



A GUIDE TO CAREERS IN DESIGN

> Becoming an  
**INTERIOR DESIGNER**

SECOND EDITION



Christine M. Piotrowski, FASID, IIDA



➤ Becoming an  
**INTERIOR  
DESIGNER**



# ➤ Becoming an INTERIOR DESIGNER

**A Guide to Careers in Design**

Second Edition

**CHRISTINE M. PIOTROWSKI, FASID, IIDA**



WILEY

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

This book is printed on acid-free paper. ©

Copyright © 2009 by Christine M. Piotrowski. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 646-8600, or on the web at [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com). Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at [www.wiley.com/go/permissions](http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions).

**Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty:** While the publisher and the author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Neither the publisher nor the author shall be liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information about our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic books. For more information about Wiley products, visit our Web site at [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Piotrowski, Christine M., 1947-  
Becoming an interior designer: a guide to careers in design / Christine Piotrowski. — 2nd ed.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-470-11423-0 (pbk.)

1. Interior decoration—Vocational guidance. I. Title.  
NK2116.P56 2009  
747.092—dc22

2008018564

Printed in the United States of America.

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

#### DISCLAIMER

This publication is designed to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter covered. It is sold with the understanding that the publisher and the author are not engaged in rendering professional services. If professional advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

All photographs, documents, and forms are proprietary to the organization, design firm, designer, or author. None of the figures in this text may be reproduced without the expressed written permission of the appropriate copyright holder.

*To Martha and Casmier, looking down from above.*

*With love,*

*Christine*

*A truly committed decision is  
the force that changes your life.*

---

ANONYMOUS



# CONTENTS

<b>PREFACE</b>	IX	<b>The Importance of Internships</b>	77
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	XII	<b>Two-Year Associate Degree</b>	78
<b>1 An Introduction to the Interior Design Profession</b>	1	<b>Postgraduate Education in Interior Design</b>	80
What Do Interior Designers Do?	2	<b>NCIDQ Examination</b>	82
<i>What Do Interior Designers Do?</i>	3	<b>Continuing Education</b>	84
Is Interior Design for You?	11	<b>How Important Is Interior Design Education in Today's Industry?</b>	92
History	17	<b>3 Where the Jobs Are</b>	99
Sustainable Design	21	<b>Career Decisions</b>	103
<i>What Do You Feel Is the Impact of Sustainable Design on the Profession?</i>	27	<b>Independent Design Firms</b>	107
Professional Associations	32	<i>What Motivated You to Start Your Own Design Firm?</i>	110
Interior Design Registration and Licensing	36	<b>Architectural Offices</b>	112
<i>How Important Is Certification by Examination and Licensing of Interior Designers Today?</i>	38	<b>Furniture Retailers</b>	116
Why Did You Become an Interior Designer?	42	<b>Office Furnishings Dealers</b>	119
<b>2 Educational Preparation</b>	55	<b>Interior Design on a Global Stage</b>	121
High School Preparation	59	<b>Facility Planning and Design</b>	124
Choosing an Educational Program	62	<b>Sole Practitioner Work Environments</b>	124
<i>How Did You Choose Which School to Attend to Obtain Your Education in Interior Design?</i>	63	<b>Job-Seeking Tools</b>	130
Four-Year Educational Preparation	72	<i>Can You Describe the Optimum Portfolio for a Job Applicant?</i>	134
		<i>What Do You Look for in Hiring a New Designer?</i>	139
		<b>What Do You Enjoy Most About Working in the Firm You Are in Right Now?</b>	143

<b>4 Design Specialties</b>	149	<b>6 Interior Design as a Business</b>	253
Residential Design	150	Business Formations	255
Aging in Place	153	<i>What Motivated You to Start Your Design Firm?</i>	257
Commercial	156	Marketing Methods	260
Sustainable Design	158	Contracts	264
<i>What Do You Feel Is the Impact of Sustainable Design or Design for Seniors on the Profession?</i>	160	Interior Design Revenue	270
Corporate and Professional Offices	166	Legal Issues	272
Hospitality	174	<i>How Important Is Certification by Examination and Licensing of Interior Designers Today?</i>	275
Entertainment and Recreation	180	What Is the Greatest Business Challenge for Interior Design Firms?	278
Retail Facilities	183		
Healthcare	186	<b>7 The Future</b>	285
Senior Living	192	What Do You See as the Future for the Interior Design Profession?	285
Institutional	195	<b>INTERIOR DESIGN RESOURCES</b>	297
Restoration and Adaptive Use	201	<b>CIDA-ACCREDITED INTERIOR DESIGN PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA</b>	299
Related Career Options	202	<b>INTERIOR DESIGN REFERENCES</b>	310
What Advice Would You Give Someone Who Wants to Be an Interior Designer?	212	<b>INTERIOR DESIGNERS</b>	312
<b>5 The Design Process</b>	223	<b>INDEX</b>	317
Project Development	224		
Programming	230		
Schematic Design	232		
Design Development	235		
Contract Documents	239		
Contract Administration	241		
Project Management	244		
Working Relationships	246		
What Is the Single Most Important Skill an Interior Designer Needs to Be Successful?	247		

## PREFACE

The profession of interior design has received a lot of media attention over the years. Network television has portrayed interior designers as characters in major shows and featured them as experts on cable's various home decorating programs. Movies have even included interior designers or decorators as part of the cast. You have no doubt looked at one or more of the magazines related to interior design on the newsstands. The media attention, of course, doesn't necessarily help someone learn all that is involved in pursuing this profession.

This book is about the profession of interior design and the professional interior designer. If you are a student in high school or a postsecondary student who is considering interior design as a career, this book helps you understand what the profession entails. Maybe you have lost interest in your current career and are looking for a way to express your creative side. This book can assist you in understanding how interior design may help you achieve that goal. It will not, however, explain how to establish a practice or actually teach you how to do interior design.

The interior design profession has two broad segments of specialization. Residential interior design, primarily the design of private residences, is the area most familiar to the public. Commercial interior design is the other large segment of the profession. This specialty involves the interior design of businesses such as offices, hotels, stores, restaurants—even airports, sports stadiums, and prisons. Within each of these broad areas, designers might focus on one or more subareas—condominiums and retail stores, for example.

The profession has changed significantly over the last 45 years or so. Here are just some of the ways in which it is different: building and safety codes are emphasized; sustainable design in both residential and commercial interior design has gained importance; the growing complexity of projects and the design process means interior designers must be better educated and trained; licensing and legal responsibilities focus added attention on project management and contract administration; and the aging population has brought an increased awareness of the design of spaces for seniors.

These challenges and others have brought about critical changes in the profession through greater educational preparation, increased technical skills, broader knowledge requirements, and the measurement of professional competency via testing. Thus, today's professional interior designer works in a profession raised to a higher level than that of the stereotypical decorator. Interior design in the 21st century is much more than selecting colors and arranging furniture.

Helping you understand this exciting creative profession and career is the purpose of this second edition. This award-winning book has been revised and updated to include new information on sustainable design, aging in place, and interior design on the global stage, as well as other topics and comments from dozens of additional practitioners at many levels in their career. Numerous new designer profiles with examples of their project work have been added throughout the book.

Additional highlights to the second edition begin in Chapter 1, which provides an overview of the profession of interior design with a brief look at its history and such considerations as licensing, and other general topics. A new section discusses the role of interior designers and poses the question "What do interior designers do?" to dozens of practitioners. Chapter 2 describes the educational requirements of interior designers. A section has been added concerning high school preparation to help younger potential practitioners understand what can be done at that level. Chapter 3 looks at the various environments in which interior designers work. For example, some designers work by themselves from home offices, while others work as team members in large design firms—and everything in between. Note that all the information on job seeking such as résumés and portfolios has been moved to this chapter. Chapter 4 offers insights into the opportunities for various specializations in the field through interviews with practitioners currently working in them. This chapter also includes additional information and comments from designers about the importance of sustainable design and design for seniors. Chapter 5 describes the activities that occur between the inception of a project and its completion. It also discusses working relationships with allied professionals and the project management process. Chapter 6 presents an overview of the business side of the profession. This chapter briefly discusses how interior designers find clients through marketing activities, the importance of contracts in defining proposed services, and how interior designers earn revenue. Chapter 7 is a compilation of comments from practitioners on what they feel is the future of the interior design profession.

Indeed, I think you will find what practitioners have to say interesting and exciting. Included are quotes and commentaries by nearly 100 professionals who are practicing interior design or have been involved in this exciting profession in other ways. Interior designers in many specialties and career stages have provided insights to help you discover what this profession is like. Their responses to questions and points of view comprise a special feature found within and at the end of each chapter. This feature is unique among career books and will help you understand what interior design is like from people doing professional work every day.

The initials that follow the names of many interior designers represent the appellations of professional organizations and are included because attaining professional association membership is an important milestone for professional interior designers, as it is with any design professional. The following list provides a key to identifying these organizations:

<b>AIA—American Institute of Architects</b>	<b>IFMA—International Facility Management Association</b>
<b>ARIDO—Association of Registered Interior Designers of Ontario</b>	<b>IIDA—International Interior Design Association</b>
<b>ASID—American Society of Interior Designers</b>	<b>ISP—Institute of Store Planners</b>
<b>CAPS—Certified Aging in Place Specialist</b>	<b>LEED-AP—Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design—Accredited Professional</b>
<b>CID—Certified Interior Designer</b>	<b>NCARB—National Council of Architectural Registration Boards</b>
<b>CMG—Color Marketing Group</b>	<b>NKBA—National Kitchen and Bath Association</b>
<b>IDC—Interior Designers of Canada</b>	<b>RIBA—Royal Institute of British Architects</b>
<b>IDEA—Interior Design Educators Council</b>	<b>RID—Registered Interior Designer</b>
<b>IES—Illuminating Engineers Society</b>	<b>USGBC—United States Green Building Council</b>
<b>IFDA—International Furnishings and Design Association</b>	

If an appellation begins with *F*, as in *FASID*, the member has earned a fellowship, which is the highest national honor of his or her association. Also note that some designers are required to place their state code before the *CID* or *RID* designations. An example is *KYCID* for Kentucky Certified Interior Designer.

Updated selected references in “Interior Design References” at the end of the book provide further reading on the topics covered in this book. “Interior Designers” in these back pages provides contact information for the various professional organizations and designers mentioned in the text.

I hope you will find this second edition of *Becoming an Interior Designer* a valuable source for learning about the exciting career of professional interior designer. This creative, multidisciplinary profession is a satisfying way to express your talent while providing functional and aesthetic solutions to a client’s projects. Because the field offers so many avenues of work, you can find a niche that is stimulating and satisfying to you as it has been for the thousands who have come before you. These are exciting times for the interior design profession. I welcome you to it!

—Christine M. Piotrowski, *FASID*, *IIDA*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the many interior designers, educators, and other design professionals who have contributed material to this book. Many of them I have known for many years. They graciously shared their insights, experiences, and passions about the profession as well as their project photos and drawings for this book. All these professionals are listed at the back of the book under “Interior Designers.”

I also want to thank several people at John Wiley & Sons for their assistance and guidance. Of course, special thanks go to my editor, John Czarnecki, for patiently seeing this book to completion. I want to acknowledge Raheli Millman and Sadie Abuhoff for their assistance on the second edition and Lauren Olesky for her assistance on the first. Lastly, I want to thank my long-time friend Amanda Miller for encouraging me to do this book in the first place.

# 1 An Introduction to the Interior Design Profession

---

We spend over 90 percent of our day in interior spaces. Despite this, most people take interiors for granted, barely noticing the furniture, colors, textures, and other elements—let alone the form of the space—of which they are made. Sometimes, of course, the design of the interior does catch our attention. Maybe it's the pulsing excitement of a casino, the rich paneling of an expensive restaurant, or the soothing background of a religious facility.

As you are reading this book, you obviously have an interest in interiors and interior design. It might be because you have always enjoyed rearranging the furniture in your home. Maybe you like to draw imaginative floor plans for houses. It could be that a relative or friend is a contractor and you have been involved in the actual construction of a building in some way. Perhaps you saw a program on television and it inspired you to learn more about the profession.

The interior design profession is a lot more than what you see portrayed on various television programs. The profession of interior design has been defined by educators and professionals. This widely accepted definition is provided to help you understand what the profession is all about:

Interior design is a multi-faceted profession in which creative and technical solutions are applied within a structure to achieve a built interior environment. These solutions are functional, enhance the quality of life and culture of the occupants, and are aesthetically attractive. Designs are created in response to and coordinated with the building shell, and acknowledge the physical location and social context of the project. Designs must adhere to code and regulatory requirements and encourage the principles of environmental sustainability. The interior design process follows a systematic and coordinated methodology, including research, analysis and integration of knowledge into the creative process, whereby the needs and resources of the client are satisfied to produce an interior space that fulfills the project goals.<sup>1</sup>