EPilogue: The Role of the Johnson Controls Institute for Environmental Quality in Architecture

"I'm so tired of hearing that the Company has decided to change the network access, or that the Company didn't order enough chairs, or that the Company hasn't settled on a protocol for managing weekend access to the building. Isn't there some human somewhere that can take responsibility for this stuff and get it fixed?" -- a department supervisor commenting on the building commissioning process.

These five tasks -- to gather knowledge, to conduct and coordinate research, to bring key people together, to facilitate collaborative pursuits, and to educate a new body of professionals -- are directly related to the mission of the Johnson Controls Institute for Environmental Quality in Architecture. Some of the current projects of the Institute reflect this comprehensive view of environmental quality.

In order to gather the best knowledge available on various environmental quality problems, disseminate it, and try to integrate it, the Institute is investigating systematic
differences in private vs. public sector building costs and development processes for the Wisconsin Department of Facilities Management. We are also exploring the creation of a publicly accessible information network to promote increased knowledge about environmental quality. And, of course, this white paper is an effort at integrating the current state of knowledge about environmental quality in the workplace.

In order to continue to coordinate and conduct research on the gaps in our knowledge, we are progressing with three active research projects: a longitudinal study of office building responsiveness to changes in organizational and social demands; a pilot study of the concepts behind personal environmental control systems, their effects on occupant satisfaction, and their ramifications for general HVAC design; and the development of impact analysis methodologies to examine new construction from a community-wide perspective.

In order to bring key people together in forums where they can brainstorm and create new systemic environmental quality ideas, the Institute and the American Institute of Architects are co-sponsoring a Taliesin Institute discussion of healthy and productive buildings. This two day meeting will be part of the highly successful AIA video conference series which was viewed by over 10,000 professionals in 1993. The Institute will also sponsor a weekend retreat at the Wingspread Center in September for leaders in the environmental quality field to share their work and their ideas.

In order to go into the field and facilitate collaborative pursuits of healthy workplaces, the Institute is developing collaborative field research with the Wisconsin building industry on the process of constructing environmentally responsive buildings. This research includes designers, contractors and clients as well as our research staff, in order to ensure a broad representation of goals and criteria.

Finally, in order to educate new groups of professionals who understand the complex system of workplace creation, and who are willing to take on the new kind of collaborative stance necessary to ensure its success, the Institute is developing a traveling exhibit on sustainability and environmentally responsive architecture for the AIA; is engaged in curriculum development for programming, design, and management of environmental quality; and is creating a series of continuing education courses to promote awareness of environmental quality among current design practitioners.