

BRIEF HISTORY: DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE & BUILDING SCIENCE

Founded in 1956, the Department of Architecture was at first the only Department of the Faculty of Architecture, which later became the Faculty of Art and Architecture of the Royal Technical College of East Africa. In these early days the Qualifying examinations were those of the Royal Institute of British Architects. The East African Institute of Architects (E.A.I.A) kept watch kept watching control in terms of ensuring appropriate professional standards. At the time the establishment and growth of the Faculty library also played a very big role of great importance

A public exhibition of the work of the students in the Faculty was held in June 1960, in the memorial Hall, Nairobi. A public lecture by Arch. Richard Hughes, ARBA was given at the exhibition. The exhibition was attended by 1496 visitors including school children. In 1963, when the Royal College, Nairobi was founded. The Department established its first ever degree course, entry to which was accepted at "O" level. This development was followed by the introduction, for "A" Level candidates of the two degree structure. Bachelor of Arts in Architectural studies and Master of Architecture. Students in the Department exhibited at the International Union of Architects Congress held in Cuba from 27th September to 14th October, 1963. PW Brian Waldoock and six students from the Department travelled to Cuba to attend the Congress.

Professor R. Buckminster Fuller, who was a Research Professor in the Department of Design Research and Development of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale, Illinois, visited the College through the kind auspices of the United States Information Service. He stopped over in Nairobi for two days, 18th and 19th February 1964, on a world itinerary of visits and lectures to Schools of Design and Architecture.

He lectured to students and the public on his theories on energetic/synergetic structures. he also outlined his proposals for a world Design research Decade in Schools of Architecture on "Human trends, Needs and Resources". The project was discussed at the VIII congress of the International Union of Architects at the next meeting in [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.](#)

The Building Science component of the Department of Architecture and Building Science of the University of Nairobi first came into existence in 1967 as The Housing Research and Development Unit (HRDU). It was the result of recommendations of the U.N. report on Housing in Kenya, prepared by C. Abrams and Bloomberg in 1965. After evaluating the recommendations arising from the study the Government of Kenya produced Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1966/7 on Housing in which a section stated Government interest in research and education to get the greatest number of houses built at the cheapest cost possible, research into building techniques and construction cost being of utmost importance. Thus in the development plan 1966-70, which was geared to institution building, the Government established the HRDU at the University to undertake research on various aspects of low-cost housing and community planning in both urban and rural areas.

In 1993 the unit was upgraded to the institute status and renamed the Housing and Building Research Institute (HABRI), following its success in cutting edge research in the field of the built environment. The effect of upgrading to institute status was the change in status from being a unit in a department to being the equivalent of a faculty in the university's institutional ranking. The aim of upgrading the organization into the institute status was to enhance its role in assisting both public and private institutions by conducting research and disseminating information on a wide range of issues related to housing and building technologies. HABRI's programme of activities thereafter entailed conducting multi-disciplinary research with the aim of improving housing conditions and community services in both urban and rural areas.

Based at the University of Nairobi and having links with both national and international stakeholders HABRI became a strong institution for training in and research into the housing and building technologies (especially the appropriate building technology—ABT) that played the key role in providing core information and skills on which the nation's housing policy and practical needs could be met.

In 2005, the University of Nairobi conducted a restructuring exercise in which several similar or related departments were merged. In this exercise HABRI was merged with the mother department of HRDU days (the Department of Architecture) to form the Department of Architecture and Building Science in a move that was seen necessary in order to bring synergy to research and training activities of both organizations. Hence the mandate of HRDU or HABRI is still being executed by the Department of Architecture and Building Science; under the Building Science component.