

Book Reviews

Book Review Editor is Anne Sweaney

A Book Review:

PRACTICING UNIVERSAL DESIGN: AN INTERPRETATION OF THE ADA by Wm. L. Wilkoff and L. W. Abed. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1994, 210 pages.

Jorge H. Atilas

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 provided all design professionals with the opportunity to rethink the built environment and become educated about strategies for implementing universal design. This book is organized in two parts: "Understanding Universal Design" and "Applying Universal Design". Each part is divided into three chapters filled with illustrations and side notes that ratify the major points communicated to the reader. In addition, Appendix 1 summarizes the ADA titles and their effective dates, Appendix 2 includes illustrated narratives of the ADA accessibility guidelines for buildings and facilities, and Appendix 3 offers solutions to scenarios presented throughout Part Two.

The first part offers Chapter One with a summary of the history of the universal or barrier-free design movement and how it culminated with the passage of the ADA. Chapter Two serves to heighten the designer's awareness of the many needs of persons with various types of disabilities. Chapter Three briefly explores the social, psychological, and economic ramifications associated with ADA compliance and the challenges presented to designers.

The second part goes into the details of applying ADA guidelines to the design of buildings and facilities. This part presents accessibility scenarios governed by various Titles under the ADA that need adequate design solutions. The reader is then asked to think about solutions to the scenarios presented. Chapter Four shows the "exterior path of travel" as the first step to consider in building accessibility. It also highlights the importance of designing adequate curb ramps, signage, parking areas, exterior doors, and maneuvering clearance. Chapter Five brings the reader to the accessibility issues affecting the "interior path of travel" to a public space. It presents scenarios involving inadequate elevators and signage, stairways, telephone location, ground and floor surfaces, drinking fountains, alarms, bathrooms, interior stairs and ramps, and an elevator lobby leading to a roof. Finally, Chapter Six brings the reader from the paths of travel to the "general function areas," or final point of destination. The scenarios provide examples for the interior of a bank, transient lodging, a medical office, a health club, museums, restaurants, a classroom, and an office area.

The book primarily targets interior design and architecture students. However, it may appeal to any professional dealing with public access to the built environment. The book has a good flow of information, it effectively highlights relevant points without attempting to cover every detail of the ADA. Floor plans and interior elevations effectively illustrate the various scenarios. Although the scenarios show how universal design helps persons with visual, hearing, and mobility impairments, the authors acknowledge the limitations associated with universal design for those persons with severe disabilities.

This book purposely excluded housing because the legalities governing guidelines for residences fall outside the current scope of the ADA. However, housing educators can use this book as a resource text for teaching introduction to barrier-free design courses applicable to public spaces of the built environment.

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A Book Review:

SUCCESSFUL RESIDENTIAL MANAGEMENT: THE PROFESSIONAL'S GUIDE by Barbara Kamanitz Holland. Chicago, IL: Institute of Real Estate Management, 388 pages.

Stephanie Lassiter

Holland uses a reader-friendly approach to outline her major themes of management theory, organizational behavior, and styles of management. With the exception of the first, second, and final chapters, she devotes each chapter to a specific aspect of residential management.

Holland addresses the importance of communication and interpersonal skills and how they aid in building an effective team, as well as the value of Total Quality Management (TQM), the newest wave in management techniques.

The first chapter is devoted to the real estate manager whose primary duties include on- and off-site management and administering funds, bank accounts, and leasing, while insuring residential relations. Holland defines the manager's goal as preserving and increasing the value of the property under management. She lists key terms, concepts, and points such as agents, capital appreciation, periodic return, and cooperative ownership.

The next chapter deals specifically with site management and the role of the site manager. An emphasis is placed on management and communication skill, maturity, judgement, and professionalism. Additionally, Holland defines the code of ethics. Terms such as administration and fair housing laws and concepts such as time management and site management are defined.

Chapters three through ten deal with specific facets of residential management, personnel relations, marketing, leasing, and risk management. Each chapter includes a special boxed list that itemizes the site managers practical responsibilities within that particular facet.

The final chapter, which is not devoted to a specific aspect of residential management, covers implementing professionalism in residential management. Holland points out that the role of the residential manager is constantly changing, which she says makes the job challenging and satisfying. Terms outlined in chapter II are analysis of alternatives, and physical change, while the concepts defined are leadership qualities and professionalism.

Because of the text's friendly format, the book appears to serve as an ideal source for studying residential management. The key terms and concepts included in the chapters help to define the most important aspects of that particular chapter, which not only increases the usability of the text but also is effective in its purpose.

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A Book Review:

THE POETICS OF CITIES: DESIGNING NEIGHBORHOODS THAT WORK by Mike Greenberg. Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 288 pages.

Stephanie Lassiter

This text, designed around a retrospective glance at the one-time community neighborhood, focuses on Greenberg's experiences as a citizen in the city of San Antonio, Texas. Citizens' obsession with privacy in the home and the rapid decay of the traditional neighborhood sparked the author to write a text on designing neighborhoods that work.

Greenberg says people often look at San Antonio as a beautiful tourist city, yet never realize the poverty, crime, and illiteracy that go hand-in-hand with its beauty. He stresses that we have become more taxpayers than citizens by "devaluing our public realm, our shared life, our sense of community." Rather than focusing on building a community among our neighbors, we focus on our privacy.

While written as a text, Greenberg's tone reads more like a novel, which makes reading it more enjoyable than thumbing through a traditional text with pages of diagrams and illustrations. Greenberg uses photos and visuals where necessary, but not in excess. He incorporates bulleted lists and headings to identify important points, which makes locating crucial information easier. Another textual feature which adds to the usability of the text is its make-up consisting of parts which are divided into chapters.

One chapter deals specifically with sidewalks and their relationship to the community. Greenberg begins the chapter with a reference to a Charles Chaplin novel and continues the chapter with details of designing a usable sidewalk. Another chapter entitled "The Marketplace" reminds us of the supermarket at the end of the street where it was safe to ride our bikes to pick up a carton of milk. By nurturing our memories, Greenberg effectively creates a mood which invigorates us to work to make the neighborhood what it once was.

He ends the text with a poignant chapter entitled "The Stakes," where he focuses on the reality of a neighborhood rather than on its physical appearance. Greenberg says a city map is more than an outline of where we live and what we do. Rather, a map is an illustration of how we have decided to live and how we relate to others. He uses a case where 11 neighborhood associations worked together to see that 800 acres of land were not designated for highway systems. Their successful attempt ended in the zoning of 361 acres for residential development. This classic example showed how working together within one's community can be effective.

Greenberg's reminder of our childhood days where our neighborhoods were safe, lemonade stands were on every corner, and the neighborhood ballpark was a place to play ball, not sell drugs, suggests to us that we are losing sight of what a real neighborhood should be, and instead obsessing on our privacy and ourselves.

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A Book Review:

POPULAR AMERICAN HUSING, A REFERENCE GUIDE Edited by Ruth Brent and Benjamin Schwarz. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 272 pages.

Jeff Inman

According to the editors, this reference guide is intended to capture the multidisciplinary essence of housing as a complex system that seeks to meet the goals of a variety of users. The book brings into focus different aspects of housing from various disciplines in the context of American culture. It was written with the intent to be used as a tool to help students and researchers realize the comprehensive nature of housing.

The book begins with a history of American housing, setting the stage for the environmental and social science perspective of housing. Residential environments focusing on people, behavior, and physical setting in relationship to the home, neighborhood, and community are examined.

The next section of this book focuses on the arts and popular media as channels of visual and symbolic information and communication, using these as a basis for the examination of American popular housing as an image or icon in the American system of values.

A chapter on housing and public administration describes how government policies and programs have been developed to produce housing. The next chapter identifies a number of diverse sources of information concerning marketing, finance, economics, and management as they relate to housing.

Another chapter deals with environmental design, construction processes, and technology and reviews the perspectives of the professional disciplines on such areas as the construction processes, building materials, computer technology, air quality, futuristic housing, and special populations and accessibility needs.

The final chapter discusses the wide range of electronic communication systems available for conducting research relating to housing. These include data tapes, on-line databases, electronic mail, listserves, on-line communities, software, and electronic journals among others. A list of electronic addresses is included.

This reference guide would be an excellent addition to the personal libraries of faculty, as well as undergraduate and graduate students involved in the study of the field of housing. An extensive list of references is provided at the end of each chapter.

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