The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture, Second Edition is completely revised to keep up with the latest developments driving the day-to-day operation of a successful private-practice landscape architecture office. Whether helping a landscape architecture student identify a career track, providing direction on starting a new office, guiding an owner seeking to jumpstart a stagnant or fledgling business, or assisting a landscape architect-in-training study for the national Landscape Architecture Registration Exam (LARE), this single-source blueprint is the key to prospering in this dynamic field. This new edition features:

- Indispensable information for practicing landscape architects, including professional ethics, finances, office administration, marketing and promotion, and project management
- An updated look at government regulatory laws, federal tax administration, sustainable design, and LEED certification
- Strategies for using the Internet, computer software, and technology to market and manage a firm
- Examples of professional contract templates
- Case study profiles of landscape architecture firms
- Requirements for professional registration and criteria for taking the national exam

This comprehensive and practical reference combines real-world experience with the highest professional standards to instruct the reader on business concepts. Expertly organized and easy to follow, The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture, Second Edition continues to be the one source that landscape architects need to direct all facets of their practice.

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The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture

A Complete Guide to Starting and Running Your Own Firm

Second Edition

Walter Rogers
To Maria Lynn Nahmias

Thank you for your encouragement and support.
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Introduction

In 1968 I was in the last semester of my undergraduate studies in landscape architecture at the University of Massachusetts, soon to graduate with a B.S. degree. One of my courses in that final semester at UMass was called Professional Practice. My recollection about the course is that there was no assigned textbook. The required readings were an assembly of sections of books and photocopied articles about writing a résumé and looking for a job. The course was taught by the only faculty member who was a practicing landscape architect working in a traditionally oriented office on site planning and design projects. I think I got a B in the course, and I did write a résumé.

Two years later, after graduating with an M.L.A., I took a position on the faculty of the first of three universities I would teach at until 1981. At each university, a professional-practice course similar to the one I took in my last semester at UMass was a part of the curriculum and was taught in the last semester. A textbook was still not available, and reading materials were still a collection of parts of books and photocopied articles.

After my teaching career, I launched a private practice. The office I started, and where I still practice, flourished through the 1980s. The practice grew to include five partners and twenty-five professional, technical, and support staff. The size of the firm required us to develop administrative and management practices that allowed the firm to run smoothly and effectively.

The idea for this book grew out of the two cornerstones evident in the foregoing brief history of my professional life in landscape architecture. First, I realized in the early 1990s that a single-source textbook on the development, operation, administration, and management of a professional landscape architecture practice was still not available for the professional-practice courses taught in most college landscape architecture curriculums. Second, over the years of operating my private practice, I had developed a great number of useful tools and techniques that might be of value if passed on to aspiring landscape architects.

When I was in college, I had a burning desire to know what it would be like working in a landscape architecture office, but I didn’t find out until I got my first job in a landscape architecture firm. Even then, I was aware of only a fraction of the intricacies of what went into the daily operations of the firm. This book tells the story of the wide range of strategic considerations involved in developing, operating, and managing a private practice. I intended this book to be a compendium of the professional practice of landscape architecture, and I have written it with the following groups in mind:

- Faculty teaching professional-practice and studio courses that simulate the office environment.
- Students taking professional-practice and studio courses.
- Aspiring graduates who want to know about the many facets of owning, developing, administering, and managing a private practice.
- Students and graduates who are searching for the landscape architecture career path most suited to their aims and personalities.
- Graduates who wish to start a private practice and can benefit from the methods and techniques I have developed and used effectively for almost two decades of private practice.
- Long-time practitioners who may benefit from the methods and techniques I have developed and used.
Allied professionals who may benefit from the methods and techniques I have developed and used. (There are many similarities in practicing architecture, engineering, planning, and other environmental design professions.)

The first edition of *The Professional Practice of Landscape Architecture* was published in 1997. In 2007, I was asked to write a second edition. Besides updating the material that made up the first edition, two significant changes occurred between the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century. The first has been technological advancement and the integration of the practice of landscape architecture with software programs used in professional practice. The second is the Internet—the World Wide Web. So, I have devoted a section in Chapter 1 to technology, software and the Web, and I have updated all of the chapters based on the influence of the Internet and how digital technology has shaped the profession since the mid-1990s.

I hope you will find wisdom, honesty, integrity, and helpful methods and techniques in these pages. I hope you will enjoy reading this book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

Here’s a brief summary of what you’ll find in each chapter.

**Chapter 1: The Profession of Landscape Architecture and Professionalism**

A definition of the profession of landscape architecture and a brief historical overview are the core of the first chapter. Eight eras of professional practice are discussed: the early park-planning era, estate design, city planning, the urban growth era, California and growth in the West, the environmental era, international practice, and the technology era.

Chapter 1 also describes the following professional career tracks:

- Private practice—design
- Private practice—design-build
- Public practice
- Academic practice
- Corporate practice
- Specialty practice

For the aspiring landscape architect, selecting a career track is an important decision that should receive a great deal of personal reflection and research of the various opportunities available. Matching one’s professional career goals with financial opportunities, professional growth potential, and personal aims is one of the important decisions made at the start of one’s professional career and often at other points throughout one’s professional life. Professional development opportunities are discussed as a long-term, lifelong pursuit. Professional development opportunities are one of the considerations in selecting a career path and an initial employer, and in making subsequent employment decisions throughout a professional’s career. Chapter 1 also discusses the concept of professionalism.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of professional registration, the Landscape Architecture Registration Exam (LARE), and professional societies. The chapter concludes with the topic of professional ethics and values. The Code of Professional Ethics and the Code of Environmental Ethics of the American Society of Landscape Architects are included at the end of the chapter.

In addition, Chapter 1 includes an overview of technology and how it has shaped landscape architecture in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty-first century.

**Chapter 2: Clients and Projects**

Chapter 2 discusses the landscape architect’s clients. The first part of the chapter focuses on the two broad categories of clients, public and private, and describes the postures, opportunities, and conditions related to developing a client mix.

A large part of the chapter discusses 12 categories of projects typically carried out for private clients. Used by the American Society of Landscape...
Architects in its annual awards program, these categories constitute a broad definition of the private practice of landscape architecture. This chapter describes a cross section of award-winning landscape architecture projects in the following categories:

1. Projects that feature sustainable concepts, "green" solutions, and LEED certification
2. International projects
3. Community development and multifamily housing
4. Streetscape, transit projects, and road beautification
5. Parks and outdoor recreation facilities
6. Commercial, industrial, and corporate development
7. Urban and regional planning
8. Institutional projects
9. Single-family residential and garden design projects
10. Conservation, and land and water reclamation projects
11. Historic preservation and landscape restoration projects
12. Landscape art and earth sculpture

Not-for-profit corporations and public-sector clients and projects are also discussed. A cross section of public agencies, and the client and project opportunities associated with public agencies are discussed in the last part of the chapter.

Chapter 3: Case Studies

This chapter presents a snapshot view of six types of landscape architecture employers:

1. Private practice: large multidisciplinary A/E firm
2. Private practice: large landscape architecture firms
3. Private practice: small landscape architecture firm
4. Private practice: design-build firm
5. Public practice
6. Corporate practice

There is no better way to evaluate career options than to compare and contrast the opportunities available among employers that represent different career tracks. Each of the case studies, except for the overviews of the large landscape architecture firms, provides the following information:

- History and overview of the employer
- Mission statement
- Landscape architecture opportunities with the employer, emphasizing entry-level opportunities
- Employee benefits
- Entry-level job description
- Representative examples of the employer’s work and projects

Awareness of career tracks and opportunities is the first step in making appropriate career choices. Studying the practices, employment opportunities, growth opportunities, and long-term potential for job satisfaction and professional development is the key to making successful career choices.

Chapter 4: Professional-Practice Relationships

Landscape architects have four main professional relationships:

1. Landscape architect/owner
2. Landscape architect/allied professional
3. Landscape architect/contractor
4. Landscape architect/general public

Chapter 4 describes these professional relationships, which can be both contractual and non-contractual. The chapter focuses on the non-contractual relationships. Three primary types of relationships are covered: the prime consultant, multiple direct consultants, and subconsultants.

Two key elements are discussed for each of the four types of relationships: (1) the expectations of the landscape architect and (2) the expectations of the person or persons with whom the landscape architect has established a professional relationship.
as well as the responsibilities of each party to the relationship.

Chapter 5: Finance

Where do landscape architects find the money to start an office and keep it going? What financing options are available, and how is the financing obtained? How are funds raised? How do lenders evaluate the landscape architect’s request for financing?

Chapter 5 answers these questions by discussing the three main forms of financing:

1. Equity
2. Debt
3. Trade credit

This chapter discusses when to use debt financing versus equity financing and the pros and cons of each. Sources of funds for each type of financing are covered, as well as the concept of leveraging equity through debt.

Three phases of financing a firm are discussed:

1. Start-up financing
2. Maintenance financing
3. Continuation financing

You will also read about the differences between borrowing for capital purchases and leasing, the elements of a loan proposal, and the concept and use of trade credit as a valuable form of obtaining financing for operating a private practice.

Chapter 6: Accounting

Accounting is not only for accountants. Every landscape architect who runs a private practice needs a rudimentary understanding of accounting and more specifically of financial management by using accounting information and reports. The landscape architect needs two types of information to be an effective financial manager: financial accounting information and financial management information. This chapter discusses both types of information and gives examples of each in practical applications related to the private practice of landscape architecture. Descriptions of an income statement, a balance sheet, an aged accounts receivable report, an aged accounts payable report, and a cash report, as well as examples of each, are found in this chapter.

Developing a pro forma financial statement (a projection of future income and financial condition based on present conditions) is covered. Other key financial reports of a nonaccounting nature are discussed, principally the work in progress report and workload projection. Ratio calculations are covered in depth because of their importance in evaluating the financial health of a firm. Trend ratios, liquidity ratios, such as the current ratio and the receivables turnover ratio, are covered. Equity or long-term solvency ratios and equity-to-debt ratios are also covered.

A section of this chapter deals with financial accounting systems and explains the difference between cash-basis accounting and accrual-basis accounting. Elementary accounting practices are covered, including setting up a chart of accounts for a landscape architecture firm.

Last, this chapter discusses the benefits and desirability of a computerized, integrated accounting and financial management system.

Chapter 7: Business Administration and Record Keeping

The administration of the landscape architecture office; keeping track of the firm’s projects; developing and maintaining filing systems; keeping financial, tax, and personnel records; and organizing business records are critical administrative tasks for successful operation of a landscape architecture office.

The key to effective office administration is using a job number to manage all of the firm’s project-related information. This chapter discusses how to develop and use a job numbering system, including
category-of-work codes that allow the firm to study trends in the firm’s procurement of work and to retrieve information for marketing purposes. Using a master roster of work in progress and work in job development phases is discussed, along with using time cards or computerized time-tracking systems. Using type-of-work codes and task codes for effective time card entry is another important administrative technique covered.

This chapter also includes a section on filing systems, methods, and records management, including the time requirements for keeping records and categories of the importance of information.

A section of the chapter discusses the development and use of forms in the landscape architecture office as a means to effective management of repetitive administrative tasks.

Establishing and maintaining files for both active and dead project files is another important element of office administration that results in effective retrieval of the daily information used in project work. A range of types of files necessary in the landscape architecture office is discussed, as well as record keeping for vacations, holidays, and sick leave.

A lengthy section of the chapter is devoted to the administration and record-keeping requirements for insurance needs. Descriptions of the typical insurance coverage needed by a private firm are covered in depth, including property and liability insurance, worker’s compensation insurance, disability insurance, professional liability insurance, life insurance, key-person insurance, and health insurance. Retirement benefits, pensions, and programs are also discussed.

Chapter 7 explains the types of product literature files important to the landscape architecture office and how to organize a technical reference library. Office payroll administration, as well as tax administration, is also covered.

Chapter 8: Marketing

Marketing is the social and business process used by landscape architects to obtain clients and projects.

Chapter 8 discusses the need for and methods of developing a strategic plan for the landscape architecture firm, including a mission statement. The strategic plan in turn sets the parameters for a marketing plan designed to analyze market opportunities, identify and select target markets, develop market strategies, and plan and implement marketing efforts. The written components of a marketing plan are spelled out.

A lengthy section of this chapter discusses marketing tools and the promotion mix. The tools discussed include:

- Word of mouth
- Firm brochures
- Project cut sheets
- Standard Forms 330
- Website
- Direct mail marketing
- Direct call marketing
- Cold calls
- Cold emails
- Social Internet networks
- Video
- Tickle files
- Newspaper, magazine, radio, and TV coverage
- Journal articles
- Public speaking
- Community service
- Sponsoring community events
- Trade shows and conferences
- Print, TV, and radio advertising
- Digital photo files and archives
- Display boards
- The physical environment of the office
- Answering the telephone

Chapter 8 discusses the proposal and interview process, focusing on the response to a statement of interest, statement of qualifications, and requests for proposals.

A section of the chapter talks about market opportunities and entering new markets. A key part of this section provides techniques to assess the economic potential of new market areas.

The last section of the chapter discusses the need for the marketing staff and includes a job description for a marketing production coordinator.
Chapter 9: Contracts

Chapter 9 discusses one of the most important skills needed by the practicing landscape architect—writing a contract for professional services. This chapter also discusses various other contracts the landscape architect must be familiar with and be able to understand and execute.

The chapter starts with a discussion of contract terminology and the elements of an enforceable contract. The next section provides in-depth information on formats for professional services contracts and includes a discussion of professional association standard contracts, landscape-architect-developed contracts, and client-developed contracts. The proposal process—the act of forming a contract—is also discussed. The elements of a professional services contract are outlined, and the concept of agency, whereby the landscape architect serves as the client’s binding representative, is discussed as an important contractual element.

Sections of Chapter 9 discuss contracts with allied professionals and contracts with credit agencies and lending institutions, including loan agreements. What to look for and expect in loan agreement contracts is covered in depth.

A section covers employee agreements, another contract form important for successful employer/employee relationships. A sample employee agreement is included.

A lengthy section discusses the art and skill of negotiating contracts, focusing primarily on professional services contracts. The fundamentals of negotiating postures and negotiating techniques used by both parties in the negotiating process are discussed.

The last section of this chapter includes important elements and useful clauses of a professional services contract. The elements include:

- Dispute resolution
- Billing and terms of payment
- Client’s obligations
- Compliance with codes and standards
- Excluded services or additional services
- Ownership of documents
- Indemnities

- Insurance
- Limit of liability
- Opinion of probable construction costs
- Termination

Samples of contract terminology are provided for many of the elements discussed.

Chapter 10: Project Management

Project management is one of the keys to successful operation of a landscape architecture firm, and the project manager approach to delivery of professional services is the most popular way to organize a landscape architecture office for completing professional services contracts.

The key elements of project management are discussed in chapter 10: They include:

1. Planning, organizing, and scoping the elements of a project
2. Setting up tracking systems to monitor and control the flow of work
3. Tracking a project and developing strategies when a project is over budget
4. Managing the work flow to maximize profit for the firm on every project
5. Selecting and organizing staff for successful completion of a project
6. Directing and motivating staff
7. Serving the client and developing a relationship that results in a satisfied client
8. Providing technical supervision for the project staff
9. Inspiring the professional staff and promoting professional development opportunities
10. Coordinating with the firm’s top management and clients
11. Attaining high quality in the planning and design output of the office
12. Marketing the firm by doing a good job with existing clients
13. Managing the planning or design effort to meet construction cost expectations
14. Taking part in performance reviews of technical staff and peers
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15. Assisting in writing and preparing proposals
16. Closing out projects
17. Managing construction observation

Throughout this chapter a wide range of tools and checklists is provided as related to successful project management.

Chapter 11: Business and Personnel Law

The focus of Chapter 11 is the legal environment of professional practice. The chapter starts with an overview of the origins of law. One section deals with licensure law and state registration. The historical precedent of licensure laws, legal considerations, and the functioning of state boards of technical registration are covered.

A section discusses government regulatory law, agencies, and how agencies affect the practice of landscape architecture. Another section deals with tort law and negligence, which many professionals agree may have the greatest legal consequences for private practice. Negligence is defined and the elements of law that must be proved to result in an act of negligence are discussed in detail.

Another section of Chapter 11 discusses labor relations and the key laws affecting employer/employee relations. The concept of employment at will, minimum wage regulations, workers compensation laws, OSHA and job safety, firing an employee, the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act are discussed as related to landscape architecture practice.

A section discusses discrimination and laws involved with discrimination in the workplace. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and subsequent amendments are discussed. Affirmative action and age discrimination are also discussed.

The last section of Chapter 11 discusses the landscape architect’s obligation to protect the general public, the environment, and the consumer of landscape architecture services. An overview of environmental legislation that is important to the practice of landscape architecture is summarized.