

# CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY GRAEME MARTIN

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THE LAST 15 to 20 years have witnessed a rapid escalation, in both personal and professional life, not only in the rate of change but also in the direction of change. The introduction of transistors in computers in the 1970s; the introduction of integrated circuits and microcomputers in the 1980s, making them available to most offices; the changes in technology in our professions; the questioning of valuation practice following the 1974 property market collapse; and the increase in professional negligence claims are but a few examples. In this context, the following paper presented by Graeme Martin in Kuala Lumpur seeks to examine the need for professional development and allied resources, the role of professional bodies and educational institutions and the move towards mandatory professional development.

## Defining professionalism

The following criteria for defining a profession have been identified –

knowledge: the knowledge pertinent to a professional field which has been subjected to disciplined analysis, tested and is capable of being extended further by systematic research;

(ii) competent application: to be able to apply the knowledge to a class of practical problems;

(iii) social responsibility: the monetary rewards attending successful performance, though varying widely in and among professions, are not valued primarily for their own sake; there are also the motives of altruism, community interest and enlightened self-interest;

(iv) self-control: the membership of a profession should have an effective means of setting standards of conduct, influencing behaviour and disciplining poor performance;

(v) community sanction: as a consequence of the above the individuals and segments of society served by a profession grant its practitioners respect, authority and considerable

freedom within which to pursue their practice.

## The need for professionals to keep up-to-date

Professional persons have a responsibility to their profession and the community to keep up-to-date in the knowledge and technology relevant to the discipline. If they fail in this duty they risk –

(i) not being able to provide clients with the most efficient and effective service;

(ii) losing a portion or all of their professional practice due to more competent members of the profession being better equipped to undertake the work;

(iii) as a profession, not being able to

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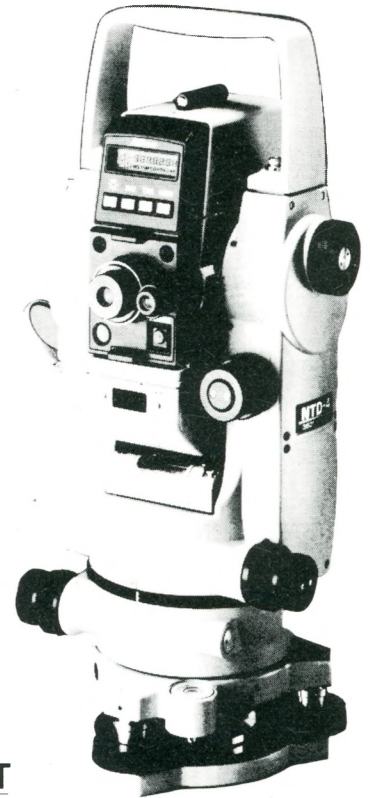
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take advantage of new professional areas, which are an extension of existing practice. Other professions will develop the necessary expertise in these new specialized fields and include the area as part of their professional practice. To quote an example, CASLE professions must retain the initiative in marine resource management and development;

(iv) exposure to professional negligence claims. The incidence of professional negligence claims has risen

alarmingly in Australia, as it has in most developed countries, over the last 10 years;

(v) having criticism levelled at the profession by the community. The status and recognition of professional bodies is not easily earned. Because of their education, training and earning capacity, professional people are often viewed as an elite and fair game for attack by the press and the public. If a member of a professional body is found wanting in terms of knowledge, competence

or ethics then the self-control and community sanction given to the professional body will be undermined and government may seek to take control of the professional area.

### Review of professional development education

Given the above, there is a pressing need for professional bodies to require adequate entry standards and strongly support professional development programmes. The level of educational courses which are acceptable to the professional body cannot be overstated. Courses should be broadly based and have an objective of education, rather than training; otherwise professional development programmes in a number of areas will have to provide bridging education to enable practitioners to understand the professional development programme topic.

Having accepted the need for professional development, how is this being accomplished? Its most regular presentation has been by way of professional journals which are published at regular intervals and generally provided to every member of the professional body whether they want them or not as part of their membership. The results of a survey carried out on the readership of the Australian Institute of Valuers professional journal, which had a response rate from the total membership of 51 per cent, indicated about 60 per cent of those surveyed generally read some of it, less than 10 per cent read all of it and about one quarter usually flicked through it. Members were asked to rank the content of the journal in order of importance; and in descending order these were papers from seminars, court cases, articles from overseas journals, letters to the editor and personalities of the profession.

### The effectiveness of study methods

Independent study methods such as professional journals have the benefit of convenience, freeing members from physical attendance, and low cost. The effectiveness of independent study can be increased by audio and video cassettes. Seminars give participants the opportunity of clarifying issues by asking questions and contributing to the discussion through comment. In addition there is the benefit, which is difficult to quantify, of the informal interaction between members during the seminar. Smaller discussion workshop groups provide not only a better learning environment but also a forum for answering new situa-

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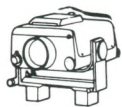
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technology, making practical use of the latest advances in many fields of science and technology and because of the simple fact that we deal with real estate and the large amounts of money it commands, have an awareness of the latest intricacies of business practice. We have always been arbiters. Whenever a surveyor marks a property limit, by whatever means he has arrived at its location, as far as the rest of the world is concerned that surveyor is an arbitrator. Gathering information has always been a surveyors job but the amount gathered and available 150 years ago is as nothing compared with the absolutely overwhelming amount which can be gathered today. It may well be that surveyors as a group are the best trained and equipped to acquire, organize, store, retrieve and present this information in the form most convenient to the ultimate user. Surely this is where a large part of our future lies if we are prepared to seize the opportunity. Certainly our education and training make us well suited for the "number crunching" aspect of the process. However, I suspect we have to be prepared to learn, adapt and expand our expertise when it comes to presentation. Traditionally surveyors have presented their results in the form of a fine plan or map, fieldnotes and report, but with an evermore sophisticated clientele we may have to face the fact that one day this form may be quite redundant, indeed hardcopy of any type may be redundant - who knows? The trick is to hang loose, keep ourselves

well informed and seize opportunities where and when they arise. In this way we shall maintain our place in the front ranks of discovery and exploration and the development of society. Never was this more obvious than during the recent F.I.G. Congress in Toronto. Surveyors around the world are making an enormous contribution ranging from the definition of the ownership of small isolated properties to the gathering and presentation of scientific data on a global basis. So take heart, though maybe unheralded, as a profession we always were and still are explorers, organizers, diplomats, arbiters and gatherers of information.

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Having mentioned F.I.G. I realize that I cannot possibly allow this issue of the Ontario Land Surveyor to go by without saying how enormously proud I felt of our own Association during the recent Congress in Toronto. I unashamedly basked in the reflected glory from so many of our own members who were involved in both the organizational and academic aspects of the conference. I could hardly believe my great good fortune to have picked this particular year to be president. This was especially true when we entertained representatives from the other provinces (members of the Canadian Council of Land Surveyors) at our new office one evening of the Congress. In addition to Council, our Association staff were also all present and made a "class act" out of the whole affair. My heartfelt thanks to everyone concerned. ●

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tions facing the profession and, in the latter situation, teach people to work in teams, to set goals and solve problems.

### The role of the professional body

The professional body has the responsibility of setting the initial academic and practical experience requirements for entry into the profession. For the reasons outlined above the profession has a responsibility to impose on its members the requirement to keep abreast with developments in their professional area and to require a high standard of ethical conduct. In areas where professionals are licensed these standards of performance and conduct should be above those required by statute. To enable these standards to be attained it is necessary for the profession to either provide professional development itself or determine the needs for professional development and arrange for a programme to be developed by an educational institution or other organization. In addition to general professional development and in the larger professional bodies the establishment of specialist groups to address particular problems of the specialist area.

### The role of educational institutions

In addition to, and working with, the professional bodies, the education institutions should be playing a major role in the continuing education of professional people. They have the advantage of human and physical resources and established courses which can be used as a base for developing programmes; and they would be in a position to anticipate and identify new areas which will require professional development education. Where academic institutions are involved in professional development there are tremendous benefits to students undertaking the formal courses at the institution, its staff and the profession. This interaction is sometimes hampered by staff being fully committed to their existing teaching requirements, administration difficulties and professional bodies not clearly identifying professional development programmes and seeking assistance.

### Mandatory professional development

The introduction of voluntary professional development is taking place in professions on a worldwide basis. However, is this sufficient? At most professional meetings the members who will attend can be predicted: some never do;

others are nearly always present. Because of those who are not prepared to undertake professional development - and they may have completed a lesser course, no longer recognized, as the method of entry to the profession - there is a need to encourage or even force members to do so. If the professional body does not take a responsible stand in this matter the profession is falling down in providing service to the community, not meeting the criteria of a profession and not supporting those members who do undertake professional development. Nor will the profession as a whole attain the standing it deserves due to the actions of incompetent members. It is considered initially that the carrot rather than the stick should be used; but in the longer term a form of mandatory professional development should be introduced.

### Conclusion

As society changes we need new theories, new people in leadership positions and new ways of doing things. All professionals have some nonsense and some unreasonable conservatism which increases as the profession matures. There is a need for reformers whose role is to propose new theories and principles and to resist some prevailing bad theory and bad practice.