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This is a compilation of the attendee chat from the LAF webinar “Practice-Based Research Now: Perspectives, Paradigms, and Possibilities” held on December 4, 2024. The webinar recording and more resources can be accessed [here](#). The chat has been edited for ease of reading, with some comments removed for redundancy and clarity.

From LAF Support : Research Now” article in Landscape Journal (open-access):

<https://lj.uwpress.org/content/43/2/87>

From LAF Support : Robert Ryan’s 2023 “Research in Landscape Architecture Design Firms” article (requires subscription to access full text): <https://lj.uwpress.org/content/42/2/129>

From LAF Support : LAF’s 2022 webinar on Design Research:

<https://www.lafoundation.org/resources/2022/09/design-research>

From Naomi Sachs: I’m not a practitioner anymore, I teach landscape architecture at a university. In addition to Studio I teach Research Methods and it’s so important for students to understand that (and how) practitioners use (and produce) research!

From Chris Samoray: Thanks for sharing the journal article and participating in this webinar! The relationship between research and practice is an exciting and needed discussion. It seems like truly integrating research into practice would only strengthen the field as a climate forward profession. Yet, research can be the first part of the budget to be cut.

I thought the comment earlier about not always being sure where to start with research was interesting. This question relates to the direction your firm is moving in research efforts.

To what extent are more landscape architecture firms interested in developing budgets for dedicated research divisions, perhaps even headed by people trained in research methods and research design beyond what a traditional landscape architecture training might offer?

From Shaun Rosier: As a thought to throw out there, I have found the use of the phrase ‘practice-based research’ as far as LAF uses it (or perhaps North American LA at large) to be somewhat out of sync with how arts and design disciplines have used it elsewhere in the world for quite some time.

Elsewhere, ‘practice’ would tend to refer to one’s designerly or artistic practices (modes and ways of working) rather than professional practice. Perhaps a stronger and clearer label for the kinds of work discussed here might be something like ‘research-in/through-practice’.

I think this would really help to differentiate and strengthen this notion of design research which seems to focus on a traditional scientific approach, distinguishing it from other approaches that focus on sharpening and developing a designer spatial intelligence(s) and ways of knowing/making.



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From Salonee Chadha: Very interesting to hear about the impact assessment research - small firms can definitely an inroad for smaller firms!

From Grant Thompson - RDG: Grant Thompson, Landscape Architect @ RDG Planning & Design. Former university researcher in horticulture and soil ecology. Seeking to encourage more research in our firm. gthompson@rdgusa.com

From Meghan Mick: I'm a former practitioner now on an R1 university's tenure track and am interested in partnering with practitioners to direct my research towards more direct, applied goals.

From Grant Thompson - RDG: Sidebar for paywalled articles: You can email the author and request a copy. They are usually happy to provide one since sharing their work is in their interest.

From Michelle Lazarz: As a smaller firm, we have a few folks interested in local plant-based research projects and test plots within our climate, and were curious if anyone has recommendations for sources of grant funding for ecological/plant based research that other small landscape firms have been successful in winning the grant? We found a few but these were targeted more towards non-profits and educational groups?

From Jeroen de Vries: At the LE:NOTRE Institute we are mainly focused on Participatory Action Learning and Research with a set of partners who are working in living labs with local communities, cities or other NGOs. this is mainly within the framework of Erasmus grants of the EU. for instance AESOp4food for sustainable food planning, <https://wiki.landscape-portal.org/index.php?title=AESOP4FOOD>

From Sonja Vangjeli : Do you know any good precedents of practice research mechanisms/programs pursued by local government agencies/municipalities, either in house, or through partnerships with practitioners and/or academics? I am trying to do this in Toronto as an LA working in the city's Urban Design, but often facing challenges in terms of logistics/mechanisms.

From Kathleen Wolf: I retired recently from U of WA doing social science research in urban forestry/urban greening. Concerning students, it seems an essential starting point is to understand what is "research". Is it original enquiry, or is it screening/review of existing metrics/models being applied to a design project? How to more clearly articulate a typology of research? BTW, I have MLA in Land Arch, Ph.D. in Enviro. Psych.

From Maria Landoni: Having one foot on LA and another in horticulture, and with a strong interest in biodiversity, my research curiosities are at that intersection where the practice of design will have to morph into maintenance practices at the large urban scale >> thinking of clients, budgets, required training. How can restoration ecology/management tools can be incorporated in the urban context.

From Grant Thompson - RDG: This research paper on soil decompaction in urban soils was an academic/practices/NGO collaboration. Research question and interpretation were highly



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influenced by practice experience that was unknown to the agricultural agronomist collaborator. <https://www.jswnonline.org/content/79/4/169>

From Cyrus Khan : Question for the panelists: How have you successfully integrated research-related tasks into project contracts to ensure they are automatically billable? I'd love to hear about your experiences, strategies, or approaches—whether through specific clauses, fee structures, or project management practices. Your insights would be greatly appreciated!

From Jeroen de Vries: There are examples of cities in the Netherlands, and these consist mainly of partnerships of universities, NGOs, and offices. Such as in Amsterdam on water cooling bodies: <https://www.ams-institute.org/urban-challenges/resilient-cities/cooling-water-bodies-cities/>

From Jeroen de Vries: In my office I never managed to have the research we really wanted to do billable, there fore we applied to separate research grants for specific subjects.

From Wai Kin Soo: Is there an effort at LAF in developing peer reviewed and approved toolkits for K-12 curriculum to perform experiments in the field, eg species richness before and after turf replacement/rebate project with native palettes? There is a lot to be said when we engage the next generation to embed research in their daily lives to push for high performance spaces in their own neighborhoods. Neighborhood landscape architects and designers can use these toolkits to partner with local school districts.

From Megan Barnes (LAF): Response on Outcomes from Lisa Hwang: "I see the ultimate goal of practice-based research as better understanding and improving our practice and project work, so "outcomes" is really the driver of what we do. We want our projects to always be improving, and we need research to do that. We are always asking "why are we doing it this way" and "can we do it better this time". Many of our microgrant participants have gone on to integrate their research findings directly into project work, examples ranging from smaller scale implementation such as what plantings perform best at residential building entries where pet waste is an issue. Or on a larger scale, some microgrants have spawned further investments to create robust in-house best practices guides or fully incorporate new digital technologies into project workflow.

As far as what effects research has had on the business, that is an interesting question, and one that I can provide a few anecdotal examples. Certainly, the investment in an individual's idea is valued and provides a creative outlet for staff. It gives them the reins on a topic of their choosing, which is great because they are the designers entrenched in the day-to-day project work and can best understand what questions are significant and valuable to their projects. As far as broader effects on the business, we have seen that research opportunities resonate in a recruitment setting, especially with interns and recent graduates who are being exposed to research, performance-based design, and sustainability in their coursework and might want to continue that in practice. We also see the notion of research, curiosity, and inquiry as topics that resonate with our clients as well, as they are always wanting to see new ideas and innovative solutions in their projects



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– though funding those pursuits is a challenge as research is rarely a special line item in a contract. We discuss this topic a lot internally and in this roundtable group, and funding continues to be a challenge in pursuing wider research projects that might be larger in scope.”

From Emily Milliman: What are some of the platforms that these booklets, apps, etc. can be found on?

From Jeroen de Vries: In participatory action research an important outcome is a transformation also in the community, the local landscape, the landscape process.

From Megan Barnes to Emily Milliman: SWA XL Lab's website has a lot of great examples

From Chris Samoray: echoing what Grant said above, definitely reach out to researchers if a paper is behind a paywall. Also, Sci-Hub may or may not be a useful way to find academic papers behind paywalls and it may or may not even have an extension in citation managers like Zotero.

From Ming-Han Li: Has your firm hired any academics who have a PhD to lead a research team with a significant budget to develop research initiatives and part of the initiatives is to enhance community engagement?

From Jeroen de Vries: On research gate there are a lot of open access papers

From Kathleen Wolf: Also try Google Scholar for article search.

From Gandong Cai: It is great to hear that firms are establishing mini grants to support individual researchers these days. One observation is that, sometime the individual research interest is not aligned with the firm's broader goal. Any suggestion in finding the balance between the diversity of ideas and the benefit they bring to the firm? The research (I am interested)-in-practice vs. The (useful) research-in-(our) practice.

From Grant Thompson - RDG: Second Jeroen's ResearchGate note. Set alerts for content, follow researchers, and request work.

From Norman Yatabe: Following up on Jeroen's comment, have any panelist worked with any U.S. universities on long-term research or monitoring initiatives? If so, how did that work out?

From Kathleen Wolf: Re: academic mode of dissemination. A key element is peer-review. I've had peer review comments that raised important questions about a research project, and/or improved our communication approach. Is peer-review an aspect of design-based research?

From Grant Thompson - RDG: I did research work with Baltimore LTER network while in grad school. Not since returning to practice, but still have that network. LTERs in Phoenix and Minneapolis would be good other resources for urban work.



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From Jeroen de Vries: In our wiki there is also a ppt on participatory action learning and research: https://wiki.landscape-portal.org/index.php/Reading_list#Background_information

From Desirae Wood: This has been so helpful and uplifting - thank you for sharing everyone! Excited to keep learning as a group :)

From Joey Hays: Thanks so much for sharing and excited to hear more about different models in future sessions.

From Aminah McNult : Thank you so much for this inspiring presentation and community!

From Allison Harvey: @Cyrus Kahn - a couple years ago, we restructured the scope in our contracts with language that commits to a base level of sustainability research/analysis on all of our projects because it was a commitment to our design process. Additionally we have a more open-ended scope to address research that requires a custom approach to assessment, analysis, and implementation

From Salonee Ghosh: This has been a really interesting session. Thank you for sharing!

From Emily Milliman: Thank you all for a wonderful conversation!

From Hayley Johnson: Thanks for all the valuable insight!!

From Gandong Cai: Thank you so much!

From Jeroen de Vries: thanks a lot for sharing!

From Andrew Gosnell: Appreciated this great discussion, very encouraging. Thank you!

From Linda Corkery: Terrific webinar and excellent follow up conversation to the LJ article -- many thanks!

From Chris Samoray: thanks all!

From carles martinez-almoyna: Thank you all for organising this! :))

From Amina Mohamed: thanks so much!

From Michal Russo: good to know I'm in such good company.

From Norman Yatabe: Great topic, thanks!

From Caroline Schoeller: Thank you!

From Soheil Jabbari: Thank you.

From John Frey: thank you!