

Session One:

Performance Appraisal

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After a great deal of talk in the last twenty years about the need for designers to obtain feedback information on the quality of their products, at long last techniques for doing this are being developed and this session covers many of them. The papers raise, and to some extent answer, some fundamental questions.

1. What is the real difference between a building and a representation of it? My own paper argues for similarities. Lau's paper exposes some of the problems associated with visual simulations used for lighting judgments; problems that research workers in lighting have often glossed over and problems which designers need to understand and solve if they are to have any faith either in their own or in their clients' judgments based on models.

2. What is the design process like and especially how does the introspective act which we call appraisal take place? Dean Hawkes in his paper puts forward a technique for continuous and rapid output of performance measures on the basis of which a designer can evaluate and change his strategy. Thomas Davis puts forward a model which attempts to explain the nature of this activity both during design and after completion.

3. The key question--if it is peoples' efficiency and above all their feelings, relationships and personal responses which are to be the main criterion of success, how do we measure these?, and how can we predict them? My colleague, David Canter, puts forward a theoretical framework into which these various types of response fit and illustrates them with examples. Davis and Roizen used some of these

techniques in a college hall of residence and artinian in Canadian schools. Davis also refers to questionnaire and interview techniques and methods of scoring and scaling.

The relationship between the papers inevitably is loose and many questions remain not only unanswered but even unasked. Amongst the former is the question as to how concepts about buildings and environment fit mental maps and human experience in general. Some, but not all the authors, at long last have given up talking about "building users" as some peculiar human species different from all other types of people. An area which no doubt psychologists will be exploring more thoroughly is the way in which a child's development of the concept of place and space happens. Cross-cultural studies by anthropologists in this area are also required. The effect of changes with time in social groups and in individuals as a separate issue from personality development also remains to be tackled.

The unification of environmental measures into a form where public discussion and argument is possible seems as yet an immense task. Costs and values, as used in cost-benefit studies, may be one answer and the limited usefulness of such studies should not be a cause for disparagement today but rather for an effort to improve their complexity and their realism in treatment of value judgment. To fall back on a distinction between objective measures and subjective evaluation shelves the problem but does not solve it.