

Practice

Ethics—Where We Get into Trouble

Learn more about how the Code affects architects and their practices

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Where do we get into trouble? Of the 15–20 cases formally presented to the National Ethics Council (NEC) each year, most fall into one of three categories:

- Appropriate credit
- Access to examples of work
- Level of professional care.

Cases involving contractual disagreements, legal issues, or licensing disputes are often resolved by the courts or state licensing boards. Although they probably involve ethics violations as well, these cases are not often filed with the NEC because they are resolved by other jurisdictions. Issues of providing appropriate credit or obtaining copies of work are not (usually) legally or contractually established and, therefore,

have no other forum for resolution other than with the council.

Many of the cases that come before the council are not clear-cut issues of right and wrong. More often, they are issues of right versus right. This 'right vs. right' problem is prevalent in providing appropriate credit. Several years ago a case was brought to a hearing where a designer of large, very specialized projects retired. A short time later he was hired as a consultant by a competing firm. That firm used all of his projects in a proposal without giving adequate credit to the original firm. In proposals produced by both firms—showing identical project experience—it became very difficult to determine who was responsible for the projects. Again, shouldn't the new firm be allowed to present the expertise of their current employees and consultants? And should the previous firm be allowed to present projects designed by employees no longer with the firm?

The National Ethics Council is often asked for specific guidelines for providing



Reference

At the AIA national convention in Charlotte, N.C., the National Ethics Council will present "FR19, "Practicing Ethically and What to Do About Those Who Don't," Friday, May 10, 1:45–3:15 p.m. The program will specifically address the AIA Code of Ethics and how the code affects the Institute, local components, and each of us in our work. We hope to see you there!

For a complete list of convention programs, [visit the AIA's convention Web site.](#)

The AIA Bookstore carries a number of titles about the ethics of architecture practice, including, *Ethics and the Practice of Architecture*, by Barry Wasserman, FAIA; Patrick Sullivan, FAIA; and Gregory Palermo, FAIA (2000, John Wiley & Sons). To order from the AIA Bookstore: phone: **800-**

credit. The architect of record, the firm that produced the work, always requires appropriate—and plainly visible—credit. An asterisk in the corner of a photograph does not meet the test, nor does an incomplete description of the individual's role in a specific project. With all the possible formats and media available today, it is impossible to be specific about what would meet a standard of designation. It is imperative, however, that the architect of record be given reasonable and obvious credit, and any individual's effort involved in a project be concisely defined.

242-3837 option #4; fax
202-626-7519; or send
an email.

The seven members of the National Ethics Council meet three times each year to deliberate specific cases and discuss issues confronting the profession and the Institute. Issues of appropriate credit, professional care, obligations to clients and colleagues, and even obligations to the environment are continually debated and discussed.

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