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### Building a Career in Architecture

Designing buildings, making blueprints, and using computers to get every detail right is just a regular day in the life of an architect. The vocation that I have researched as a potential future career is a career in architecture. I have researched the education required for becoming an architect, examined the salary of this job, and investigated the outlook of this job. Architects are counted on to make sure that the buildings they design are safe and practical. If even one problem arises in a building's design, the architect may have to start the building project again. The job of an architect is a very important one in which he or she must pay attention to every detail.

To become an architect, one must successfully complete specific educational training. He or she will need to prepare themselves for good competition for this job. Because it is such a competitive field and there are many applicants for few available positions, an architect must do everything he or she can to earn the position. One should have something that no one else has. Experience with CAD (Computer-Aided Design) will especially help set oneself apart from the crowd, for you will not need additional training to learn to design.

In college programs, students learn things like engineering concepts, building design, and graphic design. By taking classes like art, math, drafting, history, English,

and writing, he or she will be ahead of the game, and one will have a much better chance of getting a good job in a prestigious architectural firm. Also, he or she can apply for a program for architecture while still in high school: "Because most state architecture registration boards require a professional degree, high school students are advised, early in their senior year, to apply for admission to a professional program that is accredited by the National Architectural Accrediting Board" ("Architects" 178). By applying for one of these programs, one can fully understand what would be expected when he or she becomes an architect. All these classes can also help one become a very successful architect.

Most architects need college degrees and plenty of experience. In addition, one often has to pass a LEED exam about architecture. Most of the time, an aspiring architect will need experience in an architect's office: "Generally, in addition to a bachelor's degree, an applicant must have three years of practical experience in an architect's office" ("Job Profiles Architect" 127). One misconception about being an architect is that one has to be good at drawing in order to be successful in this field. Actually, because there are computer programs that will help do it for the architect, one does not necessarily need to be an artist. However, one should be able to visualize the different parts in a building and what the building will look like. He or she should understand science so one knows that the building he or she designs will be safe and practical.

One will need specific college education before one can become a professional architect. Even though one needs a specific amount of educational training, there are options for different levels of education from which to choose. One may have a

Bachelor's degree or choose to continue their education further to receive a Master's degree. These degrees must be from a college of architecture. Becoming an architect can take up to eight years of study after high school: "The Master's degree option allows for more flexibility but takes longer to complete. In this case, students first earn a liberal arts degree, then continue their training by completing a master's program in architecture." ("Architects" 157). Even though the Master's degree takes a lot longer, it is probably the best option.

After he or she receives a degree, one must complete an internship. An intern is someone who works under the guidance of a professional who is already working in their field, in this case an architect. One will most likely work in an architect's office, where he or she will have the opportunity to learn the business of architecture by a professional architect. One will learn from the professional architect and gain the knowledge and experience needed to do a good job when he or she is ready to become a licensed professional. After the three years as an intern is completed, one will need to apply for a license: "After receiving a degree, the aspiring architect then completes an internship, working under the guidance of a licensed architect to learn the business. After a three-year internship, he or she can apply for a professional license" (Byers 23). Getting a license can be a long and difficult process that will take several days to complete.

Every architect needs to have a license. It is required in every state. In order to receive this license, one will have to pass an examination. According to "Jobs as Green Builders and Planners" getting a license is not the easiest task to complete:

Every state requires that architects be licensed. To be licensed, a person must pass a four-day-long examination. To keep their licenses, architects have to receive additional education every year, through workshops, seminars, college classes, or other forms of study. Green architects need to know the LEED criteria. Developers who want to build green projects hire companies in which at least one of the architects is LEED-accredited.

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In order to keep one's license, additional education is required. This includes things like seminars and college classes. Therefore, if one chooses to become an architect, he or she should be prepared for continuing education for the length of their career.

In addition, architects get paid a certain amount and receive certain benefits. If one chooses to become an independent architect, then one will most likely be operating at a loss. When someone is just starting out in the architectural business, one can expect to earn considerably less than the more experienced architects. Companies that want a building built typically pick the more experienced architects to design their buildings, for they believe that they will do a better job.

Salary at an architectural firm is mainly based on experience. Architects in their internship may only earn \$30,000 a year: "Architects earned a median annual salary of \$56,620 in 2002, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$36,280 annually, while the highest paid 10 percent earned \$92,350 or more" ("Architects" 180). If one works hard and is determined, one can earn over \$100,000 a year.

The salary range for an experienced architect is very sporadic. The architects that are partners in a firm or own their own business tend to earn more than salaried employees. One could earn from \$30,000 to three times that amount. To become an architect it is a lot of work, but it does not pay as well as some might think. If one is only interested in the job for the money, one should consider picking a new profession. One should become an architect for the job itself, not just the money. You should be determined and you should enjoy going to work every morning. The salary for an architect is based on experience, talent, and location. There is a much greater demand for architects in big cities.

As an architect, one receives certain benefits from his or her employer. These include life insurance plans, health insurance plans, profit-sharing plans, sick and vacation pay, and retirement funds. Not all but most architectural firms provide paid vacations and holidays. So, architects receive a decent salary and pretty standard benefits.

Furthermore, experts predict a fairly mixed outlook for those seeking a career in architecture in the near future. The number of architects that are needed to work will depend on how much construction is going on at the moment: "Employment in the field is expected to grow about as fast as the average through 2012, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. The number of architects needed will depend on the volume of construction" ("Architects" 181). If no buildings are being built, architects will have nothing to design and make blueprints for. If there are lots of buildings being built, more architects will be hired.

The amount of architects is greatly dependent on the economy: “Although the growth of employment for architects is expected to increase about as fast as the average through 2014, their workload depends on the strength of the economy as a whole” (“Job Profiles Architect” 128). When the country is experiencing a bad economic climate, some architects may be laid off in order to keep the company from going bankrupt. If the economy is in bad shape, no one will want to build new buildings, and some architects’ services will no longer be required. If the economy is strong, people will want to build more buildings, and there will be a high demand for architects. When workload increases, new architects will be hired because of the increased demand for buildings. Also, established architects will either transfer or retire, and more will be hired to take their place. There are plenty of possibilities for architects to move up in their careers. One can become a supervisor, project manager, construction manager, or work in government service.

There is a mixed outlook for architects in the future. Currently about 129,000 architects work in the United States. The jobs for an architect may grow because there will be many jobs designing environmentally-friendly buildings. However, architects will face strong competition. Many people pursue this occupation, and are faced with a lot of competition, especially in prestigious architectural firms: “Prospective architecture face competition for positions at prestigious firms. To increase one’s chances of getting an internship after graduation, prospective architects should gain career-related experience in an architectural firm while still in school. Those who know CADD technology will also have an advantage” (“McKay” 1). When firms look for interns, they generally look for those who have had previous experience working as an architect. This could be the

difference between getting the job and not getting the job. Generally, experts predict that the job of an architect will grow about as fast as usual through 2012, according to the United States Department of Labor.

Plenty of people want a job as an architect. Ones who have had previous experience while in school will have a good advantage over the ones who do not. Jobs for architects will not be affected by the growing use of computer technologies. Instead of the architects being replaced by computers, computers will help make the job of an architect easier. Instead of having to draw careful and detailed drawings, they can be helped by computer programs to draw the blueprints perfectly. Computers are faster, more efficient, and make the final design look a lot better than a freehand drawing. If an architect is licensed, one can start his or her own business. Nearly one-fourth of all architects are self employed. One does not need to be hired by an architectural firm to make a living as an architect. Thus, architects have a pretty good job outlook in the future.

In conclusion, after thoroughly researching a career as an architect, I believe that I have not found the career of my dreams. In my opinion, being an architect seems pretty boring. I originally thought that this career seemed relatively interesting and exciting, but now I do not believe this is the case. Long hours of sitting behind a desk, working many hours of overtime to finish projects, and making sure that everything is exactly right in every design is not what I want to do for the rest of my life. Also, I believe that becoming an architect is a lot of work for little reward. Although the job of an architect may not be for me, there is great opportunity for those who are interested. One can own their own business, work in a prestigious architectural firm with opportunities

for advancement, or even get a job working for the government. I realize that it is very important to have good architects to design safe and practical buildings and just because this job might not be the right fit for me, it may be the perfect job for someone else.



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