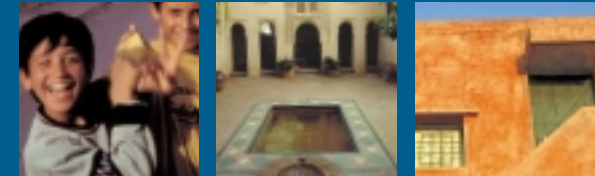BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

ArchNet

Created through a distinguished partnership between the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University, and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, ArchNet is a growing global community of scholars, students, and professionals concerned with architecture, planning, and landscape design. ArchNet provides these individuals with:

- **Comprehensive architectural resources**

- **New perspectives on the built environment**

- **Insights into Islamic design and culture**

ArchNet seeks to enable participants to learn how to enhance the quality of the built environment in their communities; to compensate for a lack of resources at their academic institutions; to honor the rich legacy of their cultures; and to celebrate the humanistic traditions of Islam.

An Exceptional Resource

ArchNet is the result of a series of conversations that took place in 1998 between His Highness the Aga Khan, President Charles Vest of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and William Mitchell, dean of MIT's School of Architecture and Planning. These discussions focused on enlarging the scope of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and MIT, which the Aga Khan had inaugurated in 1977. As an extension of those efforts, he sought to "find ways in which the profound humanistic tradition of Islam could inform the concept and construction of buildings and public spaces." To that end, he envisioned a forum that would take advantage of the Internet's tremendous global capacity for connecting individuals and distributing information in a way that would support students and practitioners of architecture, planning, and landscape design in the developing world.

Intrigued and enthused by the Aga Khan's vision, Dean Mitchell began to establish the foundation for what is now ArchNet.

Conceived in collaboration with and funded by the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (a member of the Aga Khan Development Network), and administered through MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, ArchNet was originally developed in conjunction with the MIT Press. ArchNet has since emerged as an exceptional resource for those seeking comprehensive architectural resources, new perspectives on the built environment, and insights into the wide spectrum of Islamic design and culture.

ARCHNET: AN OVERVIEW

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At the heart of ArchNet is a free and open online architectural library – the world's largest – which is available to members without cost. The library draws on the extensive resources of its participating institutions, including the 200,000 images in the collections of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, and 400,000 images housed at Harvard and MIT. Selections of these materials, reproduced digitally on ArchNet, provide valuable resources and teaching tools for students, educators, and professionals, especially those with limited access to architectural publications and research. ArchNet also provides members with access to an expanding digital archive of images from private collections that might otherwise never be seen. The site integrates this information through linked text and images, and provides access to course syllabi and seminal publications focused on design and culture in Islamic societies.

TRANSCENDING BORDERS. ArchNet collaborates with architectural schools to provide institutional workspaces that allow for the sharing of locally based resources and knowledge – including studio work, research, and publications – across borders and cultures. ArchNet's list of partner schools, whose original members included institutions in Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey, continues to expand. In addition, ArchNet has supported the establishment of "laboratory" environments at schools in Tajikistan, Syria, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, providing hardware, software, digital cameras, and other resources.

Institutions, individuals, and groups that participate in ArchNet can also establish "workspaces" that facilitate professional development through the organization and sharing of project-related information and research. Other site features include a digital calendar listing events of interest to members in various countries, directories of individual ArchNet members and participating institutions, discussion forums, and career listings.

NURTURING LOCAL EXPERTISE. ArchNet fosters connections and collaboration among the members of its global community through discussion groups, linked resources, and shared workspaces. This unprecedented model of cooperation helps participants transcend economic, cultural, and geographic boundaries; expand their intellectual frame of reference; and enhance the knowledge base of the ArchNet community. The reciprocal exchange of information enables community members to both access and share locally based architectural and planning expertise – from mud construction techniques in Mali to wooden building methods in Indonesia – at an unprecedented level.

NEW PERSPECTIVES. In its structure, content, and intent, ArchNet reflects many of the Aga Khan's most valued principles regarding rural and urban development. Beyond its educational component, ArchNet also plays a role in helping to reverse the degradation of the built environment in the Islamic world; compensating for the lack of resources in architectural programs outside the West; celebrating Islam's humanistic traditions; and honoring the cultural legacy of Islamic societies.
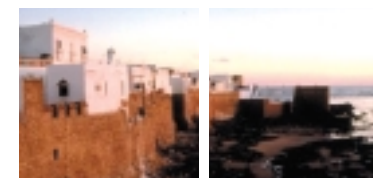
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UNLOCKING THE POWER OF THE INTERNET

ArchNet provides a compelling example of the Internet's potential for transforming educational theory and practice by linking the resources and talents of a global community of interest. The ArchNet model is particularly relevant for individuals with limited access to traditional architectural slide libraries and publications. With nothing more than a personal computer and an Internet connection, members working and studying in relative isolation can leverage an extraordinary online repository of architectural documentation (both textual and visual), which offers unique perspectives on the design, structures, and building practices of Islamic societies.
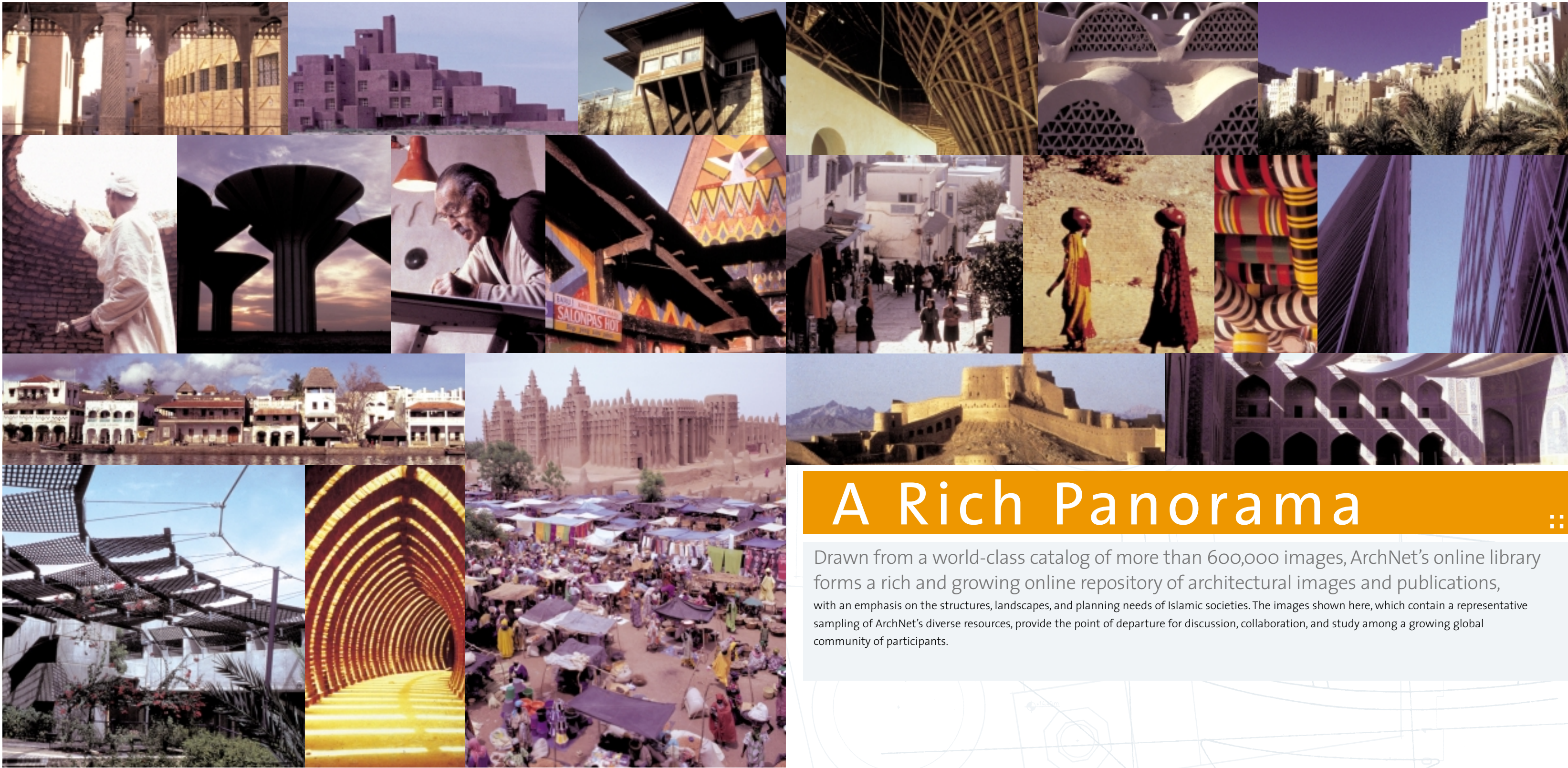
A PIONEERING MODEL. ArchNet's philosophy reflects the vision of its founding entities. The site's emphasis on improving the built environment echoes the multiple mandates of the Aga Khan Development Network, which focuses on health, education, culture, rural development, institution-building, and the promotion of economic development. More specifically, ArchNet reflects the goals of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, which include improving the training of architectural professionals for work in the Islamic world; increasing cross-cultural understanding of Islamic architecture and the intimate connection between architecture and culture in Islamic civilizations; and creating greater awareness and appreciation of the diversity and pluralism of Islamic cultures – within the Islamic world itself as well as in the West.

A WEALTH OF INFORMATION. Since 1979, the Aga Khan has supported the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and MIT, as well as the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, which he established in 1977. These programs have generated a wealth of information documenting the pluralism and diversity of Islamic societies, as well as knowledge about the historical, cultural, and economic dimensions of built environments in those societies. In making these resources available to the global community, ArchNet sustains the vision of free information exchange that was of critical importance to the creators of the World Wide Web.

ArchNet's innovative Internet-based model also provides a compelling example of MIT's OpenCourseWare initiative, which seeks to make MIT course materials available on the World Wide Web, free of charge, to any user anywhere in the world.

A Rich Panorama

Drawn from a world-class catalog of more than 600,000 images, ArchNet's online library forms a rich and growing online repository of architectural images and publications, with an emphasis on the structures, landscapes, and planning needs of Islamic societies. The images shown here, which contain a representative sampling of ArchNet's diverse resources, provide the point of departure for discussion, collaboration, and study among a growing global community of participants.

A COLLABORATIVE CASE STUDY

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The following threaded discussion contains actual messages from "Online and Correspondence Courses," one of the many topics initiated by ArchNet participants. This discussion illustrates how, in just a matter of days, members of the worldwide ArchNet community can establish important intellectual and professional connections that would be virtually impossible to replicate in any other forum. These messages, many of which contain links to related online resources, demonstrate the ability of ArchNet to foster community and nurture talent in an innovative, "grass roots" forum that truly delivers on the boundless promise of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

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The repercussions for this project are immense. Better educated architects and planners means better designers and decision makers; this leads to a better built environment, which in turn leads to better economic and social benefit, improving the quality of life.

Peter Rowe
Dean, Harvard Design School
Harvard University

MAY·21· –

I want to know if there are any correspondence or online courses conducted by any reputed international universities in interiors, architecture and landscape design.
Salim Sharif, India
Civil engineer

MAY·23· –

I know of a correspondence course offered by RHODEC institute of interior design in England. If you search for the RHODEC website you can find the details.
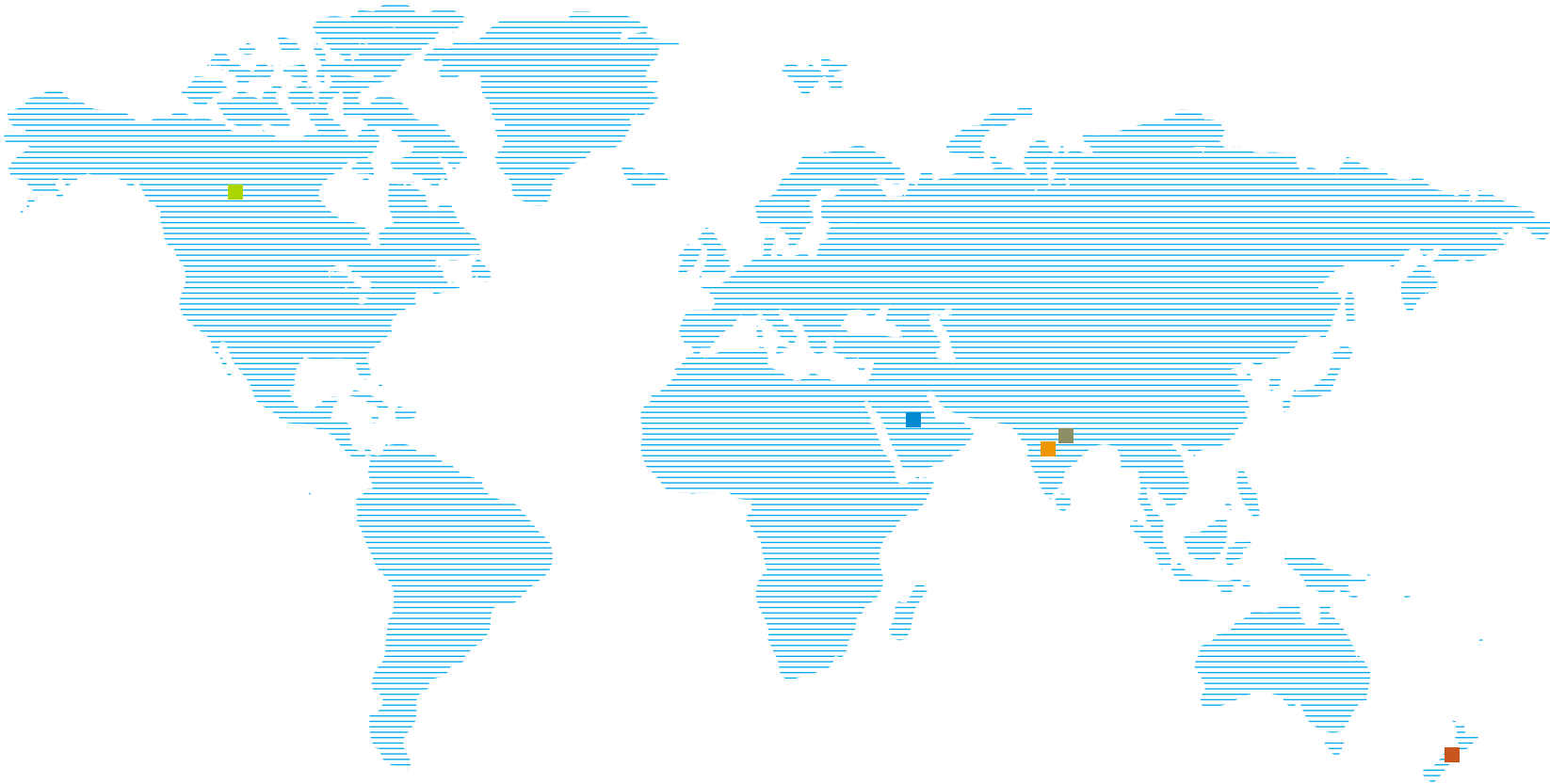Uzam Zain, Saudi Arabia
Professor of architecture

MAY·25· –

I just finished a course on "Design and Creativity in Landscape Architecture" and I highly recommend it for its unique approach to online teaching. Taught by Maged Senbel, a Muslim architect at the University of British Columbia's School of Landscape Architecture, it is one of the more timely and innovative pedagogical tools available online anywhere in the world. Good luck.
Rey Atienza, Canada
Student

MAY·26· –

I have just finished teaching an online course at the UNITEC School of Architecture, Auckland, New Zealand. The title of the course was "Architecture and the Internet." For the next semester I'm preparing the course "Create a Web-Based e-CV" - part of the "Basics of Electronic Communication in Architecture" course series that is going to be offered as an online elective each semester. Given that my general field of interest is electronic communication in architecture, and that my current Ph.D. research area focuses on the specific demands of online architectural education, I'll be happy to hear about online teaching and learning experiences of ArchNet members.
Miriana Devetakovic Radojevic, New Zealand
Senior lecturer

JUNE·8· –

You can check out the online course being conducted by Macmillan Inc. and the National Institute of Design. The course is on packaging design and is of three months' duration. For more details, log on to www.develop.emacmillan.com/nid. You can also enroll for a free 48-hour trial session.
Mansoor Ali, India
Architect

An Invitation

ArchNet provides a compelling example of how "globalization" can be used to sustain cultural identity and enhance inter-cultural understanding. Initially administered through MIT's School of Architecture and Planning, MIT's ultimate goal is to make ArchNet completely self-supporting – one that is defined and "managed" by the community itself.

ArchNet seeks to honor and reflect the principles of free speech, candid discussion, and open communication. Membership is structured to facilitate the sharing of resources and information while respecting ownership of copyright and other intellectual property.

To learn more about ArchNet, register as a member of our community, or obtain information about becoming a partner school, please visit http://archnet.org.

http://archnet.org

"It is my hope that that ArchNet will become a global resource that serves people who are working for positive change in the physical environment within Islamic societies."

His Highness the Aga Khan

ArchNet

THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

MIT has a distinguished history of educating design and planning professionals and working with institutions in the developing world. We are proud to continue this tradition through the support we offer ArchNet's electronic community.

William Mitchell
Dean, School of Architecture and Planning
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Digital Calendar

The ArchNet Digital Calendar features a broad array of current, upcoming, and ongoing events of interest to members of the global architectural community. Events include surveys, competitions, fellowships, lectures, symposia, and calls for papers and participation in conferences. Maintained by members of the ArchNet community, the Digital Calendar functions as the information clearinghouse for the site, informing users about global events that might otherwise go unnoticed. Topics range from the "Second Biennial of Contemporary Painting in the Islamic World" in Iran to a design education conference on "Connecting the Real and the Virtual" in Poland.

The Digital Calendar gives ArchNet members the opportunity to participate in a breadth of professional activities while gaining an understanding of issues and events of interest to their colleagues. All events can be copied directly from the Digital Calendar into the member's calendar in the My Workspace section. Listings are sorted by category and country, and include links that lead the members to additional online resources. Members are also encouraged to contribute their own listings to the calendar.

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Discussion Forum

The Discussion Forum is a crucial component of Archnet. Enabling the free and candid exchange of ideas and information among a richly diverse community helps position ArchNet as a truly global resource. Membership in the ArchNet community includes unlimited opportunities to participate in threaded discussions about virtually any issue concerning the built environment.

Images, projects, and publications within the ArchNet Digital Library include links that can be used to initiate Discussion Forum sessions, enabling members to engage in dialogue about the materials presented on the site. The resulting discussions are categorized by topic and are eclectic in content – from "Traditional houses in Western Kosovo" to "Mosques and the environment."

Members can also use the Discussion Forum to post specific queries related to a certain area, individual, or building style, or participate in broader-based discussions exploring the historical and cultural context of the built environment in the non-Western world. If desired, members can receive email notification each time a discussion thread receives new input.

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ArchNet and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture

THE AGA KHAN TRUST FOR CULTURE

ArchNet is a collaborative undertaking between the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC) and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. AKTC, one of the agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network, implements cultural initiatives aimed at revitalizing the heritage of Islamic communities and contributing to their social and economic development. Its programs include the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Historic Cities Support Programme, and the Education and Culture Programme, of which ArchNet is a part.

Program goals. The goals of the Education and Culture Programme are to improve the training of architectural professionals for engagement in the Muslim world; to increase cross-cultural understanding of Islamic architecture; and to create awareness and appreciation of the diversity and pluralism of Muslim cultures in the Muslim world and in the West. These goals are addressed through a focus on academics and educational institutions.
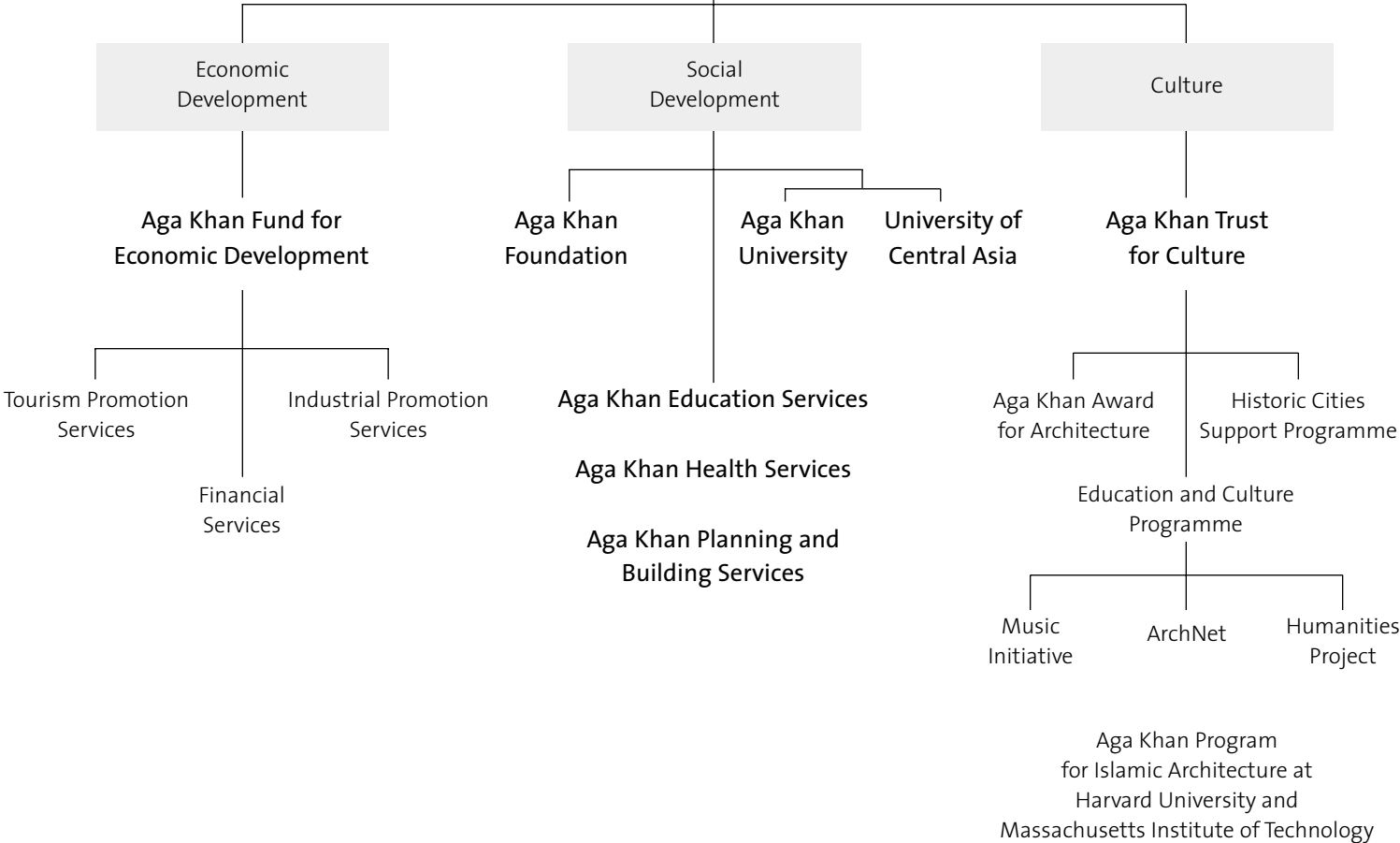
Program resources. The program's principal resource is the Trust's archives. This extensive collection contains more than 200,000 images and drawings that represent the more than 2,000 projects that have been nominated for the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, along with relevant documentation, research reports, and publications. At present, the foremost concern for the Education and Culture Programme is the development of mechanisms that will effectively open the Trust's archives to students, faculty, and others around the world via remote access. Other initiatives within the Education and Culture Programme include the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Aga Khan Music Initiative in Central Asia, and the Aga Khan Humanities Project in Central Asia.

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THE IMAMAT

Aga Khan Development Network

Economic Development

Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development

Tourism Promotion Services

Industrial Promotion Services

Financial Services

Social Development

Aga Khan Foundation

Aga Khan University

University of Central Asia

Aga Khan Education Services

Aga Khan Health Services

Aga Khan Planning and Building Services

Culture

Aga Khan Trust for Culture

Aga Khan Award for Architecture

Historic Cities Support Programme

Education and Culture Programme

Music Initiative

ArchNet

Humanities Project

Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Careers

ArchNet provides resources that extend beyond research and collaboration to embrace the practical realm of online professional networking and career development. The site's Careers section links members to extensive job listings, where they can browse positions related to architecture, urban planning, education, and allied fields.

These positions literally span the globe, encompassing locations as varied as China, New Zealand, Lebanon, and Mozambique. Titles range from Community Development Program Manager, to Asiatic Art Curator, to Professor of Landscape Architecture. Members can also present their credentials to a global community of colleagues and potential employers. All members are free to post job listings or present their credentials.

This wide variety of professional opportunities reflects ArchNet's commitment to providing members with comprehensive resources that help them achieve their broad-based professional goals.

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Group Workspace

The ArchNet Group Workspace serves as a "gathering place" for digital workgroups within ArchNet, where members work collectively, collaboratively, and in real time on specific projects. Study group topics range from a project focusing on Contemporary Iranian Architecture and Architects to a Sarajevo Urban Design Workshop. Any collaborative of ArchNet members can apply for a Group Workspace.

Keyur Vadodaria, CEPT, India

Group Workspace participants share resources such as sketches, working drawings, and project notes, as well as their local knowledge and expertise. Images, files, and project management tools are uploaded and downloaded via ArchNet, further streamlining the collaborative process. Workgroups can work "privately" or share their project resources with the entire ArchNet community.

Other features of the Group Workspace include a real-time chat room, a discussion forum area, a calendar for group-related events, and an address book area. Each Group Workspace also includes a "pinup board" section where participants can post drawings or images and receive feedback on their work from fellow participants. Members' files and images (either their own or from ArchNet) can also be placed in the Collections area of the Group Workspace.

Charles Correa Housing Charrette

The Charles Correa Housing Charrette provides a compelling example of a Group Workspace in action. Led by the distinguished Indian architect Charles Correa, the project involved students and faculty from the American University of Beirut, Lebanon; the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology in Ahmedabad, India; the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey; and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA. Forty students from these institutions were divided into eight teams of five, and were asked to explore housing issues related to the geographic areas where the participating institutions were located. Each project was based on a common number of housing units, clusters, and density level. This rich collaboration was conducted entirely using ArchNet's collaborative Group Workspace capabilities.

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Digital Library

ArchNet's Digital Library – the world's largest online architectural resource – provides members with interactive tools and content to facilitate research and promote digital collaboration. ArchNet members can browse thousands of publications, images, CAD files, line drawings, and video files focused on Islamic and other non-Western architectural traditions throughout the world. Materials are conveniently categorized by type, location, and time period, with options that allow users to search across multiple criteria. Images can be viewed in three different size formats; any image within the library can be copied directly to the member's personal or workgroup-oriented collection. Members can also initiate an online discussion based upon any image in the collection.

El-Razek Villa, façade study, gouache on paper

A Special Collections area explores specific themes -– from resettlement programs in Afghanistan to the archives of the Aga Khan Award for Architecture – that illuminate the aesthetic and cultural dimensions of architecture-related issues in Islamic societies. Print resources – including books, digitized monographs, magazines, and journals – are also available electronically, providing members with instantaneous access to distinguished, hard-to-find resources, such as *Mimar: Architecture in Development* and *Muqarnas*.

The Digital Library is further enhanced by reference tools that include an academic and institutional directory, an extensive listing of relevant Web links, and an online version of Petersen's *Dictionary of Islamic Architecture*, many of whose entries are hyperlinked to related images, publications, and resources on ArchNet.

Hassan Fathy Archive

In 1985, Hassan Fathy donated his entire collection of drawings and writings to the Aga Khan Award for Architecture. To preserve this collection, the Award organized a photographic mission to Cairo in the summer of 1988 that documented Fathy's voluminous collection of original drawings. The collection of over 1,300 images and drawings in the ArchNet Digital Library represents the first time that the work of this important and groundbreaking architect has been made available to a wide audience.

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Institutions

Aylin Agar and Emre Kuzlu, Middle East Technical University, Turkey

The Institutions area provides a focal point for ArchNet's institutional members. Participating institutions help support ArchNet's emphasis on promoting a deeper understanding of the role of the built environment in Islamic societies and other cultures. These memberships are offered free to educational and research institutions, academic departments, firms, centers, and other professional groups who are willing to make a commitment of time and human resources toward supporting their ArchNet workspace. Examples of institutional members include the American University of Beirut and the Delhi chapter of the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage.

The Institutions area provides opportunities for schools of architecture and urban planning to share student projects, faculty research, and departmental publications within their own Digital Library. Each institution's area includes a front page containing an overview of the organization and its mission, a calendar of upcoming events, and areas for posting course information and syllabi.

e-topia: Insights, Reflections, and Proposals in the Context of Lebanon

This seminar was offered as an interdisciplinary elective to senior students at the American University of Beirut in the spring of 2002. The course aimed at cultivating an understanding of the nature and potential of digital technologies while investigating the paradigm shifts necessary for their effective implementation in the realms of design, architecture, and urbanism.

The seminar reflected propositions put forward in the book e-topia: Urban Life, Jim, But Not as We Know It *(Mitchell, The MIT Press, 1999), which served as the framework for the students' investigation of the potential for e-topia in Lebanon. The course was attended by students from four different programs: Architecture, Graphic Design, Urban Planning, and Computer and Communication Engineering.*

Lina Ghotme, American University of Beirut

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ArchNet's main landing page, the Lobby and News area, contains a sign-in area for registered members, provides information about ArchNet to prospective members, and links those new visitors to registration features. In this way, the Lobby and News area provides new and potential members with a concise and appealing introduction to the vast amounts of information residing on the ArchNet network.

The landing page includes several brief articles featuring "hot topics" of interest to ArchNet members, which are updated regularly. These range from the announcement of an urban planning conference in Kabul to a piece on newly posted materials devoted to "The Art of Building in Yemen." Members can access a complete archive of previously featured news items, and contribute their own items for posting.

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Member Profiles

The Member Profiles area enables members to present themselves to the ArchNet community by posting relevant personal information, including their name, biography or curriculum vitae, photograph, field of interest, and country. Members can also search the Member Profile directory by these same criteria to locate individuals with certain backgrounds or expertise. For example, a teacher preparing a course on the history of Cairo can search the directory for Egyptian-based educators, and then initiate contact with those members electronically. Individuals can list multiple fields of interest when creating their profile, in areas that range from architectural education and urban development to textiles and restoration.

The Collections area on the Member Profiles page allows those members who maintain ArchNet image and file collections to make the online content within those collections accessible to other community members. Users of this area can also view profiles of ArchNet's newest members, as well as a comprehensive listing of the entire community.

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My Workspace

My Workspace provides each ArchNet member with updates concerning new information posted on the site – from collections to job listings – each time the member logs in. Members can use this area to edit their biography and curriculum vitae, upload a portrait, change their email alerts and password, or to review their membership status, group access privileges, and favorite Web links. My Workspace also contains features that enable members to contribute to the site in any number of ways, such as initiating a discussion topic, listing an upcoming conference or competition, or posting a news item.

The My Collections area within My Workspace is used to categorize and save specific images, files, and Web links for the member's reference, which can be posted either privately or publicly. Members can post photographs of their journeys to share with the community; teachers can use their workspace to prepare a lecture that combines content from the ArchNet archives with their own materials. An electronic address book helps members manage their communications with collaborators, information resources, contacts, and other participants in their global network. Images from ArchNet's Digital Library, Calendar, and Member Profiles areas can also be uploaded to sections of the My Workspace area (My Calendar, My Collections, and My Addresses).

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Course Syllabi

ArchNet offers a Course Syllabi page that provides detailed access to course information drawn from architecture and urban planning curricula, with a special emphasis on courses dealing with Islamic architecture. Contributed by ArchNet members, these syllabi provide not only an outline of course materials, but also extensive reading lists and bibliographic information. Syllabi for classes such as "Domestic Architecture in Islam and the Poetics of Space" (at the University of Texas at Austin) and "The Architecture of Cairo" (at MIT) contain detailed reference listings showing a breadth of academic resources and bibliographic data addressing the built environment.

Taken together, these syllabi represent the nucleus of a definitive bibliography dealing with architecture and urbanism, as well as a highly practical teaching tool. For example, an educator preparing a course on urban planning can access the syllabus, course outline, and reading list for "The Islamic City: Urban Form and Society" to help determine how a colleague addresses the subject.