

Selecting a Professional Photographer

Contributed by the Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers

Revised May 2008

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

Image quality relates to *persuasion*. You aren't merely documenting your work but are actively trying to convince other people that yours is the best of its class. Photography, like any other custom service, is never a "one size fits all" proposition, but a matter of finding the right person for the job.

WHEN ONLY EXCELLENCE WILL DO

Just as architecture is more than construction materials, photography goes far beyond the mechanics of focus, exposure, and composition. It requires an aesthetic aptitude for creating a unique and compelling presentation of a physical structure. It requires craft: knowing how to choose lenses and aim lights, caring for details of cleanliness and arrangement, understanding what color adjustments create the most impact on a printed page and making sure permissions and releases are secured. It requires professionalism, ensuring that finished images will be delivered reliably, on time, on budget and looking better than you expected. Photography requires a visual style that presents your work to its best advantage.

Images play a major role in defining how we come to know architecture and interior spaces. Because photography is pivotal in understanding the built environment, choosing a professional to photograph your project is a most important consideration. Here are suggestions to make the experience of photographing your project a good one.

IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

Which aspects of your project might best represent your design? Would you like to highlight any specific concepts, architectural elements, or other features? Are some areas best avoided? Which areas would illustrate creative problem solving?

Next, ask yourself how will you use the photography as an integrated part of your marketing plan?



Private residence, Miami Beach. Architect: Charles Allem Designs. Photography: Liz Ordoñez, www.lizphotos.com.

- Show the photos to clients via Web site, portfolio or presentation
- Use the photos for in-house reference/ documentation
- Use the photos for internally produced publications
- Submit the photos for competitions
- Send to editors of trade magazines or books
- Use the photos in trade or consumer advertising

The answers to these questions will help you and the photographer define the assignment parameters and develop cost estimates.

Share costs. Inquire whether other parties in your project (such as the owner, contractors, consultants, product suppliers, financing sources, or even public agencies) might be interested in participating in the assignment and sharing the expenses. If so, all of the participants should likewise identify their needs and priorities.

It is important that the participants understand which costs are shared and which are not. As discussed in Best Practice 06.03.06, "Understanding the Estimate for a Photographic Assignment," the total price has

three components: creative/production fees, expenses and rights licenses. Expenses (e.g., travel; consumables; equipment or prop rentals; and fees paid to assistants, models and stylists) and production fees (the photographer's time, expertise and judgment) can be shared on any basis the participants choose. Rights licenses, in contrast, are based on the use each participant makes of the images and are not shared or transferable among the parties.

RESEARCH THE CANDIDATES

There are a number of possible strategies for finding the right photographer for the job. One is to scan architecture magazines for images that impress you and find out who made them. If an advertisement does not show photo credits, a call to the advertiser or ad agency may produce a name. Advertisements often do not show photo credits, but a call to the advertiser or ad agency might produce a name. Ask your professional colleagues for a recommendation.

To narrow the field of candidates, visit photographers' Web sites, request samples of their work or schedule meetings for portfolio presentations. Be aware that Web sites and portfolios often represent only a limited selection of the photographer's work. When asking to see portfolios, request images from assignments of similar scope and building type to the project you have in mind.

FIND A PHOTOGRAPHER

The American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) operates a free "Find a Photographer" service at www.FindaPhotographer.org. Only qualified professionals are in this database, and you can search by geographic location and photographic specialty. The search results include full contact information, sample photographs and Web site links.

Architectural photography is a specialty within the profession, requiring different tools and skills than, say, weddings or wildlife. Within the specialty are further specializations—interiors, exteriors, landscapes, aerials, scale models—that may be important to your project. One criterion for evaluating a Web site or portfolio is whether the images indicate that the photographer has the skill and experience you want.

The photographer's "vision" or stylistic approach is just as critical. You want a visual style that complements both your architectural designs and

your marketing goals. Evaluating this factor is often the primary goal of a portfolio review.

ASK FOR ESTIMATES

Once you have identified the few photographers who seem to have the experience, skills *and* a vision that matches your goals, ask for estimates. You are not looking for a "lowest bidder" but rather a confirmation that each candidate understands the nature of the assignment. This understanding should encompass your budgetary and marketing goals.

Although photography is a competitive industry, it is not a commodity business; expect variations in the initial proposals you receive. The differences may reflect the photographers' experience, professional stature, different creative approaches and interpretations of your needs.

An estimate is not set in stone. If it reveals a misunderstanding of your requirements, call the photographer to discuss the matter. The photographer might make suggestions that could yield better results or lower costs. (For some concrete suggestions, see Best Practice 06.03.08, "Controlling the Cost of a Photography Assignment." For more information about interpreting the photographer's estimate, see Best Practice 06.03.06, "Understanding the Estimate for a Photographic Assignment.")

Don't underestimate the value of a photographer's enthusiasm and experience, as he or she can become an important part of your creative team.

CONCLUSION

Try to match your needs with a photographer's strengths, professionalism and compatibility with your style. The right photographer for you is one who understands your design ideas and can communicate them visually to the wider world.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 06.03.06 Understanding the Estimate for a Photographic Assignment
- 06.03.07 Preparing for Professional Photography: A Checklist
- 06.03.08 Controlling the Cost of a Photography Assignment

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Leadership
- Disciplines
- Design disciplines
- Architectural photographers

Understanding a Photographic Assignment Estimate

Contributed by the Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers

Revised May 2008

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

The photographer's estimate is more than a financial document; it can serve your creative and promotional planning needs as well. It is important to understand the assignment description or, in architecture terms, the scope of work, the licensing and rights of the work, and the pricing and payment processes.

SPECIFICATIONS FOR THE ESTIMATE

As a creative professional, you undoubtedly understand the importance of accurately defining the scope of work in order to determine your firm's design fees. Similarly, to prepare an estimate, a photographer must have a detailed description of the assignment.

As described in Best Practice 06.03.05, "Selecting a Professional Photographer," before you request an estimate, list the aspects of your project that you think might best represent your designs. The list should identify:

- Assignment description with any specific concepts, architectural elements, or design features you'd like to highlight.
- How the images might be used: documentation, portfolio, editorial features, advertising, design competition submissions, Web sites and so on.
- Other parties, such as contractors or consultants on the project, who may want to use the photos.
- Deliverables needed, such as digital files, prints or transparencies.

These are the major factors that a photographer needs to know in order to frame an accurate, detailed estimate. Based on all these factors, the photographer submits a formal estimate for the assignment. A photography estimate includes the assignment description plus three other components:

- Licensing and rights granted
- Creative/production fees
- Expenses

Let us look at each of these in turn.



Kuhlhaus living room, Los Angeles. Architect: James Meyer/LeanArch. Photography by John MacLean, www.johnmaclean.com.

THE ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION

A description of the project will include its name and location, the number of views, a list of deliverables and a timeframe for completing the assignment, plus any extraordinary circumstances, such as dawn shots, all-night sessions, views from cherry pickers, or aerial photos.

In some cases, the photographer may propose alternatives to your initial specifications. As a creative professional, he or she may be able to visualize some ideas you hadn't considered or to find ways to get the desired results at lower cost.

COPYRIGHT LAW

Under the Copyright Act of 1976 and the Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works, photographs (like designs and drawings) automatically receive copyright protection immediately upon their creation. Copyright gives the

creator of an image the exclusive legal right to control how the image is used.

This control is exercised by granting licenses to specific persons for specific uses. The right to use an image cannot be transferred by anyone without the written consent of the copyright holder.

Absence of a copyright notice does not mean that an image is free of copyright, and it does not relieve a prospective user from the responsibility of obtaining permission from the copyright holder. Altering or removing a copyright notice can result in liability under the Copyright Act and several other state and federal statutes. Simply having physical possession of photographs, slides, prints, transparencies, or digital files does not grant the right to use them.

Practical implications

It's important that you and your photographer agree on the scope of the license before the contract is signed and photography has begun. Outline your tentative plans for using the images, even if they are vague at the moment, and negotiate for optional future rights at the outset. Should your marketing plans change mid-course, be sure to discuss them with your photographer.

If you are interested in sharing photographs with third parties who have not been involved in the commissioned assignment (e.g., members of the design team, contractors, consultants, product manufacturers, clients, tenants, or magazine editors), they must understand that any use of the photos requires a written license agreement from the photographer and payment for usage. If you've received photographs without written permission for their use, do not use them until you have secured licensing rights directly from the photographer.

LICENSING AND RIGHTS GRANTED

A photograph, like an architectural design, is considered intellectual property. The photographer owns the copyright to the images he or she creates and has the exclusive right to license their use. Licensing agreements are specific with regard to use and should answer three basic questions:

- Who will use the images?
- How and where will the images appear?
- How long will the images be used?

This information may be detailed in the licensing section of the estimate, or it may be supplied in a

separate licensing agreement that grants specific rights to commissioning clients. If several parties agree to share in the cost of an assignment, the photographer will develop a separate licensing agreement for each individual client to cover the permissions and rights.

PRICING

A photographer's fee typically has three components:

- Creative or production fee
- License fee
- Expenses

Unless there is reason to separate them, some photographers will quote an umbrella "creative fee" that includes both the production fee and the license fee. However, when several parties have agreed to share costs, they usually need to license different rights, and the production and license fees will generally be stated separately.

Creative or production fee. This component reflects the time and skill it takes to complete the assignment. Variables include the total number of views, scheduling and deadlines, site logistics and artistic considerations such as unique vantage points or special times of day. Intangible variables include the experience, creativity and vision that the photographer brings to the assignment.

In addition to the time spent behind the camera, a photographer's preproduction and postproduction time is included in the production fee. Preproduction tasks may include client meetings, advance site visits, meetings with the facility's management to organize access, conversations with building engineers to arrange technical coordination with lighting, landscape maintenance and other site-specific preparation.

To help you anticipate issues during preproduction planning, consult Best Practice 06.03.07, "Preparing for Professional Photography: A Checklist."

Postproduction tasks commonly include image editing and selection (which may involve more client meetings), digital processing (color correction, minor retouching, compositing), and preparing master files for final delivery. It is not unusual for the postproduction work to consume as much time as the photography.

License fee. This component (sometimes referred to as the usage fee) reflects the value of the

authorized uses for the images. The value is determined by a number of considerations, including how widely and for how long the images will be viewed, reproduced and distributed. Typically, the more extensive the use, the higher the fee will be.

Licenses use specific language to describe the rights being conferred. A glossary of licensing terms used in the photography and publishing industries has been compiled by PLUS (Picture Licensing Universal System); visit www.useplus.com to browse the definitions.

To obtain the best value, negotiate a license for the entire group of images based on your current and planned needs. There's no point in paying for a right that you will never use. However, it is smart business to negotiate a commitment regarding the cost of additional rights that you might need in the future.

Expenses. If the job will require travel, specialized equipment, prop rentals, specific insurances, or fees for location access, these will all be indicated on the estimate. Likewise, the anticipated cost of hiring photo assistants, stylists and models will be part of the total. There may be some contingent costs, such as for weather delays.

Expenses for digital photography may include charges for image capture, digital processing, master file prep and postproduction tasks such as color manipulation and digital retouching, archiving and file delivery. For film photography, expenses typically include material charges for film, processing and supplies.

DIGITAL PROCESSING COSTS

People outside the graphic arts are often surprised to learn that equipment and processing costs for digital photography are actually greater than for traditional film photography.

Digital technology saves time and money "downstream" when the images are used in various printing and publishing applications, but it requires the photographer to spend considerable postproduction time to get the best results. In effect, the photographer has taken over the work of the film lab, print lab and prepress house. The specialized tools for capturing and processing high-end image files are expensive and (as with most computer systems) are quickly obsolete.

Both digital and film techniques can yield fine images. In specific circumstances, the photographer may prefer one or the other for technical reasons.

Delivery considerations

If the image is to be delivered digitally, it may have to be processed in several different ways. Each destination has its own particular requirements. UPDIG, a coalition of imaging organizations, describes current best practices for a wide range of applications on its Web site, www.updig.org.

It may seem as though there are endless variations for delivering high-quality images, but your photographer will be able to simplify the options as you decide on your needs.

A WORKING DOCUMENT

Just as a breakout of fees and responsibilities between architect and client allows the client to make adjustments to the project, so breaking out the components of the fee structure allows architects to work with the photographer in changing the proposed scope of work with a minimum of disruptions.

For example, suppose you initially asked for an estimate based on creating images to be used for brochures, office displays, exhibitions and a Web site. After you see the images, you decide to also submit them to a magazine in conjunction with an article on your project. This constitutes an extra use, for which there will be an additional license fee (and perhaps additional expenses to deliver optimized images), but the production fee would not be materially changed.

Likewise, you may find that the estimate for the work as originally proposed is higher than you had budgeted. Find out where there is room to reduce costs without sacrificing the objective of visually "telling the story" of the project through the essential views. In addition, the photographer may have suggestions for capturing more successful views without significantly increasing the costs.

THE FINE PRINT

The estimate will have a space for your signature. By signing and returning a copy to the photographer, you indicate your acceptance of the assignment description, license and total price. At that point, the estimate becomes a contract.

Attached or on the back of the estimate will be a set of Terms and Conditions. As with any contract, one purpose is to agree on each party's responsibilities if problems arise and how any disputes will be resolved. Another purpose is to state the industry norms. For photography, these include copyright, photo-credit requirements and what alterations (such as compositing) you can make to the images.

CONCLUSION

The photographer's estimate is more than a financial document; it can serve your creative and promotional planning needs as well. It is a tool that can help you meet your business objectives, your documentation needs *and* your marketing goals.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 06.03.06 Understanding the Estimate for a Photographic Assignment

- 06.03.05 Selecting a Professional Photographer

- 06.03.08 Controlling the Cost of a Photographic Assignment

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Leadership
- Disciplines
- Design disciplines
- Architectural photographers

Preparing for Professional Photography—A Checklist

Contributed by the Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers

Revised May 2008

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

Site preparation and advanced planning are important elements of executing a professional photography session. The Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers offers a few guidelines to help architects obtain high quality photography without incurring unnecessary expenses.

A LITTLE ADVANCE WORK PAYS OFF

Photography, like any outside service an architect might need, has both cost and quality parameters—one to be minimized, the other to be maximized. By choosing an experienced professional and, in particular, by following the due-diligence steps recommended in Best Practice 06.03.05, "Selecting a Professional Photographer," you can be reasonably assured of getting the quality of results you need. Likewise, you can minimize the cost by working closely with your photographer in advance of and during the assignment.

The most productive photography assignment is one with few surprises while on location. Delays, downtime and retakes are too often the cause of both unnecessary expense and hasty compromises that may lead to disappointing results. With this in mind, the American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) has compiled a checklist that covers many of the details involved when photographing architecture and interior design. By collaborating closely with your photographer and paying attention to details, you will maximize efficiency and productivity.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Has the architect walked the site with the photographer?
- Who will be the architect's representative during the assignment?
- What is the site contact name and number?



Sterling Ridge at Desert Mountain, Scottsdale Ariz. Private residence of the architect, David Hovey (Optima). Photograph by Michael Baxter, www.BaxterImaging.com.

- Is security clearance required?
- Is there a security department that must be notified about the assignment?
- Is parking available for the photography crew?
- Are certificates of insurance required? Who needs to receive them?

INTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY

Site access and security

- Where is the loading dock? Are there restricted hours?

- Will the photographer have total access or need keys to specific areas?
- Will the crew and equipment be able to get in or out after hours?
- Will a floor plan be provided?
- Will elevators be working?
- Does the photographer have access to ladders and dollies?
- Does the photographer have access to vacuum cleaners and cleaning supplies?
- Will the air-conditioning or heat be off during the assignment? Do special arrangements need to be made to keep the HVAC on or to turn it off?
- Will all alarms be off?
- Is there a secured place to store equipment during multiple-day assignments?
- What are the emergency phone numbers for assignments taking place during weekends or after hours?

Illumination

- Does the photographer need approval to adjust interior, exterior and ambient light?
- Is the lighting computer-controlled?
- Are the lights controlled by motion sensors?
- Is all lighting operational and are the bulbs consistent within areas?
- Will spare bulbs be available?
- Can lights be manually turned on and off from a circuit breaker?
- Will the photographer have access to the circuit box?
- Is a building engineer or an electrician available if required?
- Are there windows in the space? Is there a way to control ambient light?

Furniture and fixtures

- Do any decorations or signage need to be removed?
- Can desks be rearranged without permission?
- Will props or models be necessary?
- Does the photographer have permission/password access to turn on

computer screens, television monitors and AV equipment? Must specific images be loaded into the devices in advance?

Personnel

Consider who should be present and who should not be present during the photography, and make sure that everyone is fully briefed on the roles he or she will be playing.

- Are the owner and the occupants expecting the photographer and crew? Do they understand the nature of the project and the duration of the photography?
- Is there a cleaning crew in the space after hours? Can they and the photographer work around each other?
- If models will be used, are they employees of the tenant or the architect? Do they understand what they may be required to do and to wear and how long they may be needed?
- Are model releases required? (This is especially important for children.)
- Who is responsible for meals and for supplying water, coffee and snacks?
- Will a memo be sent to employees or tenants regarding advance cleanup and the assignment date and time?
- Is any union permission required for photography?

EXTERIOR PHOTOGRAPHY

- Will a site plan be provided ahead of time?
- Is there any construction activity?
- Are there window washers on the building?
- Is any facility maintenance scheduled?
- Will the interior of the building be accessible to adjust window blinds and lights?
- Can customer or tenant parking be controlled?
- Will the Police Department be needed for parking or traffic control on public streets? Do any government authorities require that permits be obtained?

Landscaping and surroundings

- Is the landscaping complete and mature?

- Are there any fountains? Who can control them?
- Are there any computer-operated sprinkler systems, and can the photographer control them?
- Will the photographer have access to exterior lighting and signage?
- Are there any decorations, signs or banners that need to be removed?
- Are the lights controlled by timers or photo sensors? Can they be manually controlled?
- Has a client representative checked the site recently for dumpsters, scaffolding, window stickers, fences, debris, graffiti or snow markers?

CONCLUSION

This checklist is not intended to be exhaustively complete. It should serve as a stimulus to your planning and a reminder of the range of issues that may need your attention in advance of the photography session. Every site is different; every season has its special concerns. With a bit of forethought, you can help your photographer get the work accomplished efficiently and without disruption to other activities while also delivering the quality of results that you expect.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 06.03.06 Understanding the Photographic Assignment Estimate
- 06.03.05 Selecting a Professional Photographer
- 06.03.09 Licensing Photographs for Publication

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Leadership
- Disciplines
- Design disciplines
- Architectural photographers

Controlling the Cost of a Photography Assignment

Contributed by the Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers

Revised May 2008

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

Architectural photography is a high-dollar investment that makes sense. Finding a way to incorporate photography assignments into a firm's budget is not as hard as one may think. Cost-sharing, advanced site planning and preparation, commissioning a local photographer, limiting an assignment's views, and communicating with the photographer can help architects control the costs of a photography assignment.

PHOTOGRAPHY TO FIT YOUR BUDGET

Professional photography is of great value in advertising, marketing, magazine articles, competition submissions and office décor. Good imagery is a powerful tool for conveying the quality of your work.

Like architectural design and development, professional photography is a custom service that can be molded to meet your business goals and stay within your financial constraints. If your needs seem to outweigh your means, don't be discouraged. Following are a few ideas to relieve the pressure on your budget.

SHARE THE COST WITH OTHERS

You aren't the only one who might benefit from photographs of a project. The owner, interior designers, landscape architects, contractors, consultants, product manufacturers, tenants and others probably have similar pride in the building and a similar need to market themselves. With some forethought, all may be served by a single photography assignment where the costs can be distributed equitably, to everyone's advantage. Photographers who specialize in architectural work are quite familiar with such arrangements.

If this is your plan, it is essential to let the photographer know about it before the initial estimate is prepared. As detailed in Best Practice



Boston Convention Center, Boston Mass. Design by Rafael Vinoly Architects. Photography by Brad Feinknopf, www.feinknopf.com.

06.03.06, "Understanding the Estimate for a Photographic Assignment," the estimate typically will have separate cost components for production fees, licenses and expenses.

The production fees (the photographer's professional time) and expenses (e.g., travel, consumables, props, rental equipment, assistants, models and stylists) are generally not affected by the number of parties unless their separate interests require different views or special setups. A sharing arrangement means these cost elements may be lower for each participant.

Each party will be charged a separate rights-license fee, which is based on the use he or she will make of the images. In addition, each participant will pay separately for any special deliverables, such as large-format prints, Web galleries, or image files formatted and sized in different ways.

CONTRACTUAL FORMALITIES

After reviewing the assignment parameters, the photographer will provide a written estimate that

states the terms of the cost-sharing agreement and names the primary commissioning client and other participating parties.

Alternatively, the photographer may draw up separate estimates for each of the parties. This relieves the commissioning client of any responsibility for collecting payment from the other participants. It also clarifies the cost-sharing details when different parties need different views. For instance, it's unlikely that the interior designer will make much use of the exterior photography, while the architect probably has limited use for photos of the furniture in the lobby. Nevertheless, each of the parties will get the benefit of dividing the costs that are incurred in common.

LICENSING AND RIGHTS GRANTED

While all the participating parties will be sharing the expenses and the production fee, each party will pay separately for the uses that he or she will make of the images. The building owner may need only brochures for prospective tenants, for which an advertising brochure license would be needed. The designer might require Web-site use and glossy prints for a portfolio. The architect might be interested in Web rights, large prints for the office lobby and permission to submit images for competitions. Whether the assignment paperwork is framed in terms of separate estimates or a single estimate with primary and additional clients, each party is asked to sign a license agreement.

A vast array of uses and rights can come into play for any particular situation. Some common standards exist. PLUS (Picture Licensing Universal System) has compiled a glossary of licensing terms used in the photography and publishing industries. Visit www.useplus.com to browse the definitions.

A REAL-WORLD SCENARIO

Suppose that an owner, a contractor and an architect discuss a cost-sharing proposal for photography. Two of them agree, but the contractor decides not to participate. A few weeks later, however, the contractor needs to print capability brochures and asks to use images from the shared photography session. Because the contractor forfeited the option to license the images at the pre-negotiated license fee and terms, the contractor is now in the same position as any outside party requesting use.

Photographers are usually willing to license images to third parties but typically charge these parties at least as much as the original group for several reasons, including different delivery requirements,

deadlines and license terms. The photographer and the latecomer will have to negotiate new agreements from the ground up. From the photographer's point of view, this is an inefficient way to do business. Multiparty licensing is cost-effective because it allows streamlined planning and preparation for photography.

In addition, the latecomer can choose from existing images – while the original group could anticipate only the outcome of the assignment they had commissioned. There is also the factor of simple fairness: If non-participants could get photography at the same cost as participants, the benefit of cost-sharing arrangements would be negated.

KEY POINTS TO MULTIPLE-PARTY LICENSING

- All participating parties must sign an agreement before photography begins.
- Each participant is charged a licensing fee commensurate with his or her specific usage needs.
- Each participant is responsible for ordering and paying for his or her individual deliverables.

Clear communication among all participants is of prime importance, whether the photographer contracts only with the commissioning party (acting as liaison and collecting the other parties' respective shares of the fees) or contracts with each party separately. The benefit can quickly be lost if the parties don't share an understanding about goals, timelines and use rights.

A practical wait-and-see approach has its place in obtaining photography, as in any business decision. Sometimes the wise course is to license after the fact; other times, it is best to commission a separate assignment. If your requirements are congruent with the other parties' needs, there is no benefit in standing aside from a multiparty agreement. Rather, there can be considerable advantage to joining with other parties, not only to minimize cost but also to participate in the job planning and thereby ensure that the resulting images are useful for your business purposes.

PLAN AHEAD, ALLOW LEEWAY

Schedule photography well in advance and plan for some variability in the timing. Creating photography on a rush basis adds to the expense, while a relaxed schedule means that your photographer can work through any last-minute glitches without incurring extra expenses.

The weather, too, can be a factor. A tight schedule means that foul weather and other uncontrollable variables may become problems. In contrast, an extended schedule may provide the opportunity to highlight your design with dusk or night illumination, different people, moving vehicles and even a variety of changing seasonal elements.

Another aspect of planning for photography is ensuring the site is prepared before the shooting assignment begins. Are the windows clean? Is all the construction equipment out of sight? Is electric power on? In a pinch, problems can sometimes be retouched away, but this adds to the postproduction time and can mean compromises in image quality. It's usually easier and less expensive to prevent the problems while on site.

SHOP LOCALLY

In addition to minimizing the travel expenses, engaging a local photographer will often allow the most flexibility in scheduling the work. It can also simplify getting back on schedule after a weather delay.

The American Society of Media Photographers (ASMP) operates a free "Find a Photographer" service at www.FindaPhotographer.org that lists several hundred specialists in architectural photography. Only qualified professionals are in this database, and you can search by geographic location and by specialty. The search results include full contact information, sample photographs and Web-site links.

USE FEWER VIEWS

It goes without saying that the number of views is a major factor in the job's cost. Each view must be composed and lit; the location must be cleaned and the background cleared; all props and personnel must be in position. Each view takes time and costs money. Get the most value from a given budget by listing concepts you'd like to illustrate and assigning a priority to each. Your photographer can then make sure that you get the most important images while staying within your budget.

WORK WITH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER

A good photographer can bring to bear a wealth of experiences and skills to get you the images you need at the lowest feasible cost. Just as small changes to a building's specs can make a big difference to the cost of construction, so small adjustments to a photographic assignment can drastically alter the cost of images. Your photographer can advise you about the options and

trade-offs that are available, giving you the freedom to balance the costs and benefits to your advantage.

CONCLUSION

The decisions you make during the process of planning for the photography will affect its cost far more than any later steps you might take. Here are a few options that will help minimize the outlays:

- Share the costs of the photography assignment among several stakeholders in the job.
- Prioritize the views you'd like and phase the work over a period of time to highlight your design with changing seasonal elements.
- Hire locally. Visit ASMP's free www.FindaPhotographer.org to identify qualified photographers near the project location.
- Schedule flexibly to avoid rush work, overtime costs and to allow for weather delays.

The quality of the photography you use to represent your designs is a reflection of your firm's values and affects how the marketplace perceives your business. There will always be someone willing to photograph your project at a lower price. A "bargain" can easily turn into an expensive problem when the resulting images do not meet expectations and have to be re-photographed. Commissioning a professional architectural photographer is an investment that can prevent frustration while saving time and money. Most importantly, the photographs you receive will be a valuable resource for your marketing as well as a source of inspiration and legitimate pride.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- | | |
|----------|---|
| 06.03.07 | Preparing for Professional Photography |
| 06.03.05 | Selecting a Professional Photographer |
| 06.03.06 | Understanding the Estimate of a Photographic Assignment |

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Leadership

- Disciplines
- Design disciplines
- Architectural photography

Licensing Photographs for a Publication

Contributed by the Architectural Photography Specialty Group of the American Society of Media Photographers

Revised May 2008

The AIA collects and disseminates Best Practices as a service to AIA members without endorsement or recommendation. Appropriate use of the information provided is the responsibility of the reader.

SUMMARY

Licensing photographs for a publication benefits all involved, if the license is secured correctly. Proper photo licensing offers compensation to photographers, visibility for architects, and prestige for publications. Setting clear expectations about rights and licenses helps architects, photographers, and publishers avoid unnecessary conflict.

THE VALUE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

When properly handled, placing attractive images in a trade or consumer publication is a win for everyone. The publication gets better images, the architect gets favorable coverage and the photographer gets a licensing fee for the use of the images.

Editorial images have tremendous value for both the publisher and the architect. The magazine benefits because high-caliber professional photography adds to both the design and depth of the stories. Good architecture, represented by good photography, attracts a more affluent and professional readership. This allows the magazine to charge premium rates for advertising and buffs the magazine's prestige. Although difficult to measure, prestige is more than a feel-good; it smoothes the road and opens doors for the magazine's editors and sales reps.

The architect benefits by gaining visibility and recognition. Not only is the cost of an editorial-use license far lower than the price of an ad in that same magazine, but the credibility of editorial content is also far higher than advertising. In addition, the architect can purchase reprints from the publisher at a fraction of the cost of commissioning a similar piece from a graphics house or advertising agency.

Besides these benefits to the architect and publisher, the publication can benefit the entire architectural profession and especially its students and emerging practitioners. Architectural designs are not created in a vacuum but within an evolving tradition or cultural milieu, which both influences and

is influenced by the newest designs. Written descriptions and drawings are important in this process, but photographic images are the most direct form of communication. Without photos, architects would have to travel to see examples of successful design. It is no exaggeration to say that good photography is a bedrock element of architectural progress.



Hartnell College Learning Center, Salinas CA.
Architect: BP Architecture, Concord, CA. Photograph ©2006 by Bob Swanson, www.swansonimages.com.

WHAT'S A PAGE WORTH?

Magazine subscribers rarely have any idea what the one page in a publication is worth – a lot! To find out just how much, visit the publication's Web site, follow the links for advertisers and look at the media kit.

One example: A standard full-page ad in the May 2008 issue of *Architectural Record* cost \$16,980.

ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE

Conflicts can arise, however, when the publisher, architect and photographer have different expectations about rights and licenses. For example, if the architect has submitted the images as part of a story pitch, the publisher may believe that it's the architect's responsibility to secure the publication rights. The architect may not see why there should be any restrictions on the uses of the photographs.

The photographer may be unsympathetic to the publisher's deadline pressure, and so on.

It is a rare magazine publisher who would run a feature story without pictures, especially if the images had been instrumental in getting the story planning started. At the same time, the publisher would prefer not to drop the story out of hand; the magazine staff has probably invested time in story development and would have to find something else to run in its place, with the deadline inexorably getting closer each day. However, if the necessary rights are not in hand, those are the unpleasant choices the publisher faces.

This Best Practice refers primarily to magazines and other periodicals, including journals, newsletters and their online equivalents. However, we do not mean to exclude books from the discussion. Deadlines are usually less urgent in the book business, but the upfront investment of staff time and writers' advances can create the same financial dynamics.

In the worst case, there may be a standoff, with neither the architect nor the publisher agreeing to pay for the use rights and the photographer unwilling to give the rights for free. If so, the book or the article will be killed and everyone will lose something.

SECURING AN EDITORIAL LICENSE

Since the magazine receives the most direct financial benefit from the use of the images, it is most often the magazine that pays the photographer for the necessary license. The publication typically contacts the photographer directly and pays a fee commensurate with the value the images contribute to the magazine's success. Several factors determine this fee, including the number of images to be used, their printed size and their placement. Thus, a photo used on the cover has a higher value to the magazine than photos used inside. Other factors include the magazine's editorial payment rates for photos that it commissions from freelancers, the magazine's circulation and the rates it charges advertisers.

Licensing of images for books follows the same principles as magazine licensing. The fee is based on the type of book (e.g., college text, popular press, coffee-table, trade paperback), the press run, and the size and placement of the images.

The publisher may refuse to pay this fee, either as a negotiating ploy or an attempt to shift its editorial cost to another party. It is in the publisher's interest to get the license at the lowest cost, of course, and he may sometimes play a little hardball. However,

most photographers have established pricing, which is based on the value that the images bring to the publication. Despite the publisher's protestations, it's quite rare that a publication truly cannot pay. When that happens, it's a sign that the publication is soon to fold, because rights licenses are such a small part of the total editorial, printing and distribution cost.

If the publisher can't or won't pay for the rights, the other option is for the architect to obtain the editorial-use license. The cost is the same either way, and many architects find that spending time dickering over who pays is costlier than simply taking the initiative.

It is rare that an architect will license broad publication rights in advance, although it can be done. Without knowing what use a future publisher or art director might make of the images, the photographer would write the license to cover a wide range of possibilities and charge accordingly. This may not be a wise use of the architect's working capital.

THE VALUE OF A PHOTO CREDIT

It is often argued that a photo credit, like a byline, has value to the photographer as a form of advertising. This is true in one sense: Its value depends on its prominence on the page. However, it's not true that the credit can be used to negotiate down the license fee. Most photographers have already factored its value into their fee structure.

In this respect, photographers and architects have much in common. Architects like to see their firm's name on the dedication placard, but they nevertheless expect to be paid for their design work. Professional photographers view a credit line in much the same way. A visible photo credit may improve the photographer's chances of getting future work, but it's not payment for the work that was completed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: EDITORIAL LICENSING

- Editorial publication rights are not typically granted to architects unless specifically stated in a written licensing agreement.
- A publication's content is its most valuable asset, attracting both readership and advertisers. If the publication refuses to acknowledge the value of photography and does not secure an editorial license, the responsibility for licensing the rights may revert to the architect.

- A photo credit is not equal to the value of the content (images) received by the publisher.

CONCLUSION

In the optimum scenario, when an architect and a publisher begin discussing a story, they decide who will be responsible for securing the license rights for the images they want. The fee depends not on who pays it but on the value that the specific use brings to the publication. In practice, the value of high-quality images, both to the publication and to the architect, is always much greater than the cost – and that’s why everyone wins when the deal is completed.

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 06.03.07 Preparing for Professional Photography
- 06.03.05 Selecting a Professional Photographer
- 06.03.06 Understanding the Photographic Estimate

Feedback

The AIA welcomes member feedback on Best Practice articles. To provide feedback on this article, please contact bestpractices@aia.org.

Keywords

- Leadership
- Disciplines
- Design discipline
- Architectural photography