

## THE SPECIFICATIONS INITIATIVE

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OK, I'm ticked!

OK, we've griped, moaned, and talked too long, to each other!

OK, we, the choir, have the message--we understand!

OK, it's time to take the kid gloves off and really come to grips with the issues. Of course, we're fighting from behind, but let me ask this--When and where did specifications become so irrelevant, ignored, maligned, misunderstood, and dismissed by the very professionals who need them for their projects?

When? Where? and Why?

There are protestations all over the place about "Contract Documents", in the realm of Agreement, Drawings, and--is it still true?--SPECIFICATIONS?

If so, then why do the "other professionals" from designers on down look down their noses at specifications and those who produce them?

Why do we hold to the tripartite definition, A-D-S?

Why does the impact of specifications pervade almost every legal cases brought dealing with a construction project?

We are left to wonder if Sullivan, Wright, Meis, Gropius, Breuer, Corbu and the other even older masters wrote specs. Perhaps not, but did they diss them? Did they utilize some (in some form) for their projects? The answer from this quarter is PROBABLY YES?

You see, for generations there has been an underlying level of architects and engineers who well knew what was required in the documents to get the project built as designed and desired. Quietly these people produced the drawings and wrote the specs while the masters and the other principals got the glory, and cut the ribbons. This scenario still exists today!

Some may grump and quarrel that spec writers are not bona fide professionals--wrong! "Hogwash!", as Grandma said. Their work is as dedicated and is really more precise than that of others working on the projects. It is a tough and most ill-advised stretch to utilize the specs in the definition of contract documents and then in some incoherent, unthinking way, eliminate them from bare recognition, only to cherish and stake your reputation and legal status on them when you are in court. Vacillation? Nope, pure egotistic dumb! They are firmly based documents, supportive of the drawings and project design, and not veil-like images that come and go for varying reasons. They do not exist to be used as "conveniences" when necessary, and as door stops when not

***NO project can be built using drawings only, and  
neither can any be built using specifications only--***

***By definition and by absolute co-joinery, drawings  
and specifications must co-exist and provide a combined  
value and source of project information!***

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WHY then is there on-going dismissive-ness of specifications; a lack of understanding of their purpose; a lack of support for their value and preparation; and a continual disregard for their contribution? WHY?

Every organization that deals with any aspect of the professional practice of architecture (and let's include engineering) needs to be approached, addressed, (confronted if necessary) educated where necessary, and brought to bear on the issue of specifications and co-contribution of drawings and specifications—period!

All the cutesy software, the 3D models, the revolting images, the virtual projects and the other bells and whistles of project design MUST, at some point come to "light" in some form of specification. BIM is the new "shtick"--the new do-all-end-all, but little is available that even begins to address how specification-like information (still vitally needed for the projects) is incorporated into the model. Is the use of links appropriate? Will links take one to a massive amount of irrelevant information? Who will refine and focus that information, reducing it to the cogent necessity? What must now be done to re-format the requisite construction information to fit the BIM program?

CSI has engaged this, we hear. But not a lot has come to bear of late, and certainly all the vociferous proponents of BIM have NEVER EVER mentioned this aspect of the modeling. WHY? In hopes it will go away? (scary thought!)

So blare the trumpet and let the "games" begin—sound the call to a strong, well-founded, direct, professional, astute initiative to engage all those involved in the construction process--every group of architects, engineers, contractors, sub-contractor, IT folks, vendors, suppliers, manufacturers--and present them with in-depth, incisive, decisive, and absolutely "stunning" information about specifications, their creation, use, impact and contribution!

And coincidentally, and by no stretch the least, include NCARB, NAAB, ACSA and their engineering counterparts for full incorporation of at least minimal specification instruction in every professional school! That is far too long overdue and really should be placed on an "immediately" basis right now!

No rose-colored prospectus for the design professions, or high-flutin' principles, or visionary dreams should obscure the fact that we need to get everyone on board with all of this, NOW! We have too long phoofted away the true value and impact of specifications, in any format.

It is so easy!-- they are 1/3 of Contract Documents; they are co-equals with drawings; they are absolute necessities for every project!

You cannot practice, successfully, with one arm tied behind you or ignoring their existence.