

## EDITORIAL

Architects are not traditionally known for their research and analytical expertise. In the not-too-distant past, "architectural research" was considered an oxymoron! However, things have changed, and we say for the better, with respect to architectural research.

Although research degrees in Architecture began to be offered more than 40 years ago, it was only in the 1980s that architectural research began to emerge as a visible and bounded field of activity in the west. The situation in Sri Lanka is still in its early infancy.

And this brings us to the question of why a research journal by a professional body such as the SLIA. Research as we know, is merely a *systematic inquiry*. While most architectural practitioners do engage in some form of inquiry in the course of their professional work, what is perhaps lacking is the systematic search that yields *generalizable* results. Such an inquiry is essential if we are to "create" knowledge. And in our knowledge-based economy, those who are able to "create" knowledge hold the key to success.

But SLIA being a professional body, the research fostered and encouraged by the SLIA cannot be "mere" inquiries into reality: architectural research must be capable of informing the *practice* of architecture. Such a knowledge base will help the profession wean itself away from a near-total reliance upon intuitive understanding, historical precedent and personal experience. The architectural profession will then be able to rely more upon research and scholarship as the basis for its practice (cf. Joroff and Morse, 1984: 15-16).

Such a transition has occurred earlier on in fields such as medicine and engineering. And not surprisingly, our society takes the professional decisions made in these fields far more seriously than say, an architectural decision. If we are to be taken seriously, the profession must foster, encourage and indeed engage in serious and systematic inquiry that can inform its practice. It is therefore proper for the SLIA to encourage and provide a forum for such architectural research.

In this volume, we continue the welcome tradition began by the SLIA two years ago, of fostering systematic inquiry that can inform the practice of architecture. The present volume showcases the breadth of research interests found among Sri Lankan researchers. We urge the practitioners of architecture to engage these inquiries with an attentive mind, in the hope of gleaning kernels of truth that can inform your practice.

One of the most successful, privately-initiated research efforts in the world is sponsored by the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration & Air-conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). The member-supported research initiatives of the ASHRAE has helped the American HVAC engineers achieve industry leadership and credibility. Might it not be the case that we at the SLIA encourage such systematic inquiry to inform our practice in ways that give the profession greater self-confidence and credibility?

### Reference:

- Joroff, M. & S. Morse**, (1984). "A proposed framework for the emerging field of architectural research," in, J.C. Snyder, (ed.), *Architectural Research*, New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, pp. 15-28.

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