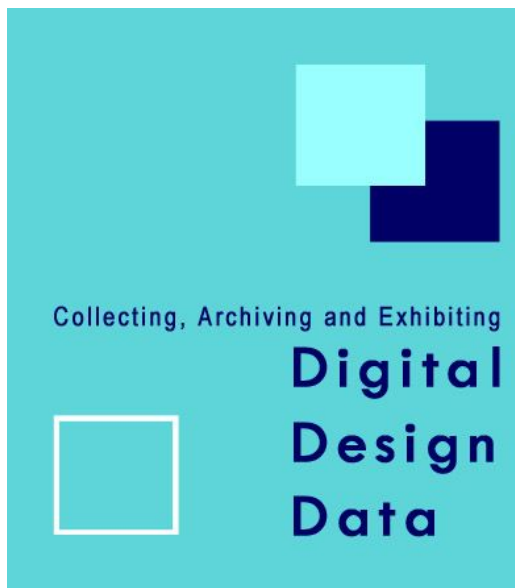# Digital Design Data

KFA White Paper

The Curatorial Department of Architecture of The Art Institute of Chicago contains one of the foremost collections of architectural drawings in the nation. In early 2003, this Department initiated a major study designed to make an original contribution to the understanding of the collection, archiving, and uses of digital design data produced by architects and industrial designers. The results of this study redefined the collection parameters of the Department of Architecture.

Additionally, this initiative paved the way for other museums and archives to replicate or adapt this model, as they grapple with the inevitable impact of new techniques and technology. Finally, the report provided recommendations to design firms on archiving practices.

With funding from the Schiff Foundation and the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in

the Fine Arts, the Department of Architecture selected KFA to conduct the study. The study's Advisory Committee consisted of senior representatives of leading archival institutions, universities with advanced programs in computer-aided design, and technology vendors, as well as architects and industrial designers, many of whose work was already included in the Department of Architecture's permanent collection.

The study addressed three major areas:

Collecting: How prevalent is the use of digital design tools and what kinds of digital data are designers creating? KFA approached this topic through in-depth case studies of nine projects at varying scales (industrial to urban design) at different firms. We also conducted an international survey to validate the case study findings and received responses from over 100 design firms worldwide.

Archiving: What are the steps and techniques necessary for a museum or archival institution to receive, catalog, manage, preserve and present digital design data? The report from this phase covered the entire process, from data preparation in the design office and accession by the institution, through long-term digital preservation techniques and making the data accessible to the public.

Exhibiting: KFA researched the few exhibitions of digital design data to date and explored how institutions and educators are using digital "exhibits," in museums and online, to inform. We also organized a charette to design an exhibition of digital design data.

The report was published electronically in July 2004 on the Art Institute of Chicago's website.

Alan Joch explored the scope and significance of the Collecting, Archiving and Exhibiting Digital Design Data Study in the May 2004 issue of Architectural Record.

http://www.artic.edu/collections/digital-design-data