

# Building Design & Construction

THE NEWS MAGAZINE FOR THE BUILDING TEAM

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UNIV'S COLLEGE-Blades

## Four new faces look out on Harvard Yard

Cover: William Kessler

## Tower of Texas makes debut

## Downtown developers trucking in Chicago

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## The four faces of Harvard's EFB

Anywhere else, the Educational Facilities Building for Harvard's School of Public Health would look like the backdrop for a science fiction movie. But on its Boston site, wedged between the Grecian-corniced Countway Library of Medicine and another limestone medical building, EFB stands quietly elegant, its precast plastic skin capturing the limestone tone of older buildings in Harvard's medical school "yard" without mocking or imitating them.

The reason for the seeming paradox is architect William Kessler's design philosophy. "If you can visualize EFB in Topeka, Kan., then it's not good design," mused Kessler, who studied under Gropius while attending Harvard's Graduate School of Design. "A well-designed building will interpret its site, the buildings around it, and its environment so well that it will look ridiculous anywhere else."

Before designing the 10-story, \$8.8-



*Kessler: "A well-designed building will interpret its site, the buildings around it, and its environment so well that it will look ridiculous anywhere else."*

million school building, architects William Kessler and Associates of Grosse Pointe, Mich., set out to learn what public health is all about. "That was certainly an educational experience in itself," Kessler said. "We soon

learned that the average age of students is 30, and that most of them already are practicing M.D.s." After establishing space needs, Kessler studied the architecture around the site. He realized the job of reconciling a modern building not only with the older limestone structures around it but also with a trapezoidal site whose perimeters varied from 95 feet to 240 feet was not going to be easy. "We couldn't go any higher than 10-stories without dwarfing the other buildings around EFB," Kessler explained. "But we needed to have at least 142,000 square feet inside to meet space requirements."

Kessler solved the problem by allowing the site to dictate the building's shape. The result is a building that presents four unique faces, depending on the viewer's perspective.

From one side, EFB appears tall and dominating, with the top two floors jutting outward. Along this, the longest side, much of EFB's mass is concealed from view by the close proximity of the 14-story main Public Health Buildings. There are no windows on this side, but by using 3-foot-high ribbed sections on the 5-foot-by-12-foot panels to delineate floor depths, Kessler was able to pick up EFB's 14-story sister building's two-tone appearance. On the opposite side, where the site shrinks to a mere 95 feet, EFB undergoes a metamorphosis. Resembling a cubist sculptor's swan, this side also is unmarred by windows. On EFB's backside a diagonal street increases the site perimeter to 230 feet. Other architects might have found that a hindrance. Kessler capitalized on it by allowing the lower five floors of the building to fan out, filling the site. Starting at ground level, the lower five floors step back in diminishing pie-shaped wedges. "We wanted to concentrate the building's mass and volume on the lower floors where space requirements were greater," Kessler explained.

**Indented space**—While the building's mass dominates the backside, EFB's front, which faces a massive plaza,

appears neither tall nor massive. "We wanted to deemphasize EFB's 125-foot height on the front side so that it wouldn't dominate the plaza or the shorter buildings around it," Kessler said. To accomplish this and to let sunlight into the lobby areas of the building, floors one through five are indented, each floor stepping back approximately 5 feet from the one above it. Kessler's use of dark bronze-tinted windows and matching anodized aluminum sashes brings the building's exterior emphasis down to the plaza level. By exaggerating the two main entranceways in this manner Kessler also makes the building appear shorter.

The two upper floors, where more space was needed to house administrative offices, jut outward, mirroring their lower floor counterparts. On the 10th floor, Kessler modernistically interpreted the Grecian cornice of Countway Library by placing the windows in lesser intervals.

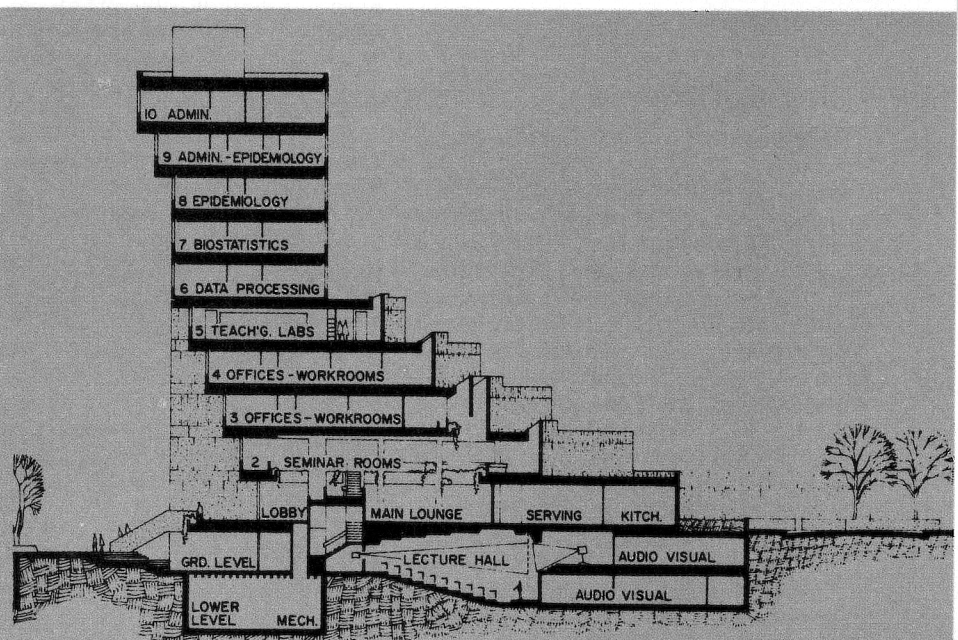
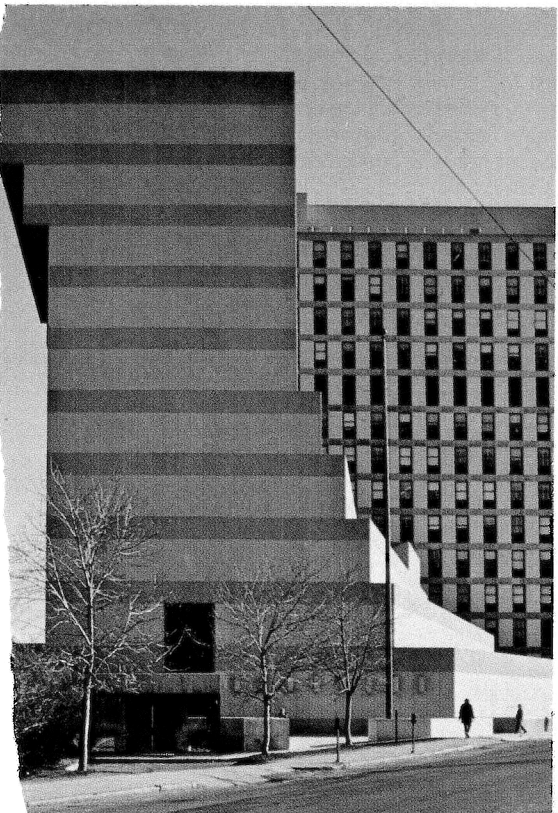
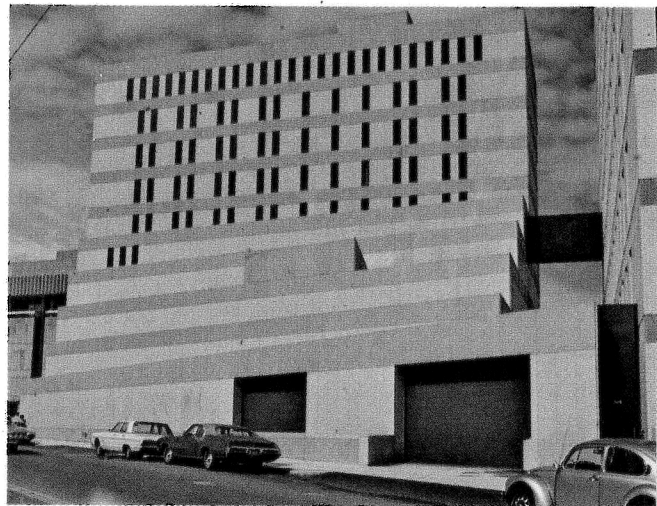
Because Kessler did not want to conceal the building's steel makeup completely, he allowed the two hangers from the sixth floor Vierendeel truss to be visible on the fifth floor of the main entranceway. The truss, which is 76 feet long and 14 feet wide, spans two-thirds of the building's front and carries the five upper floor loads. "We also allowed the truss members to dictate where windows were placed on the sixth floor," said Kessler.

Another material Kessler used to portray the building's skeletal framework was the 5-foot-by-12-foot plastic panels. The 3-foot ribbed area of the panels reflect floor depths while the smooth sections portray floor-to-ceiling height. The 3-inch thick panels are composed of copolymer thermosetting resin and sand matrix cast at the factory in specially designed flat and fluted molds.

**The other side**—Although the panels have been on the market for a dozen years, they usually feature a rough aggregate finish. But Kessler opted to reverse the panel installation so that he could complement other limestone



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*In designing the Educational Facilities Building for Harvard's School of Public Health in Boston, Kessler had to reconcile a modern building not only with the older limestone structures around it, but also with a trapezoidal site whose perimeters varied from 95 feet to 240 feet.*

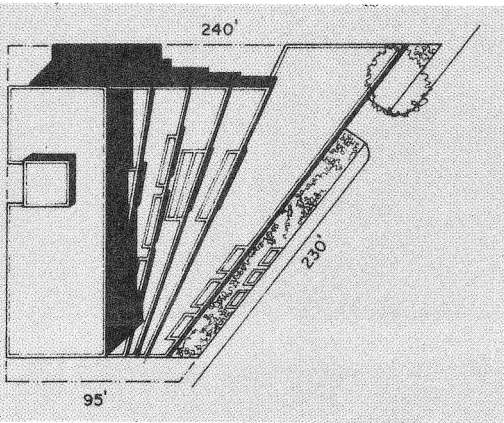


# Pace-setting prototypes

buildings on the medical school campus. "I believe this is the first building to feature a reversed installation," Kessler said.

Initially both limestone and precast concrete were considered for the building skin, but both proved too costly. In addition to their lower cost, the copolymer panels also had more versatility than either concrete or limestone. "We could never have gotten the smooth delineation between ribs on the fluted sections of the panel with either concrete or limestone," Kessler asserted.

Harvard University's project supervisor Ronald Catella saw several pragmatic reasons for using the material. "First of all, it doesn't stain like precast would have when it rains," Catella said. "Another nice thing about this material is that once you put it up it's complete."



The panels proved difficult to caulk, however. "Because they had never been installed in reverse fashion before, we did have some problems getting the sealant to adhere to the panels. But we were able to lick it after trying several different sealants and steam cleaning the panels once more. The building has been fully occupied since last fall and we haven't experienced any other problems with EFB."

If architect William Kessler were allowed to do EFB over, there's only one thing he'd change. "I would have exploited the plastic material, making the building look a little less like limestone. It's so versatile that it'll literally take any shape you can think of. And if I get a chance to use it again, I'll make it a more dramatic ally." □

When a large business or industrial real estate development is launched, the design concepts that shape it must be able to produce buildings that have marketing appeal even if they are only part of a long-range plan.

One developer with keen awareness of the influence of design on the growth of such projects is St. Louis-based Linclay Corp. The company has developed buildings that are not only distinctive in their first-phase stage but also provide the elements for expansion of the building program. Examples can be seen in Plaza I and The Quadrangle, the first office buildings, respectively, in Linclay's Earth City and Brown Campus developments. Earth City is a planned 1,700-acre "balanced community" of office, commercial, industrial, and residential facilities, and Brown Campus is a 233-acre business and industrial park. Both are in northwest suburban St. Louis.

Peckham-Guyton, Inc., of St. Louis designed both buildings. While vastly different in appearance, they are similar in that both are elements of easily expandable master plans.

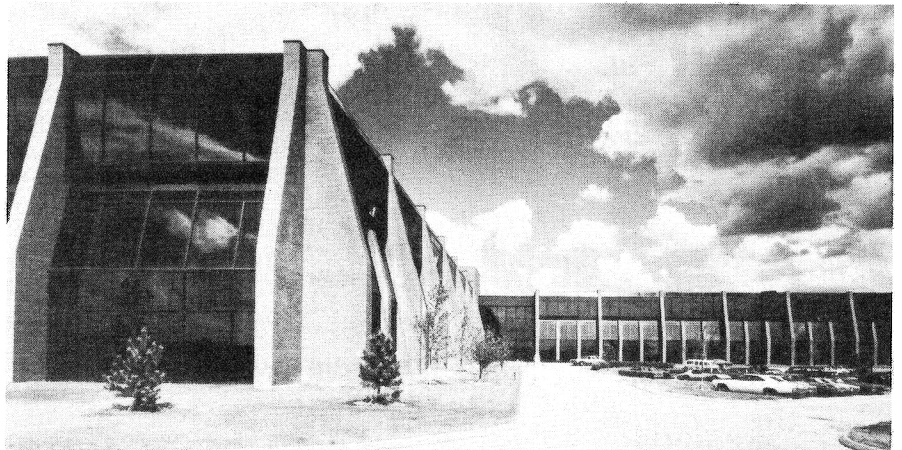
Plaza I is the more unusual of the two buildings. The first phase of this office structure, which also will have commercial tenants on its first floor, was completed in late 1973. It consists of two hexagonal modules 212 feet long and 150 feet wide which are joined to a 60-foot-diameter round brick tower. These hexagonal and circular elements are building blocks for a planned series of interconnected structures. The Earth City master plan envisions as many as 30 hexagonal modules of varying size and height. Some of the circular elements might be enlarged to house retail stores

**Transitional recess**—Among the fea-

tures which characterize the present structure and set a pattern for later phases are the building's recessed windows. From an exterior point of view, they establish a strong horizontal orientation, and from the building occupant's perspective they ease the abrupt transition from interior to exterior space. Windows are recessed more deeply at ground level than at second and third floors to lay groundwork for achievement of visual harmony in case any future modules are open at ground level (e.g., to span roadways). Another trend-setting feature is a continuous 30-foot-wide atrium which bisects one module and is offset in the other.

Freestanding cantilevered concrete stair towers are located at the outside ends of the hexagonal modules. They are identical to the staircase inside the circular tower and will be enclosed in similar manner when new modules are added. Elevators are housed in their own circular towers joined to the main tower. There are no provisions for vertical circulation within the modules.

Plaza I has a precast concrete exterior. But this doesn't preclude use of other materials for future modules as long as the horizontal motif is maintained, according to project architect David Thayer. He characterizes Plaza I as "a concept more than a building." Planning for it did not begin with the idea of developing elements that could be used repetitively. Separate buildings were originally contemplated, and the modular approach grew out of the accommodation of various program requirements. It provides the basis for greater predictability of development, Thayer said. "When you go into a large development with individual detached buildings, you have less control over the project from the standpoint both of



Future expansion will add two more wings to The Quadrangle, resulting in cross-shaped plan.



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William Kessler and Associates receives National AIA Honor Award

The American Institute of Architects selected Detroit's Center for Creative Studies, College of Art and Design, to receive the nation's highest award for architectural excellence. Formerly known as the Art School of the Society of Arts and Crafts, the project was designed by the Detroit architectural firm of William Kessler and Associates. As one of six projects among nearly 500 reviewed from across the country, the AIA jury claimed that the winners "represent the highest standards of where we are today." They also said that "The six buildings chosen represent several different directions. Some are derivative, some are boldly revolutionary; yet all add to the enrichment of the building art. Many projects exhibited great competence and some showed great inventiveness. Some may be forecasts for things to come."

The Kessler firm designed the College using pre-cast concrete structural elements which permit additions and expansions to the building in any direction as the needs



arise. The system is such that at any point of development, the building will appear to be a complete structure. The 2,000 pre-cast units used in its first phase contributed largely to its architectural expression. The interior of the building, generally unfinished with the mechanical services exposed, provides the art students with an environment conducive to their creative efforts. Completed in the spring of 1975, the structure cost approximately 7.5 million dollars.

The project also received an additional special award for barrier-free architecture.

The Bartlett Award, named for the late Senator E. L. Bartlett of Alaska, who sponsored

Public Law 90-480, dealing with barrier-free design, honors buildings that are

especially accessible to the handicapped. The building was reviewed by consultants

named by the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped. William

Kessler, representing the architects, and Walter B. Ford II, President of the Board

of Trustees of the Center for Creative Studies College of Art and Design will receive

the awards at the AIA National Convention in Philadelphia, May 5, 1976.

Of fifty awards received by William Kessler and Associates, this is the third National

AIA Award. Other projects so recognized were public housing developments in Mount

Clemens and Wayne, Michigan. Major awards also have been given to educational

buildings at Grand Valley State College, State University of New York, and Harvard

University. Many private residences have also received similar recognition. Projects

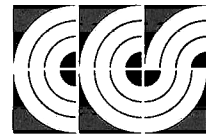
currently under way include the new Detroit Science Center, Detroit General Hospital,

Wayne State University Clinic Building, a new campus in Taylor for the Wayne County

Community College and the Rose-Thomas Elementary School for the Detroit Board

of Education.





Center for  
Creative Studies

College of Art and Design

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The architecture of the Center for Creative Studies results from an attempt to develop a flexible and expandable building system within the functional needs of the school. Early development of these needs indicated that the primary space increment for most of the program was a 1,000 square foot studio. This was resolved into a modular unit 32 feet square from which the building blocks began.

Given the function and character of the system, a search was then conducted for a method which would incorporate flexibility through repetitive use of similar elements. The objective was to be able to add on to the structure in any direction with a minimum of effort and no change in character. Simultaneously, a search was underway to find a system which would comfortably receive all the mechanical, plumbing and electrical piping distribution. It was felt that this accommodation had to be an integral part of any repetitive structural system.

The net result of these efforts was cylindrical columns which serve to facilitate vertical piping needs, and rectangular cut outs in beams which accommodate horizontal piping runs as well as exterior louvers for air intake purposes of the heating-cooling units in each room. Many of these mechanical provisions had a direct influence on the shapes and form of the concrete units.

Throughout this development, it became obvious that these concrete structural units should be cast in a factory and shipped to the site for erection. It was inevitable that their final shape, size and function would yield the basic form characteristics of the building. The infill between columns and beams became secondary as architectural expression

In order to preserve the integrity of the system, and offset the repetitiveness of the system, vertical cylindrical towers were introduced outside the system to accommodate stairs and elevators where required.

One of the earliest of design parameters was to take care not to design a slick, highly finished building. It was thought that art and design students especially should not be inhibited in their studies by a sterile or untouchable building. Having no finishes would not only provide student freedom to building usage, but would also provide a moderate background to the work being produced in the school.

With a flexible system thus established and detailed, the full building composition was to be the last design effort. The final design configuration was the result of departmental relationships and functions. Of major importance was the desire to expose to view, where practical, the happenings within each department. It was felt that involvement in the full creative process would produce an inspirational environment. The plaza is one such area where students and visitors can observe various sculpture studios and industrial design shops and studios. Views from corridor to room and room to room have been planned to further intrigue the students and faculty.

It is hoped that a background has been built within which the students and faculty can freely create. A background with architectural integrity, uninhibiting, yet strong enough to withstand the creative onslaught from a vibrant population. While the test of this building may be its final adaptation to an expansion process and its ability to serve its education purposes, its ultimate test will be evident in its assistance to individual human goals in the creative process.

#### OWNER

Society of Arts and Crafts  
Detroit, Michigan

#### BUILDING SITE

5½ acres bordered by John R to the west, Brush Street to the east and divided in half by Kirby Street

#### BUILDING SIZE

120,000 square feet

#### COST

\$7,000,000

#### OCCUPANCY

January, 1975

#### ARCHITECTS

William Kessler and Associates, Inc.  
733 St. Antoine, Detroit, Michigan

#### CONSULTING MECHANICAL AND ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

Hoyem Associates, Inc.  
Bloomfield Hills, Michigan

#### CONSULTING STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS

Robert M. Darvas & Associates  
Ann Arbor, Michigan

#### CONSTRUCTION MANAGERS

Kenny-Dickens Construction Management

#### MAJOR CONTRACTORS

The Donald Miller Co.  
Aggregate Surfaces, Inc.  
A. J. Etkin Construction Co.  
Brooker Electric Company





Louis de Moll, FAIA (l.), president of The American Institute of Architects, presents a 1976 AIA Honor Award to architect William Kessler, FAIA, and Walter B. Ford, II, chairman of the Board of Trustees of Detroit's Center for Creative Studies. The Award was presented to William Kessler and Associates for the design of the multi-media arts center.





Michigan Society of Architects, 553 East Jefferson, Detroit, Michigan 48226, (313) 965-4100

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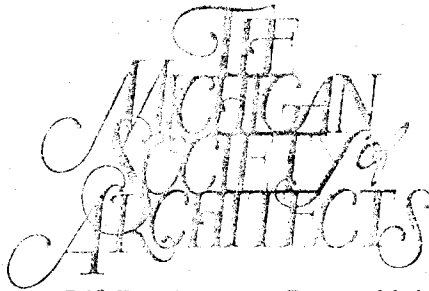
WILLIAM KESSLER AND ASSOCIATES RECEIVE SENATE  
RESOLUTION

William Kessler and Associates, architects of Detroit, will receive an honor award from the Michigan Society of Architects on October 17, 1980 at the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn. The honor awards are presented each year by the MSA for "excellence in design."

A resolution commemorating the 25th anniversary of the architectural firm will also be presented by Senator Jack Faxon. The Senate resolution (No. 677) will read as follows:

Whereas, It is a great honor and a special privilege to pay tribute to the people who have made William Kessler & Associates, Inc. so successful as this outstanding architectural firm celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary. This momentous occasion marks a hallmark in the history





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of the company that must be a source of great pride to all employees, for they know what an impact architecture has on our society, both today and in the future, and how successful the Kessler firm has been in producing exceptional architecture during the past twenty-five years; and

Whereas, Kessler buildings have inspired people throughout our nation. Aesthetically superior, they serve each aspect of human need. In recognition of this fact, the firm has received numerous honors for its superb architecture. They include the prestigious Bartlet Award from the American Institute of Architects in acknowledgment of Kessler's efforts to eliminate barriers to the handicapped through the design of the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit, the award from the Department of Housing and Urban Development for a public housing complex for the elderly in Wayne, Michigan, and numerous other awards for buildings





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ranging from private homes to corporate headquarters to medical facilities; and

Whereas, Kessler buildings have contributed greatly to the renaissance of Detroit. This is particularly true with the Concourse design that will link the new Detroit Receiving Hospital and Wayne State Health Care Institute with Harper Grace and Children's Hospital. Moreover, Kessler projects in other states have been equally impressive. They include the School of Public Health at Harvard University and WPRI-TV in Rhode Island. Indeed, the people of William Kessler & Associates, Inc., have just cause for celebrating their company's twenty-fifth anniversary, as do we all. May they ever prosper; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate, that the highest tribute be extended to the people of William Kessler & Associates, Inc., in recognition of this splendid company's twenty-fifth anniversary; and be it further

Resolved, that a copy of this resolution be



# THE MICHIGAN SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS

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transmitted to the firm and its staff as a reflection  
of our esteem for them and their excellent work.

The resolution was co-sponsored by Senators  
Plawecki, Vaughn, and Welborn.

THE CORNICICE AND SLATE BUILDING,  
AN HISTORIC DETROIT LANDMARK  
RESTORED, RENOVATED  
AND NOW OCCUPIED BY  
WILLIAM KESSLER AND ASSOCIATES,  
IS AMONG 50 JURY-SELECTED  
PROJECTS PROMISING NEW LIFE  
FOR CITIES HONORED IN  
URBAN DESIGN MAGAZINE'S  
SECOND ANNUAL AWARDS PROGRAM

