

Designing Water's Future



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SUMMER CAMP



#### THE ASPEN DESIGN CHALLENGE

The Aspen Design Challenge is a call to students, worldwide, to use their creative talent and strategic design skills to address a crucial global problem.

The Challenge is issued as part of the Aspen Design Summit, an international conference held in Aspen, Colorado. The Summit brings together leaders from business, the public sector and nonprofit organizations; experts working with the UN's Millennium Development Goals; and individuals and agencies from the developing world.

The Summit is a collaboration of AIGA, the professional association for design in the United States and INDEX:, a global, non-profit network organization that is dedicated to changing global mindsets by exploring and showing how design can improve life for people.

At the Aspen Design Summit, participants are actively involved in working groups led by leading designers to develop actionable solutions to global problems. One element of the Summit is to challenge students from around the world to contribute to this work.



## THE 2008–2009 CHALLENGE TO STUDENTS:

*Use news, stories, facts, and personal experience to develop actionable design solutions that will raise awareness of the emerging global water crisis.*

The brief and guideline for an international competition will inform students and faculty of the opportunity to participate in the fall of 2008. A finalized brief will be delivered in August (*along with a final schedule and submission guidelines*). This draft brief is offered to help faculty plan their fall courses to include this challenge.

- Faculty will be asked to assign the brief for workshops during the fall term.
- Entries will be due in December 2008.
- A jury will meet to review the submissions in January.

From February to April, selected finalists will be asked to develop their ideas further for presentation to a gathering of designers, scientists, journalists, business and NGO leaders in Aspen and selected projects will be published.

Forty students will be invited to INDEX: Summer Camp, a collaborative workshop in Copenhagen for three weeks in August 2009, to refine concepts, with the results to be presented at the World Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen in the fall of 2009.

### DESIGNING WATER'S FUTURE

*“The consequences for humanity are grave. Water scarcity threatens economic and social gains and is a potent fuel for wars and conflict.”*

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON, DECEMBER 2007

*“Design is a plan for action.”*

CHARLES EAMES

This year's project, *Designing Water's Future*, emerged from a session at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in January, 2008.

This project is a collaboration with the two organizations that initiated that session:

**Circle of Blue** – an international network of journalists, scholars and citizens that connects humanity to the global freshwater crisis.

**COLLINS:** – a communication design and innovation firm based in New York City.



At the World Economic Forum, a select group of global thought leaders noted:

- The global water crisis presents a communications design challenge of urgent immensity
- New mythologies and metaphors are needed to understand this crisis
- Current public understanding about the use and management of water (*especially in developed countries*) is narrowly defined by outmoded experiences and assumptions
- Powerful, fact-based narratives are needed to engage and inform diverse, international audiences of varying demographics and geographies
- The water crisis needs a visual identity, a mantra, new mythologies and stories carried by innovative vehicles to inform and inspire audiences that may be separated by demographics, education, and immediate need
- We currently lack the full scope of raw field data and the presentation tools needed to make it understandable and actionable for policy makers and solutions
- The crisis may be complex in its global implications, but the solutions are “*local, local, local*”

The project will engage design and business students around the world in addressing these issues.

#### OBJECTIVE

*Designing Water's Future* is aimed at generating exceptionally creative and original design thinking to raise awareness of the emerging global water crisis – and to do so in ways that inspire people to act. Reaching beyond all boundaries, the initiative seeks to reframe how we think about water, how we manage it, how we save it. It will address the design problem of the crisis, redefining the outdated, limiting cultural mythologies that have become obstacles to progress on one of the world's gravest threats.

#### THE PROBLEM

From Atlanta to Australia to Ghana, water is the axis issue that intersects the world's challenges: from health, poverty and security to climate, energy, immigration and environment. Even financial and commodities markets are affected. We're just beginning to grasp the scope of the challenges and their intersection points. Many solutions exist, yet policymakers and the public must first be aware of the complexities and then be called to act, from implementing water management measures in Las Vegas to bringing safe water to rural Africa.

The water saga is complex and requires a 360-degree, multidimensional design approach that includes powerful, fact-based, relevant narratives, accessible information and coordinated channels for action.



Globally, the UN estimates that two-thirds of the world's population will live in areas of water stress within the next 20 years, and that 5 million people—mostly children—die each year due to contaminated drinking water.

In the developing world, solutions may mean drilling wells for children in a Ghanaian village or applying new or traditional filtering technologies for families in Bangladesh.

In the developed world, drought, climate, pollution, agricultural misuse and failing infrastructures beleaguer even the most advanced civilizations.

For example, while the American Southeast is gripped by the most severe drought in 100 years, even legendary water-rich areas such as the U.S. Great Lakes are struggling to cope with foreboding stresses on water ecosystems.

#### UNDERPINNINGS

*We come from water:* each child born re-enacts the mysteries of life's origins on Earth.

We thrive on water: it is the foundation of our bodies, the wellspring of civilization and commerce, the inspiration for achievement, the symbol of faith, the renewing force of nature. Water is inseparable from every eddy of our existence.

In water-rich places, it is inconceivable to do without it, and water is not given a second thought. In water-scarce areas, it is inconceivable to take it for granted, and the thought of water dominates each day.

The drenched and the dry are united in a continuum of human dependence on water, which is ebbing for all. What differs is the capacity for awareness and the ability to act.

Connecting people to the challenges of the complex global water crisis calls for a new approach that is as pervasive and tenacious as water itself. Water finds a way into, around or through any barrier. Water defies the normal conventions, assumes many forms. It reshapes the world and revitalizes body and spirit. The water dialog must run deep into our human consciousness and our cultures. Water must renew its priority in every aspect of our daily lives if we are to see, think and act in new ways.

We gaze out into the universe and explore distant worlds, seeking signs of life – seeking water. Perhaps the real quest lies not out there, but right here, in the spaces, full of promise, on our own planet made of water.



## OUTCOMES AND SUBMISSION DETAILS

### STATEMENT OF CREATIVE STRATEGY

In no more than 500 words, provide an explanation of your idea and overall thinking.

### VISUAL IDENTITY AND MANIFESTO

Generate comprehensive messaging and communications tools and strategies for water, applicable universally and/or to specific target audiences.

### PRESENTATION

Develop and apply new media, online and traditional communications tools for:

- Distributing the manifesto, the messages and calls to action
- Delivering fact-based narratives and data provided by Circle of Blue, and other sources

### COLLABORATIVE SPACES

Define new approaches for public participation and engagement, from the most tactile to the most virtual. Inspire individuals and communities with bi-directional (*push-pull*) engagement.

### PROCESS

The challenge should be addressed by teams of students, working collaboratively with others of different disciplines. It is expected that the teams will be led by a faculty member or tutor and will demonstrate the following competencies:

- Ability to solve communication problems
- Ability to create and develop visual response
- Ability to collaborate
- Ability to respond to audience contexts
- Understanding of and ability to utilize tools and technology
- Broad understanding of issues
- Ability to work in a global environment
- Ability to construct verbal arguments

The process will engage the team in design thinking—challenging assumptions ruthlessly, using human-centered research to determine the most effective strategies for communicating, and quickly developing prototypes to test effectiveness.



#### SUBMISSION DETAILS

A website for project submissions will be launched in mid-July.

Please visit [www.aiga.org](http://www.aiga.org) for updates.

#### SUPPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS UNDERTAKING THIS PROJECT

This project is supported by a range of resources (*accessed from the Resources link below*). In addition there is a filmed interview (*use link below to view*) involving an expert partner with whom we worked to develop the project, and a designer. This has been made specifically to offer extra support and insight to students working on the project.

**AIGA and Aspen Design Summit** [www.aiga.org/aspensummit](http://www.aiga.org/aspensummit)

**Circle of Blue** [www.circleofblue.org](http://www.circleofblue.org)

**INDEX:** [www.indexaward.dk](http://www.indexaward.dk)

#### QUESTION?

Additionally, we are providing the opportunity for student participants to put questions to the program team at points during the course of working on the project. All questions should be emailed to: [aspenschallenge@aiga.org](mailto:aspenschallenge@aiga.org)



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## RESOURCES ON WATER ISSUES

Thousands of data points online and elsewhere cite core statistics for the water crisis, from cholera deaths to bottled water consumption to river flows. There's also the massive challenge of preserving the supplies and infrastructure in the developed world in the face of climate change and population growth.

Water has a richly informed history, both present and past. There is up-to-date data from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) satellite system. There are also readily available resources documenting the hieroglyphs by which ancient civilizations charted their water sources.

Here are some resources from which to begin exploration of the water crisis. Please share your favorite fonts of information online at (TBD).

### WORLD WATER ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR)  
World Water Assessment Programme (WWAP) | The United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR)

The United Nations World Water Development Report, released every three years in conjunction with the World Water Forum, is the UN's flagship report on water. It is a comprehensive review that gives an overall picture of the state of the world's freshwater resources and aims to provide decision-makers with the tools to implement sustainable use of our water.

### AQUASTAT

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization  
Aquastat provides comprehensive information related to water resources and agricultural water management across the world, with emphasis on countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean.

### WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

Environmental Change and Security Program, "*Navigating Peace*"  
Environmental Change and Security Program: Water ECSP Water Stories

### WILSON CENTER CHINA ENVIRONMENT FORUM

The Wilson Center's Navigating Peace Initiative reframes stale debates and generates fresh thinking on critical water problems.



**PACIFIC INSTITUTE**

[www.worldwater.org](http://www.worldwater.org)

Home of The World's Water series, the biennial report that provides detailed analysis of the most significant trends and events and up-to-date data on water resources and their use. The reports are essential references for water resources specialists, resource economists, planners, students, and anyone concerned with water issues.

Water Conflict Chronology

Water and Climate bibliography

Data tables from The World's Water

**USGS**

Water resources of the United States

Comprehensive collection of real-time and historical water data, ground water and surface water.

**GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP**

The Global Water Partnership reaches deep into local practices of international water management.

**CIRCLE OF BLUE**

WaterNews – the daily source for international water news

“*Reign of Sand*” – reports from the water crisis in Inner Mongolia

“*Tehuacán: Divining Destiny*” – reports from the Mexico valley where water is at the root of culture, mythology, economic hardship and migration.

**GRAPHICS AND BEYOND**

Gapminder, a new way to see global development data

Worldmapper, a new way to see data on a map



THE BIRD IN THE WATERFALL: A NATURAL HISTORY OF OCEANS, RIVERS, AND LAKES

By Jerry Dennis

**Amazon.com:** The Bird in the Waterfall: A Natural History of Oceans, Rivers, and Lakes: Jerry Dennis, Glenn Wolff: Books

Dennis, a frequent contributor to *Smithsonian* and *Wildlife Conservation*, has always been curious about bodies of water. He shares his fascination while discussing why water changes color, how dowsing locates subterranean springs, what causes ocean currents, how a lake freezes, and why rivers meander. Contrary to what seems most logical, rivers meander because flowing water seeks consistency and tries to deepen shallows, fill in deep spots, and smooth out rapids and waterfalls. A delightful book about watery places and the life therein.