



Bringing Home the Bacon

By Jeri Ripley King



Remember the Kevin Bacon game? Loosely based on the theory that any two people on Earth are about six acquaintance links apart, the basis for the Bacon game is that any actor may be linked to Kevin Bacon by having worked in a movie with him or having a link to someone who has. You get the gist of this; movie actors are closely connected. But, according to the six degrees of separation theory, so is everyone else. We don't have to look far in educational facilities departments to start noticing the connections within and among our departments, institutions, and beyond.

APPA facilitates our connectedness by providing opportunities for us to share the "who, what, how, and why" of our work. We meet people from other institutions and business partner firms. We learn by talking with each other, attending educational sessions at conferences, reading, and researching topics of interest. By exploring new ideas, we share what worked for us and what didn't.

Through this, we hone our connections. The more connected we are, the more we know about educational facilities management. The more we can tap additional information quickly when we need it, the better we can serve our institutions.

OUR BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

APPA members have been collecting, sharing, and refining our knowledge about educational facilities for nearly 100 years. We have amassed a vast amount of information that includes books and

publications, including the *Facilities Manager* magazine and Thought Leaders Series, Center for Facilities Research projects, Facilities Performance Indicators surveys and reports, the Body of Knowledge (BOK), and *Inside APPA* e-newsletter.

In recent years, much of our written knowledge has been made available via APPA's website. Our searchable database now offers more than 3,300 articles and case studies. We are adding about 100 projects of this type per year. Sixteen peer-reviewed research projects have been completed since the launch of the Center for Facilities Research (CFaR) in 2002. At this time, we are averaging about two peer-reviewed research projects per year. In addition, the online Body of Knowledge that replaced the four-volume *Facilities Management* manual several years ago, continues to be expanded and updated.

Keeping a watchful eye on our written knowledge, videos, podcasts, and recorded webinars is APPA's Information and Research Committee, a group of about a dozen members that includes regional representatives, at-large committee members, and APPA staff. They play a key role in fostering the growth and dissemination of APPA's collective body of knowledge.

With much of our expanding written knowledge available on the APPA

website, the Information and Research Committee has wrestled with how best to organize that information for easy access. Last year, the installation of an improved search engine started helping users find things more quickly. More improvements of that ilk are planned. However, an even more fundamental change is currently underway.

The Information and Research Committee and APPA staff are also working to connecting our online BOK to other areas of information in the APPA website. The BOK is a reference for information in APPA's four core areas:

general administration and management; operations and maintenance; energy, utilities, and environmental stewardship; and planning, design, and construction. To date, the BOK has been a separate entity

BOK Body of Knowledge

from the other amassed articles, case studies, research projects, and resources APPA makes available to its members. Now, it will enjoy a closer connection. The first steps already have been taken; simple links have been established to allow it to serve as a portal, sort of a one-stop shop, for access to the BOK chapters, Facilities Performance Indicators survey and report, the *Facilities Manager* magazine, and the Center for Facilities Research.

Imagine the synergies that can be created as we increase the connectivity of our information database. This means

that, in the future, when you are trying to find out about best practices, trends, or elements within a specific topic area, you will be able to go to APPA's Body of Knowledge for information and also gain access to the various parts of APPA's website that may also have additional information available on the topic.

It also means that it will become easier for you to identify a topic that has not yet been covered. It may be a topic that you want to explore and then share what you learn, a case study about what worked or didn't, or a topic that you recommend for consideration by the Center for Facilities Research or for *Facilities Manager* that will engage others in the quest for knowledge.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

As exciting as it is to be on the leading edge of this drive for increasing our

knowledge and expanding the connectivity of our information and research, there is one more step underway that is extremely important. With the current dues cycle for 2013-14, the online Body of Knowledge will become a member benefit.

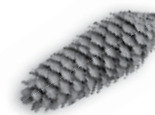
In the past, an annual subscription to the BOK made it possible for all within an institution to use this source of information. One subscription allowed all within a member institution access. However, if the dues payer did not opt to purchase a subscription, it meant that everyone within that member institution would not have access, thereby excluding connections by those in the facilities department, administrators, faculty, and students who might someday choose to go into the facilities field.

Beginning with the new fiscal year effective April 1, this valuable source of educational facilities information will be

available to everyone at a member institution. It can be used by students, faculty, and staff to expand their connections, elevate their understanding, and grow the profession. There will continue to be an annual subscription fee for nonmember institutions and organizations.

APPA connects each of us, and our knowledge, through networking, information sharing, and celebration of achievement. It is within this context that our participation matters the most. In effect, APPA reduces our degrees of separation to enhance our knowledge in ways that will enable our success as educational facilities professionals. ☞

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