

**EDSymposium17 First-Time Attendee
Perspective**

**By Cynthia (Cindi) Gardner, CDFA
Recipient of the SDA Past Presidents Council
First-Time Attendee Professional
Development Grant**

Embarking on a journey is not merely putting one foot in front of the other; it is the desire, planning, and mental preparation guiding an individual into a situation, whether it be travelling, resting, creating or dismantling a portion of our lives.

Life's longest journey is education. From the moment we are born, education begins. The cries of an infant evolve into coos and cries in response to their environment or to elicit a response. As they grow, children learn to adjust to the world around them from family, school, friends, and the various forms of social media. As adults, we continue to learn, but do so differently. Some of us are visual learners and others learn by action. Technology has changed the way all of us learn at the various stages of our lives.

Having already experienced a portion of life, many adults adjust to learning by relying on past experiences in order to sort out what is relevant to the new learning experience and what is not. We need to incorporate and compare the new information with previous experiences to form a bond that's easier for our brains to digest.

As an adult, I can honestly say that for me, learning is a new journey every day. While there are some days that I cannot recall why I walked into the kitchen (several times in the same day), I can say that I remember how much I've learned over the past 20+ years in the A/E/C industry. Not every detail, but I remember this journey much more than my journey from grades 1 through 12. I will definitely remember my trip to Minneapolis and the learning experiences in which I participated.

Although I am new to the experience of EDSymposium, what I learned the most is that I was welcomed with open arms by everyone I met. New friends expressed an honest welcome. The voices of people with whom I'd participated on calls were finally matched with a face. The laughs were many, conversations were varied. What I will teach others, now that I'm home, will be the warm welcomes, hugs, laughs and more conversations about common issues (Yes, AIA Contract Documents, I'm talking about YOU).



Aside from learning about my fellow members, I learned,

1. Minneapolis is a beautiful city with much to discover (three days doesn't even begin to scratch the surface).
2. Marketing is not just a "job," but a way of thinking. We are ALL marketers.
3. As a group and as individuals, we are intelligent, inspired, outspoken, fearless, and sometimes tenacious.
4. Coffee flows freely at EDSymposium (thanks to the coffee bean gods). I vote for more iced tea next year...and ice cream. Lots of ice cream.
5. Cyber security is a growing problem...and opportunity (both good and bad) in the "pay me now or pay me later" situation of cyber-ransom.
6. Minneapolis has more lakes than alligators (thank goodness), and some have excellent seafood restaurants (how far away is the nearest ocean?)
7. We support each other, whether we realize it or not.
8. I can talk Shannon Soady into expensive ice cream VERY easily and that Judy Beebe is as friendly in person as she is via email.
9. I need to start packing better shoes when I travel.

What I didn't learn is why Snickers Salad is so popular in Minnesota.

I will also **teach** my chapter members in Orlando that we are the mentors of the members of tomorrow. I already knew this, but it didn't really stick until I saw some of our younger members. THESE are the members to whom we ALL need to reach out. THESE are the members we ALL need to embrace; they are the future of SDA.

Our history is written by our current membership and those who came before us. Our future will be written by those who follow. Make the path welcoming, with great conversations and educate so that our history is well-written.

**EDSymposium17 - Returning
Attendee Perspective
By Jennifer M. Greene
Recipient of the SDA Past
Presidents Council
Returning Attendee
Professional Development Grant**

EDS17 – Minneapolis/St. Paul
Welcomed Us

I was honored to receive the Past Presidents' Council grant to attend EDS17 in Minneapolis in May. My very first convention was in Minneapolis/St. Paul in 1998 and, 19 years later, there I was, returning back to where it all started, with several wonderful women I met back then – Karen Roman, Kim Moffat (whom I ran into at the airport and shared a cab with to the hotel), Stacey Rowland...

My path to membership in the SDA was such a lucky one. Here is a little background...

In April of 1988, I went on a temp word processing assignment to Kliment Halsband Architects (KHA). The next day, one of the partners came to me and said "You've come in and taken over. Would you like to be our office manager?" My response was "What's an Office Manager?" and, once those duties were explained to me, I said "yes" and my career in the A/E/C industry was launched.

In 1992, my boss, Frances Halsband, was also Dean of the Architecture School at The Pratt Institute (it was during the recession and that extra salary kept us afloat). She had been working with several members of the SDA New York Chapter (then SAA) to create and establish a Design Management program at Pratt to provide a focused education on the special needs of managing design firms. She came into the office one day and said, "Jen, you need to join this organization!"

I one-hundred-percent credit my involvement in the SDA for my professional growth that allowed me to become KHA's first ever non-licensed Associate in 1996. After 16 years, I left KHA



in 2004 as Associate / Director of Marketing and Administration to take the Director of Marketing position at Dattner Architects. That next year, I was promoted to Director of Business Development, where I created strategic alliances with developers, consultants and other architecture firms around the country, helping grow the firm from 35 to almost 100. In 2016, I joined the senior management team at The Durst Organization, where I am one of only five female senior managers in a firm of over 300.

As usual, attending EDS17 did not disappoint. I did not get a chance to attend Thursday's leadership session on Workplace Ethics, but I did arrive in time for the host chapter party, held in the lobby of Michaud Cooley Erickson's office building. It was exciting to see all of the "first-time attendee" ribbons on so many people; I believe we had 13 first time attendees, several from the Minneapolis/St. Paul chapter.

I had a chance to get to know several of those first-time attendees, along with many whom I have known for years, at dinner that night at "Hell's Kitchen." Gretchen Renz from the Seattle chapter, Betsy Nickless from Orange County, current SDA National President Sabrina Heard, Past President Monica Hodges, Jeff and Brooke Simcik, Susan Lankey, my dear Stacey Rowland, and many others... My New York and Canada chapter members sat behind us, which turned into an impromptu networking session at dinner and later at the hotel bar.

Friday started early with a plated breakfast and keynote speaker, Jeffrey Rainey, of GREATER MSP, who gave us an overview of Minneapolis/St. Paul and shared highlights and plans for the future. The opening breakfast has become a favorite session of mine over the years, as it's a great chance to learn about the host city and plan what I want to see while I'm there.

The following session was particularly interesting to me as a marketer, called "The Marketer & Firm Administrator: A 21st Century Partnership." Michael V. Geary, CAE and Scott Butcher, FSMPS were the presenters, and I learned several interesting things. For instance, marketing professional services used to be illegal in the United States. Designing a building was a "gentleman's agreement" through the "old boy" network. You could not even advertise. Eventually, you were allowed to put out a shingle, but that was it.

SMPS (Society for Marketing Professional Services) was founded out of the American Institute of Architects, by Weld Cox, FAIA, in 1973. Weld wrote the first book on business development. Pre-1970s, there was no marketing. That started changing in the 1990s, during and after the recession, which is when I helped create the marketing department at KHA.

Continuing education ranged from "Cyber Security" to "Ownership Transition" to "Positive Interpersonal Skills" to "Getting Your Staff to Think like Owners." All in all, we had 15 hours of continuing education. The EDSymposium committee did a wonderful job in preparing a convention with interesting, relevant topics and excellent speakers.

Continuing education aside, it's the networking that I like the best about attending EDSymposium. It is educational to be in a room full of people who all work in the same

profession and who all have the same issues. I always learn tips and tricks to take back to the office from these networking sessions, both planned and spontaneous. It's great to catch up with friends that I have made over the years at national conferences, great to make new friends and great to get closer to my fellow chapter members.

Next year's EDS18 is in Salt Lake City, Utah. If you have never attended a convention, start planning now. It will energize you, educate you, and hopefully get you more involved on the local and national levels. Remember, SDA is a volunteer organization, and we need all of you to be involved.



SDA National Convention in Philadelphia, PA, 2002 (or 2003?), Jennifer, Lula Blackwell-Hafner, Stacy Rowland, Ellen Blumenthal