



CSI Houston Chapter
The Construction Specifications Institute

August 2014

**August 25, 2014
Board / Chapter
Meeting**

PLACE: H.E.S.S. Building
5430 Westheimer Road

TIME:

5:30 P.M. (Registration and
mixer)

6:00 P.M. (Evening Meal &
Meeting)

COST:

\$35.00 to non members at
the door.

RESERVATIONS: Go to:
<http://www.csihouston.org>

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CSI Houston Website:
<http://www.csihouston.org>

August 25th

**CSI Houston Chapter Program
Golf Course Design**

As a prologue to the 25 year anniversary of the CSI golf tournament, please join us for the August CSI Meeting Presentation that will feature a leading design firm in the field of Golf Course Design and Construction.

We will learn about the challenges, design strategies, and environmental considerations associated with designing these massive projects.

During the social hour, visit with the golf professional from the Falcon Point golf course for tips and tricks, and also be sure to try your hand on the practice putting mat: A \$5 putt will get three extra raffle tickets at the golf tournament on October 13th.

Please join us at our August 25th, CSI Houston Chapter meeting for an interesting and informative evening of discussion.

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August 2014 President's Message

by Neil P. Byrne, CSI
President, CSI Houston Chapter

Thanks to everyone who came out for our July meeting. The presenters did a tremendous job and it was a great way to kick off the new CSI year. I wanted to send a special thanks to Jeff Holstien and Alex Bernard for putting together the program. I look forward to the August meeting on the 25th, the topic will be Golf Course Design.



Speaking of golf courses, the Golf Committee led by Holly Jordan is off to an incredible start. Please plan on participating in this great event, more information can be found on our website, www.csihouston.org. Note, the date has been pushed back a week from Monday, October 6th to the 13th. This gives everyone another week to sharpen your golf skills!

On a very sad note, long time valued CSI member Lance McHaney passed away unexpectedly on July 26th, 2014. Lance's contributions to this Chapter cannot be measured and his warm presence will be missed by all that knew him. CSI Houston donated \$1,000 to a fund set up in his name. Any additional donations can be made payable to Shirley McHaney and mailed to 4901 Daffodil Ave. #274, McAllen, TX 78501. Funds will go to the maintenance of The Adobe Wells Golf Course per his wishes.

I look forward to seeing you all at the August meeting. Remember, please do your part to increase membership and member participation at CSI Houston!


FEATURE YOUR PRODUCTS WITH A TABLE TOP DISPLAY

At each monthly meeting, the Chapter encourages Industry Members to provide a table top display of their products and services for the inspection and education of those attending the meeting.

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CSI Board Meeting Minutes
Houston Chapter CSI
Location: HESS Building – 5430 Westheimer Road
– Houston, TX
June 23, 2104

Present: Alex Bernard, Amy Salmeron, Betsy Finch, Bill Fairbanks, Bill Lunsford, Bob Cook, Chuck Vojtech, Don Smith, Doug Frank, Holly Jordan, Neil Byrne, Robert Byrne, Tom Atwell

President Robert Byrne called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.

Reports

Finance/Administration: Chuck Vojtech

Chuck reported the chapter owes funds to the Foundation for scholarships. The board discussed whether or not the Foundation had invoiced the chapter. The board also discussed updating bank forms for the newly elected officers.

Treasurer's Report: Bob Cook
No report.

Professional Development: Tim Wilson

Neil reported Tim will stay on as Professional Development Chair but not as Certification Committee Chair. Neil is working on filling that position.

Academic Affairs: Al Pasek
No report.

Certification: Tim Wilson
No report.

Technical Committee: J. Peter Jordan
No report.

Member Services: Tom Atwell

Programs: Alex Barnard
Alex reported he is working on forming a new committee and is recruiting new members to serve on the committee.

Membership: Bill Lunsford
Bill reported membership is currently at 171 members, membership is down from the previous month. The chapter lost some members, but also gained new members.

Awards: Amy Salmeron
No report.

Table Top Display: Amy Peevey
No report.

Personal/Professional Development: Doug Frank/Di Ann Reid
No report.

Public Services: Don Smith

SPEC.tectonics: Don Smith
Don reported May and June issues had been posted to the website. The board discussed ad renewals and invoicing. Neil suggested someone make an announcement at the chapter meeting about advertising opportunities in the newsletter.

Public Relations:

Holly reported the golf committee has new members and they are scheduled to have a brief meeting prior to the June chapter meeting. Holly discussed having the golf committee members wear name tags leading up to the tournament, a written job description for the golf committee and the current golf forms updated.

Electronic Communications: Logan Vits

Don reported Logan updated the meeting notice on the website.

Other Business:

Neil asked for input from the board members concerning time and location for the monthly planning meetings.

Robert Byrne discussed the 5-Year Plan and the importance of executing the plan. Doug Frank reported he will include chapter dues in the Chapter Admin Guide.

Meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Betsy Finch, CSI
Chapter Secretary

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Where Have I Heard That Before?

By Sheldon Wolfe, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, CSC



"It is probable that few members of the profession will disagree [that] the preparation of specifications receives less study and attention in proportion to its importance than

any other phase of architectural or engineering practice. It is generally conceded that there is need for accurate, concise, yet comprehensive specifications in order to secure the best results from any set of plans. In our architectural schools ... instruction in specification writing has been neglected to such an extent that those to whom the task of specification writing has fallen have usually been forced to educate themselves. As a natural sequence of this condition we find too many inaccurate and incomplete documents accompanying drawings under the guise of specifications."

If you participate in or visit CSI groups on LinkedIn, or follow discussions on 4specs.com, or talk with just about any specifier, it's likely you have heard similar comments. Most of those who work with specifications appreciate their value, and believe that, to be effective, they must contain all the information needed by the contractor, they must not contain irrelevant information, and they must be easy to understand.

Following is more of the comment from which I took the opening quotation.

"IT is probable that few members of the profession will disagree with the statement that, considered broadly, the preparation of specifications receives less study and attention in proportion to its importance than any other phase of architectural or engineering practice. It is generally conceded that there is need for accurate, concise, yet comprehensive specifications in order to secure the best results from any set of plans. Yet to many architects and engineers the task of their preparation is onerous, and in order to produce a written document to accompany the drawings they sometimes even resort to the re-working of old specifications. It is usually discovered later that they do not accurately apply to the work in hand.

"It is because of these conditions that THE AMERICAN ARCHITECT notes with the greatest satisfaction the initiation of a movement to organize The American Specification Institute along the lines of the National Professional Societies.

"It is obvious that The American Specification Institute should have as its fundamental purpose the education of its membership so as to assure better and more uniform specifications, the dissemination of information relating to the production of raw materials, their manufacture or fabrication into finished products, and how, when and where to use the different materials. When the specification writer has acquired a thorough understanding of the materials and equipment described and called for in his specifications he will be able to write more intelligently and produce a document that will furnish protection alike to the client, the architect, the builder and the manufacturer.

The above was printed in 1920, in *The American Architect*, published from 1876 through 1938, when it was absorbed by *Architectural Record*. In following issues, readers responded.

"The average architect beginning practice today knows very little about this most important phase of his work. He little knows how much stress a client will put on his knowledge of stone and concrete; the grades of lumber; the most efficient kinds of paint for various purposes; what constitutes the various grades of glass; plumbing goods; hardware and electrical work. The architect to correctly specify must know these things intelligently and intimately so that he may not only be in a position to advise the client but to advise the builder if necessary. Architecture is the art of building thoroughly even as much as making buildings attractive." *Heacock & Hokanson*

"It occurs to me that architects in the past have paid altogether too little attention to this important phase of their work, and too little opportunity for development has been given to those men who are engaged in specification writing. The result of this has been that often our well-conceived projects have been poorly constructed, and proper provision has too often not been made to protect various materials in the proper manner." *H. Kenneth Franzheim, architect*

Continued on page 8

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Continued from page 6

"I agree that the specification practice of most architects offices is the least creditable part of their work, due probably to several things: First, ... in an effort to hasten the work, old specifications for similar buildings are often rehashed and made over with a greater or lesser degree of success, mostly less. Secondly, specifications are to the majority of architects the least interesting part of their work, the very essential to the best interests of their client. " *An old subscriber*

"Most specification writers receive their training at the present time solely in the school of experience, which is, of course, excellent, but does not cover the entire ground, for the reason that these men are usually the product of training of one or two offices which have their individual methods." *Wm. O. Ludlow, architect*

Not everyone agreed. I recently heard an architect express an opinion similar to the following.

"We, of course, do not approve of any institution that would seek to standardize so important a document as a specification, because we believe that personality and creativeness enter as much into this branch of the architect's work as in matters of design and execution of drawings. We do not believe that you can make specification specialists because we believe the specification maker must be imbued with all the art and questions of accomplishing a building and it is a subject as intimate as the architect himself." *Edwards & Sayward*

Isn't it interesting that we're voicing the same concerns now as were expressed nearly a hundred years ago?

© 2014, Sheldon Wolfe, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, CSC

[Agree? Disagree? Leave your comments at http://swconstructivethoughts.blogspot.com/.](http://swconstructivethoughts.blogspot.com/)

The thing most relevant to specification writing is this. Not all clients or their lawyers can look at a set of construction drawings and visualize the completed building in three dimensions. But the lawyers can read a set of specifications.

"Don't tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results.

George S. Patton

Editor

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“Strictly SMITH-ly”

Why I Became a Specification Writer

By Donald F. Smith, Jr., CSI CCS RA LEED AP

I wasn't born a specification writer or an architect for that matter. While in engineering school, I found myself thinking one day that I was going to spend the rest of my life picking things out of catalogs for other people to use in their work.

I was not allergic to hard work, having once cleared a quarter acre of forest in a day as part of a two-man crew, cutting, then sorting out the poison ivy before burning and clearing and grubbing with a brush hook. But quickly decided that manual labor wasn't my thing.

It was just that there was a creative side to me that enjoyed discovering what made things work as well as what prevented them from working. In school I enjoyed art, science, drafting, wood and metal shop, and the math that I could visualize. As a result, I did well in things that I enjoyed, but not those that didn't interest me at the time.

After I moved to Houston, I was hired by an architectural firm that had a good reputation in Houston, and grew from about fifty-five people in the early 70's to more than 280 in the mid 80's. People who worked hard and made the right choices were rewarded with advancement and more responsibility. I liked working in an open drafting room. If you kept your head down and your ears open it was like going to school, but without the degree, of course. Unlike today, senior staff took supervision seriously, usually early in the morning before most people arrived and left notes on the work of the previous day commenting on the quality of the work and the direction that you were taking the design.

Between projects, you were invited along on field observation and encouraged to comment on what was going right as well as work that wasn't according to the contract documents.

The office work during these periods between new work involved field reports and shop drawing review. Specification in the early 70's were appalling. I would see something delivered at the jobsite which was close to being new junk. I would return to the office and read the specifica-

tion. I was shocked to find that after reading four pages of the relevant specification that covered the hollow metal doors and frames that they were indeed required to be made of steel sheet, spot welded at 8-inches on center, with a coat of gray primer. What was not mentioned though, was that these were exterior doors and frames, and the water that poured into the interior of the door and frame construction ran over unprimed metal surfaces on the interior.

After this, I was invited to review the specifications for each of the projects that I worked on from then on. When the position of specification writer became open, I was made one of those offers that you couldn't refuse.

There are several things that I have been grateful for and that I have never given credit or thanked those responsible for me. Many times in my early career as a draftsman, and later as an architect, I was put in a position that I could have made many mistakes. This was a position of both opportunity and trust. I have thought about this and came to the conclusion that trust is given on the basis of proven decision making. The more right decisions in life, the more rope you are given to hang yourself with.

Success is therefore built on the acquisition of knowledge on those subjects that your work depends on. The most important thing is discovering the limits of what you can do safely and to acquire knowledge to fill in gaps relevant to what you have to do. Having a good memory is a great asset. Although it can be a curse when you can remember something and can't remember where you saw it. I think this is the problem that our institutions of higher learning are grappling with. You can teach rules and techniques, but experience and judgment only come by doing. I think the knowledge and usefulness of the specification writer is not well understood nor an accurate understanding of how long he will be around.

"A mind once stretched by a new idea never regains its original dimension."

Oliver Wendell Holmes

... Just my opinion,

Donald F. Smith, Jr., CSI, CCS, RA, LEED™ AP

“Strictly SMITH-ly”

Drawing and Specification Review

By Donald F. Smith, Jr., CSI CCS RA LEED AP

Drawing and specification review is a lot harder than it use to be. You may think that not much has changed, but the move from paper copies to computer output, usually at a reduced scale, makes it harder to see mistakes. Also, computer generated work looks better.

The CAD operator of today has a library of details to work from. Because of constant design and material changes, few details are exactly what is needed; most are similar and require some to major modification. Project Architects have the lead role in CD development and live stressed to the limit. The cartoon set created in DD may not get the full attention needed, especially if material and system decision are not made in a timely manner. Detail changes can often fall through the cracks. To the CAD operator on the fast track, this is an opportunity to advancement to show off the depth of his or her capabilities. Beginner CAD operators, can enter dangerous territory by putting out work that is beyond their personal understanding or limitations.

Computer work looks good; even the mistakes. I'm a believer that work should not be shown when it has not been completely thought out. Whatever happened to “Requirements to be provided.” I have even encountered a note from draftsman with not too much imagination about the future of his career. He wrote “See so-and-so”, which I take it was the Project Architect that he used to work for.

One of the most important concepts carried forward from Design Development is the weather integrity of the building. As construction proceeds to close in the building the weather integrity systems should be simple easy to build and hopefully accomplished by one subcontractor, not and army of unrelated trades each pointing fingers at each other. One of the biggest mistakes is getting caught in your own mouse-trap. It is not only painful but very embarrassing.

Sometimes by looking at the style of the details, you can figure out how many people are working on a similar detail in different locations. Have you ever seen brick on one elevation turn a corner and Poof! It's concrete masonry and no clue is given if the transition is a butt, tooth, or whatever joint.

Component information noted in wall section is important. The question is: why did the drafter draw this view? What was important about it? It should show and note the changes that occur from a typical location and just enough related information to orient the viewer. As a specification writer, I can't tell you how many plans, elevations, and sections I see with extraneous information. If you are looking at a building elevation, who cares if it has a concrete bench in front of it when none of the building exterior material are identified.

It almost looks like a failure to commit to writing a note. How could you possibly draw something if you don't know what it is?

But I will venture a guess on how this happens. Designers. Designers never think their best idea is the one that is first thought of. Even up to the Date of Substantial Completion I can imagine the little gears are turning in their mind that a better solution is out there, and . . .there is still time to make a change.

If I had a dollar for every cut sheet received that contained 11 different models each with material, accessory and color selections to be made I would be retired and living in the Caribbean.

All of these problems weave indecision into the construction documents. And all of these postponed decisions should have occurred in either Schematic Design or in the Design Development project phases. Postponing decisions does not allow you to get more, they actually trap you into settling for less. Prices rise, coordination costs more, and the advantage of competitive pricing has been lost , not to mention increased overhead, lost fee, and more stress.

What really has been lost is the satisfaction of taking on a small task and completing it satisfactorily. The joy of not having to worry about it again.

"In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists. "

Eric Hoffer

... Just my opinion,

Donald F. Smith, Jr., CSI, CCS, RA, LEED™ AP



Melody Stinson, AIA, CCCA, CCS, CSI, LEED AP
CSI South Central Region 2014-15 President
Contact: mstinson@rees.com

Hello from Oklahoma City!

First I would like to thank Past President Holly Jordan for her leadership and guidance throughout my term as President-Elect. It was an honor and great experience to serve with Holly and the rest of the region board members last year.

Many of you may not be aware what part the region plays in your membership benefits, so let me share some examples. The spring region conference in Austin offered continuing education; two CSI Fellows taught chapter leaders the basics of 'Roberts Rules of Order', (the format which governs all CSI board meetings) and incoming fellow Mark Chavez taught a CDT bootcamp for over 30 people. These are resources you can't get the same way online; there is no replacement for one-on-one, face-to-face interaction.

Throughout the past year we have held monthly conference calls with chapter presidents in an effort to strengthen communication between chapters and share ideas; at both the fall and spring meetings Holly held a President's dinner to show appreciation to the leaders who volunteer their time to run the chapter, an often thankless and difficult job! Our dedicated electronic communications chair, Adam Clark has increased our web presence by upgrading the region website www.scr-csi.org/ and setting up microsites for Austin with Lubbock and San Antonio in the works. On the region website you can find links to each chapter's page and other region information like guides, contact information for region officers and committee chairs - please take advantage of these resources!

Moving into the 2014-15 year, my plan is to build on the momentum which has been growing steadily and continue toward the strategic goals set last year:

1. Provide open communication and contact information so all region members know who to go to (resources) for assistance
2. Provide leader training including a P-E training class (invite VP's, others interested in serving as chapter P-E's also), treasurer and secretary training
3. Increase membership and membership retention; provide training for chapter membership chairs
4. Engage members with L.I.F.E. initiative
5. Provide assistance for chapters on electronic communications (including acquiring Constant Contact for email, setting up microsites, updating websites, using Dropbox for easy document access)
6. Increase attendance at SCR Conferences- encourage chapters to include more in their budget to assist leaders with travel to conference to get vital training

I encourage all members to get involved at the region level and I cordially invite you to attend the 2015 spring conference taking place at the Overton Hotel in Lubbock, TX, April 16-18, 2015. Your involvement can contribute to a stronger South Central Region- please do not hesitate to contact me with ideas and suggestions and best of luck for another wonderful year together in CSI!

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**CONSTRUCTION
SPECIFICATIONS
INSTITUTE**

Aug 2014 Through Sept 2014

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Jul 27	28	29	30	31	Aug 1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 Planning Mtg, 3:00 pm, 2010 N. Loop 610, Ste. 170	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 CSI Houston Board / Chapter Meeting- Hess	26	27	28	29	30
31	Sept 1 Labor Day	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9 Planning Mtg, 3:00 pm, 2010 N. Loop 610, Ste. 170	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21/28	22/29 CSI Houston Board / Chapter Meeting- Hess	23/30	24	25	26	27