect's first opportunity to add value to the project,** that is, to maximize the opportunities for the client.
 - 1 The brief is a mechanism for applying the findings of the building research community to facility design.
 - 1 The brief is an effort by the architect to understand what the client wants and, in some cases, how he/she wants it done.
 - 1 The brief is essentially a management tool.
 - 1 The brief and the briefing process are attempting to do the impossible: to set down, once and for all, information which is constantly changing.
 - 1 Briefing is the opportunity for the client to exert some control and direction over the project.
 - 1 The briefing process is an opportunity for the client to discover what he really wants.
 - 1 Briefing is a process whereby the client's needs, requirements, and preferences are teased out through a series of design proposals.
 - 1 Briefing is the way the company architects make the building delivery component of the organization responsive to a constantly changing business plan.
 - 1 The brief is the mechanism that the well-to-do and powerful use to preserve their stature in the organization and in society.
 - 1 The brief embodies what the architect learns by living with the client.
 - 1 Briefing is the preparation for strategic planning decisions.
 - 1 Briefing involves the value-engineering of requirements to discover the most important issues.
 - 1 The brief delineates the specific application of government planning guidelines to a particular project.

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS

Briefing is a process whereby the architect and the client attempt to find the shortest list of essential elements. The Bucky Fuller idea of conceptual series is useful here. Conceptual series help to avoid overlooking important design factors during briefing.

Implicit in this idea of briefing is a kind of value engineering of requirements in order to discover the most important issues and to avoid information overload during design.

Briefing has to do with preparation for strategic design decisions. In the past, briefing has suffered from being either non-generative (not leading to design decisions) or overdetermined (overly restrictive in terms of design choice). Briefing should explore the strategic morphological design alternatives in terms of the relationship between form and function. There should be greater predictive accuracy at the briefing stage in anticipating the

functional outcomes of formal alternatives. This means that existing forms must be studied and research tools need to be used to determine how various strategic form alternatives work in various ways. This is all based upon how buildings actually work. All of this can then be computerized for easy access and use.

The whole of briefing can be divided into precedent (past solutions) and prototype (new solutions) as bases for planning the scheme at hand.

A huge programming effort that takes a long time and that results in a fat document is a waste of time. This firm likes to tear them up right in front of the client and then begin serious discussion about the real and current issues of the project. A formal approach to briefing is never really a good start for design. Efforts at formalized briefing never work. The failure of design competitions which are briefed in detail are proof of this.

The brief must be a constant asking of the question “why” and a thorough involvement with the real problems of the client. The brief always evolves with the design. Not until the architect begins to deal with design does the world of the client and the world of the architect begin to come together.

Briefing is traditionally held to be the description of the client’s requirements as stated in terms which the client believes to be true. In reality, briefing is the starting point for a discussion which lasts throughout the design process. This involves the client stating what he believes is needed and the architect interprets this and gradually brings the client’s ideas and architect’s understanding into congruence.

Except for the small house, building projects require the allocation of major resources. The powerful and elite of society are always the ones who control these resources (including the government). These groups are not interested in undertaking building projects which undermine or weaken their elite positions. The buildings must at least protect the existing elite position and, if possible, enhance it. This motivation and intent cannot be made explicit in design briefs, and so various strategies are used to protect building briefs from questions which might alter the nature of the project and thus jeopardize the elite positions of these groups. These strategies include:

- Making the brief appear to be objective and unassailable
- Making the brief long, complex, and impenetrable
- Using experts to protect the brief from questions
- Spelling out all the detail so that the brief seems open and complete
- Taking great pains to make the brief appear to be innocent

Briefs are never innocent. They always contain the value systems of those who provided the information and of those who wrote it down.

Since briefing must express intentions in language, the tools of linguistic analysis can be applied to briefing in order to better understand its structure and the patterns of design outcomes that emerge from briefs. Briefing is both prescriptive and descriptive, and there would seem to be certain design results preordained as a result of the language used in the brief.

If you trace back the history of building type and briefing, most of the interesting events, trends, and influences on today began about 1800. This was when projects grew in scope and complexity, began to be multifunctional in nature, and required some documented predesign thinking about the nature of the design problem.

Briefing is an effort to extract the client’s requirements by the architect as filtered through the architect’s understanding of the building type and the limitations of construction. Clients don’t always understand that their needs must be tempered by these other factors. Often, the architect knows more about the client’s building type than the client knows.

This firm has a different view of briefing from most architects. We prefer that the client not come to the firm with a fixed brief but rather with an open mind towards his project and requirements. The firm prefers to work with the client in the definition of his problem and to apply the creative talents of its staff to the establishment of the requirements. Usually firm and complete briefs prepared by the client are incomplete or wrong in their analysis of requirements. The architect’s role is to challenge the client about what he thinks he needs. For the architect to re-

ally understand the client's organization, the architect must be involved in briefing. Client-produced briefs or briefs done by third party consultants frustrate this involvement.

Briefing, then, is the way the architect gets to know the client's organization and the method of contributing creative input to the definition of the client's problem.

Pre-done briefs prepared by the client or consultants before the architect is hired are actually inefficient. It takes a long time for the architect to "unbutton" this sort of brief and then to build up a true brief for the job. It is more efficient in the long run to allow the architect to help form the brief in the first place. This sort of briefing is a very brave act by a client.

It is very easy to do briefing improperly, and when this happens it causes serious difficulties later. Briefing is often done by unskilled people who have never done it before (clients). The most important aspect of briefing is participation by an informed client.

In this organization, the management of facility planning is critical because buildings must be responsive to the overall business strategies of the company and must fit within very demanding time, cost, flexibility, and design parameters. Manufacturing and marketing can change dramatically in a short time because of the competitive nature of the business, and the building construction component of the organization must work within this volatile and fluid environment.

The company has evolved a considerable amount of design standards material which simplifies briefing. But this material really is not the brief. By the time a decision has been made to go ahead with a project, a large amount of feasibility and planning work has already been done. And so briefing is not considered the beginning of a process, it is really the end of a long process which extends back into business and company strategic planning at the highest levels. The organization's construction program is totally driven by the strategic business planning.

Most clients don't have the ability to prepare their brief. It is interesting how many very large projects have very short briefs or even no brief at all.

For some types of clients, the brief must be teased out by eliciting their reactions to a series of design proposals.

Some clients are very impatient with the idea of briefing. They feel they hired the architect to design the building and expect him to get on with it without much participation by the client. If the architect asks the client to get involved in briefing, the client wonders if he hired the wrong architect.

Clients need guidance in expressing needs which are stated in ways that are architecturally relevant but should not be forced to distinguish between what is useful or not useful themselves. This is the designer's responsibility.

Briefing ensures that the design team, led by the architect, fully comprehends what the client believes he is seeking. The process must be flexible enough to recognize that the designer can help the client to discover that the client really wants something very different than what had first been envisioned.

The brief is a way of optimizing communication between the architect and the client. Ideally, this communication leads to a design form which exactly reflects the requirements of the client and at the same time enables the design team to express perceptions of society and of the future in the design.

The briefing begins when the client senses that he may have a space or building-related problem. The brief is not a space list or even a document. It is the collective working relationship between architect and client.

Briefing is essentially a design exercise and very much integral with the planning of the scheme. The brief should never attempt to be so precise that it unnecessarily closes down design options.

The brief is only complete when the design has been approved by the client. At first the information flows only from client to architect, then the design ideas flow from the architect back to the client. Finally, there is a two-way dialogue, which is the ultimate goal of the design-briefing process.

Briefing is something that is never really accomplished. We never actually achieve it. The whole idea of briefing needs to be thought through better. A brief can never be a single document which states the whole problem once

and for all. Briefing cannot be done by formula or using any standard approach. The goal is to capture the whole problem with the brief but, in practice, this is never done.

A brief always contains some issues which are precise and others which are ambiguous. A good brief needs both. During design the problem statement is constantly reevaluated, and the brief needs to take this dynamic into account. Briefing is really trying to pin down a moving target.

Real world problems are never tidy ones. They always contain ambiguity and conflict and contradiction.

The brief is an opportunity to give the client what he never knew he could have. Briefs should extend well beyond the client's "needs" and explore new opportunities in the situation. A building project is a major undertaking, and the client should benefit in as many ways as possible from it.

The architect should never accept the client's brief "as given" but look for as many other additional things that the project can accomplish as possible. The brief should broaden the client's horizons.

The brief is like the building itself. It is not a single "event" but an ongoing process that continues through time.

Architects are really in the communication business, and so the brief is crucial to that process. The building is simply an outcome of that process of communication.

Quality assurance is an important aspect of the architect's service and the brief is central to that process as well. The brief establishes what the architect and client agree will be provided by the building. Quality assurance reduces client uncertainty about the ability of the architect to fulfill the brief.

Clients are very concerned about obtaining adding value for their money.

If architects can't add value to buildings, then there is no reason to seek architectural services. Value should be added at all project phases, including briefing.

Architects should tell their clients that "the building will be as good as your ability to describe what you will do in it."

Briefing is first of all a creative process. It is a part of the total process of producing buildings. It begins with someone who has a desire to do something (client) and ends with someone helping them do something about it (architect). Generally, the brief is:

- A generator, an organ of ideas
- A setting of goals without saying how specifically to get there
- Not overly constraining on the design process
- Part of a larger process
- Not something that guarantees a beautiful building
- Not something that should be seen as an end in itself
- Something that, if done wrong, can mean problems later in design

Prefer the word "program" to "brief." "Program" is appropriate because of the connotation of the instructions to a computer. The program is a set of instructions about how the building is to perform and be used through time.

The word "brief" comes from lawyers and implies a bundle of papers wrapped in a ribbon which is prepared once and not revisited.

There is a danger in a brief being too complete, too thorough. We all fear thick documents full of figures.

Briefing is a continuous process over the entire building delivery procedure rather than a one-time event up front. It is iterative and layered in that various briefs are produced at various points when different kinds of decisions need to be made.

Briefing even continues after the building is occupied because the client needs help in maintaining the fit between his operation and his facility.

Designing and briefing are all one process. The brief just begins the process of gradual alignment of understanding with the client that is continued during the design of the building.

The brief itself can never anticipate all the physical design implications of the project facts and needs. This makes design, where the physical is juxtaposed with the verbal, an essential part of the briefing process.

In England the architect is the expert who generally tells the client what he needs. There is less democracy in the briefing process in England than in the U.S. or Canada.

In England, there is a problem in that the process is not researched by the client or the architect. Briefing is a rather loose process because there are very few professional clients who demand rigorous briefing. A brief could be one sentence (“design my house”), and many briefs are only one or two pages long.

Briefing should always include attention to the philosophy and attitude of the client. The brief should be taken through three general phases:

- Broad issues
- Deeper investigation of broad issues
- Detailed briefing (room data)

Generally, a brief addresses purpose, place, and performance. The brief can also be thought of as the design “conditions.”

Briefing is often a needlessly static phenomenon. In this sense the brief can be part of the problem in getting a good design.

The brief is the statement of what the client needs. Usually, the client first does his own appraisal of his present facility to determine if he is eligible for new construction funding within the guidelines of the government standards. Clients must justify their proposed new construction economically by exploring the implications of a number of scenarios, including doing nothing.

Building design should be based upon clear and measurable criteria similar to the way roads and highways are designed. Roads and highways are planned to avoid and reduce accidents and the damage resulting from accidents. The outcomes from these kinds of planning decisions can be evaluated later. This leads to gradual improvement of design solutions over time.

Reduction of the occurrence of crime in buildings is another clear criterion which can be planned for and measured when the facility is completed and in use. Briefing should be based upon these kinds of building performance measures.