

Author wins award for *CMAJ* article on hospital architecture

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McGill University professor [Annmarie Adams](#) has been recognized by Canada's foremost architecture association for her [CMAJ Humanities article](#) on Canadian hospital architecture. She was presented with a President's Medal for Media in Architecture by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada at the 2017 Festival of Architecture in Ottawa May 26.

According to the institute, "This award recognizes storytelling about buildings and cities that promotes understanding of architecture and the role of architects in the daily lives of Canadians." Adams' article in *CMAJ*, which synthesizes the history of Canadian hospital architecture over the past 165 years, is representative of many articles she has published over the past 25 years.

"She helps physicians understand the importance of the buildings in which they work," stated the jury.

Adams, chair of Social Studies of Medicine at McGill, became interested in hospital architecture following her PhD dissertation, which explored doctors, women and healthy houses (and led to her 1996 book *Architecture in the Family Way*). Hospital design is a subject that touches us all, said Adams, and is also a topic of deep interest to Canadians.

"It's rewarding to study something that matters to so many," said Adams. "I strongly believe that architecture shapes everything. Certainly it shapes medicine. The more health care professionals know about design, the better placed they are to make decisions regarding their own and future health care environments."

In Canada, unfortunately, there has been little innovation in hospital design in recent decades. About a dozen hospitals stand out in the history of the building

type, she said, but none was built recently. The only Canadian hospital that "was a game-changer," according to Adams, was McMaster University Health Sciences Cen-

tre, built in 1972. And there doesn't appear to be any new Canadian hospitals on the drawing board that will attract global attention.



Annmarie Adams, author of *CMAJ* article on hospital design, wins prestigious award.

“One of the reasons there is little innovation in hospital architecture today is that the same specialized firms tend to get all the jobs.”

Adams is now working on a biography of Dr. Maude Abbott, one of Canada’s first female medical school graduates. Adams was recently appointed to the department of Social Studies of Medicine, leaving a “full-time gig” at the School of Architecture, where she was a former director. Her new department is “a rather utopian

unit,” she said, with historians, sociologists, anthropologists and biomedical ethics experts.

“As a consequence, I am inspired on a daily basis to see architecture through other disciplines. Also, as a bonus, I get to teach medical students, which is a long-time dream come true.”

Adams plans to continue her study of hospital design. Indeed, she has only scratched the surface of the topic, she said, noting that there are only a handful

of architectural historians in North America working on hospital architecture. “I often wonder why so few historians are drawn to hospital architecture, and I think it’s because the buildings themselves are relatively complicated.”

A media medal was also awarded to the late John Bentley Mays, whose writing on architecture appeared in *The Globe and Mail* for 40 years.

Roger Collier, CMAJ