

CSI Houston Chapter  
The Construction Specifications Institute

February 2015

**February 23, 2015  
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 and  
Meeting)

COST:

Gratis to CSI members;  
\$35.00 to non members at  
the door.

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

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

**CSI Houston February Program  
"Exploring Mineral Fiber Insulation"**

As with many great innovations, nature is often the source of inspiration. As with Mineral Fiber, inspired by volcanic eruptions, when strong winds pass over streams of molten lava producing fine silky threads, it has become one of the most innovative and versatile insulation products on the market today.

The February Chapter meeting will seek to explore the origins, health and safety, sustainability and properties of mineral fiber insulation along with mock-ups and active participation in live experiments.

Guest Speaker: Dean Cox, Knauf Insulation

Please join us at our February 23, CSI Houston Chapter meeting for an interesting and informative evening of discussion.

**ASSA ABLOY Door Security Solutions will have a Mobile Show-room outside the HESS Building. Please visit the ASSA ABLOY mobile show room from 4:30 – 5:30 pm**

**CSI HOUSTON CHAPTER  
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## February 2015 President's Message

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

CSI Houston hit the ground running in 2015 with our much anticipated market forecast presentation by Mr. Pat Kiley. With 140 people in attendance and 14 vendor table tops, it was a tremendous event. I want to thank those who attended, especially our sponsors and speaker.



We also rolled out our new membership campaign, **R.U.N CSI** (Are you in, CSI?). This campaign slogan is geared to increase membership and member participation through a grassroots effort. We need our current member base to do their part to help achieve our goal. So when you go about your day to day business, remember **R.U.N CSI!**

In other Chapter news, our very own Holly Jordan is running for Institute Director. A local voice at the Institute level would be of great benefit, and I could not think of a better person for the job. The electronic ballots are out, please vote for Holly.

Also, for those interested in passing the CDT exam, we have set up an "exam cram" to help you achieve that goal. The date has been set for Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. Mark your calendar now, more details to follow.

Lastly, the South Central Region (SCR) Conference will be held in Lubbock, TX this year on April 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>. I hope to see all of you there.

I look forward to seeing you all at the February meeting.

Remember, please help increase membership and member participation by advocating **R.U.N CSI!**

### 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.

The table top display is also encouraged to be presented during the social hour and after the program for any questions by attendees.

The presentation fee is \$200 for members and \$250 for non-members, or free with a Golf Sponsorship pledge.

Contact: [don.smith315@sbdglobal.net](mailto:don.smith315@sbdglobal.net)



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↑  
↑

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**CSI Board Meeting Minutes  
Houston Chapter CSI  
Location: HESS Building – 5430 Westheimer  
Road – Houston, TX  
November 24, 2014**

Present: Alex Bernard, Betsy Finch, Bob Cook, Chuck Vojtech, Don Smith, Doug Frank, Holly Jordan, Neil Byrne

President Neil Byrne called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

The October 2014 Board Meeting Minutes were approved.

**Vice President Reports:**

**Finance/Administration: Chuck Vojtech**

Treasurer's Report: Bill Fairbanks

Neil asked for a midyear budget review. Chuck agreed to have the review available in January.

**Professional Development: Tim Wilson**

Continuing Education: Greg Quintero

No report.

Technical Committee: J. Peter Jordan

No report.

**Member Services: Tom Atwell**

Programs: Alex Bernard

Alex is working on the program for the February meeting; a tour will be scheduled during March and scholarships will be awarded at the April meeting.

Membership: Mark LeCrone

No report.

Awards: Amy Salmeron

No report.

Table Top Display: Amy Peevey

No report.

**Public Services: Don Smith**

Special Events

Holiday Event: Holly Jordan

Phyllis Joseph is working on the arrangements to deliver the wagons and gifts collected to the Shriners Hospital. There will be a list of gift ideas available to members at the November meeting. Neil reported he has purchased six wagons for the event.

SPEC.tectonics: Don Smith

Don reported the current newsletter has been posted to the website.

Electronic Communications: Logan Vits

No report.

Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

**Betsy Finch, CSI  
Chapter Secretary**

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## TIMELESS INSPIRATION SINCE 1964

Miami went wild for the Mutual of Omaha Building in 1969. The floor-to-ceiling bronze windows and soaring columns designed by renowned architect Minuru Yamasaki made adjacent skyscrapers seem tame by comparison. Today it's called Colonnade Plaza, but on opening day it was called amazing because of its energy-efficient windows of Solarban glass, that block solar heat and reduce cooling and lighting demands.

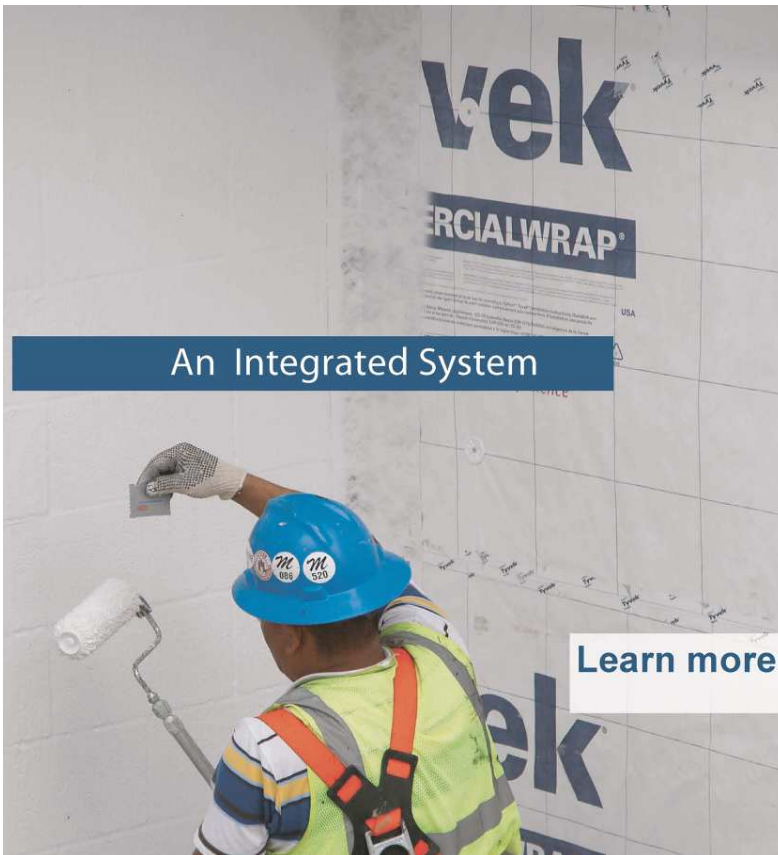
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## Rules of Thumb

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

A huge problem that continues to grow is that we have too much information. When American architects formed AIA, 150 years ago, construction was much simpler; mechanical systems hadn't changed much since the Romans used them 2,000 years ago. Since then, countless new materials and processes have been introduced.



Life was simple for architects of those early years, much of their time being spent detailing ornamentation. In 1905, a local university building of 112,000 square feet was built using a steel frame, with brick, marble, granite, and terra cotta. The construction documents comprised 58 drawing sheets and a 51 page project manual. By today's standard practice, hundreds of pages of drawings and a project manual of at least two volumes.

We all know that, at least in theory, today's designers must understand and comply with a growing collection of building codes, local regulations, and zoning requirements; they must keep abreast of the latest in building materials; and they must know what's in the standards published by many organizations. No easy task, this - in fact, it's impossible - so we focus on the big things and hope for the best. To keep things moving, we must carry in our heads the really important stuff, the rules of thumb. Following is a collection of such rules I have offered to young professionals for many years.

**What to draw.** If it comes in a box, don't waste time detailing it. *Do* spend time showing how it fits in. Example: Don't draw detailed sections of windows, with all of the pieces that make up the sash and frame; *do* make sure to detail how the window fits in the opening and how it is flashed.

Draw *only* what is needed; *but* draw *everything* that is needed. This takes a little thought, but helps the drawings get done right the first time. And, it helps the bidders, who don't have to wade through a lot of information that isn't necessary to find what it is we really want.

**Where does the information go?** People who work

at the site don't even *carry* specs, let alone read them. Put the information they need on the drawings, and everything else in the specs.

**Defined terms.** If defined in the contract documents, the terms *furnish*, *install*, and *provide* can have distinct meanings. While the difference between *furnish* and *install* is fairly obvious, the common definition of *provide* is not, so avoid problems by using *furnish* and *install* rather than *provide*. In a single-prime contract, there is only one *contractor*, but there may be many *subcontractors*.

**Drawing notes.** General drawing notes often repeat, and often contradict, each other, as well as the project manual. Eliminate redundant notes. Use the same term for a given product throughout; use the same term that appears in the specifications. Used too often, "Unless noted otherwise" suggests you don't know what's in your own documents; how can the contractor be expected to know? Why preface some notes with the word "Note"? Ask yourself what each note means. Example: "Fill with concrete and paint." Notes such as "fasten securely" and "see specs" are unnecessary. Don't use brand names. There is no need to say "Provide countertop" or "Install trim"; just indicate what the product is.

**Assignment of work.** That's part of the contractor's job.

### Spelling.

I have a spelling checker, it came with my PC. It plainly marks four my revue, mistakes I cannot sea. I've run this poem threw it, I'm sure your please two no; Its letter perfect in it's weigh, My checker tolled me sew.

© 2015, Sheldon Wolfe, RA, FCSI, CCS, CCCA, CSC  
[Agree? Disagree? Leave your comments at http://swspecificthoughts.blogspot.com/.](http://swspecificthoughts.blogspot.com/)

**Y SAY YOU CAN'T PICK YOUR FAMILY.  
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## FEATURE YOUR PRODUCTS WITH A TABLE TOP DISPLAY

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## “Strictly SMITH-ly”

### How Architect’s Decisions Make It Into Specifications

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

I am always amazed at the creative ways that decision makers communicate their desires. Shortly after I took over writing specifications full time and was quite busy, I had a project architect in the firm I work for approach me and tell me that he had “a project that would start next month and that it had glass in it.” So far, so good, I thought.

In a week or two after our first encounter, he showed up again and pronounced “Don, its going to be bronze glass.”

After weeks passed and a few more of these brief encounters, a picture was beginning to develop. I had no reason to believe that he was not completely serious, but I started to wonder why anyone would communicate in such a way that would make the listener doubt their sanity. Nothing was ever written down, not even on the smallest of “Sticky Notes.” The flow of this almost monotonous information was endless. I was beginning to believe I was the butt of some very cruel joke.

It was as if every little scrap of a information was engraved on a grain of sand on an endless beach that was shifted and re-deposited by the action of each new wave as time went by.

At least with computers, you have the benefit of the day-time group to help you sort things out. But, it still does nothing to help sort out the changes impact on the related work of other sections.

I left engineering school shortly after my second year in college began for many reasons, including the premonition that I would be picking products out of catalogs for someone else to use for the rest of my life.

It’s funny how these little daydreams come back to haunt you.

*Continued on page 9*



Continued from Page 8

But anyway, it has always amazed me how a tide of emails containing cut sheets of catalogs with multiple items each with multiple options and accessories arrive without a manufacturer's name or decisions marked to show what is wanted. It makes you wonder what they are willing to seal and sign.

Review comments are likewise troublesome. Review comments are normally handled in the form of comments in a pdf file. There is not just one version but overlapping comments from the several required submittal dates and no mention of what is superseded or now following a new decision path.

Comments can also come from a project client representative. These comments are usually directed to the project architect. Forwarding these to the specifier without the project architect taking action on them can be dangerous from many points of view. Even skilled project representatives can look at something and not understand its use. One client representative once told me "Sometimes I look but I don't see." Teamwork gets the job done. There is no better help than another set of eyes looking at something from a different perspective.

Forwarding changes without specific instructions on what they are for can also be dangerous. Take for example new cut sheets for products and materials that are different than those originally sent to the specifier. Are they substitutions for the original instructions? Are they changes for only some items, but not all? What happens to the original decisions?

This is where the specifier has to remind the reviewer that the specifier works in the "Non-Fiction" department of our profession and cannot fabricate facts based on what the specifier thinks is required. The project architect that signs and seals the drawings and project manual is responsible for the decisions and content of both drawings and specifications. The project architect attends meetings with the client and the consultants, listens to the pros and cons of the options available, and makes decisions or causes decisions to be made by a consultant that he can support in the interest of the client.

If a specifier sees a problem that has not been addressed or addressed adequately, a sugges-

tion can be offered for consideration, but only the project architect can weigh the decisions to use it or not as only he has all the information and responsibility to make such a decision.

A Design Development Phase Outline Specification is a good place to evaluate the products, materials and systems that comprise a project. But even in this early stage, decisions still must rely on judgment, objectives, function, and budgets. A project architect once asked me for a generic roofing spec. It was early in the Design Development phase of the project so I responded "Sure, what kind of roof is it; clay tile, sheet metal, modified bitumen?" Then a curious look appeared on her face and she turned and walked away from me.

I keep going back to Yogi, my personal philosopher . . .

"If you don't know where you're going, you might wind up someplace else."

Yogi Berra

... Just my opinion,

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

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## “Strictly SMITH-ly”

### The Importance of Technical Resources

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

Drawings and specifications rely on design decisions founded on fact, not intensions. Codes, standards, and technical specifications are not guidelines in the sense of general areas of agreement or disagreement, depending on your point of view, They belong to broader categories of minimum requirements for safe construction, habitation and use, as well as general agreement as to what works and what does not. Or I would say an agreement of how things work, and in some sense also areas that they may not work or work well.

Architecture is the art and science of designing and building, especially habitable ones, and also the method or style of building. Building Codes are a compilation of requirements for the *minimum* requirements for safe construction and habitation. It has always amazed me that they are often viewed as a line in the sand. Almost a dare on how close a particular design can get to the line of what is permitted. History tells us that great architecture results from the art and science of construction and how well the structure performs and the joy and practicality that it brings to the occupants over a long period of time. In today's society, people don't fight to preserve poor architecture, but rather to preserve the culture of the past, how people lived and how we got to where we are today.

A good technical library contains Codes, standards, industry specifications, historical styles, types of construction, technical literature and periodicals on what works, how it works, and information on where it doesn't work. The modern library is in a state of transition. Use of printed material is declining with maybe the exception of preserving the historical record. Internet sourced material seems to be increasing, but changes so frequently that maintaining links to sources can be problematic, so much so, that quick access comes at a price. I prefer a mix of Internet links, local copies of manufacturer's data and scans of published articles filed by subject for quick retrieval. Samples, if kept, are useful, but only if marked as to what they are, who they were obtained from and when they were obtained. It is important to remember that items with a natural range of variation such as masonry, stone, and wood are difficult or impossible to closely match.

Time is an important concept for what ever the source may be. If you are familiar with Master Format, a section number followed by and abbreviated subject source and date acquired I think is the bare minimum to keep track of product data and gives a good starting point to consider when to weed and replace old material. Certainly product data that is no longer valid, out of date, or no longer available should not be kept to be selected by the unwary. Sometimes you also need to apply a personal test. Would I spend my own money on this product for a current project?

It is important that the resource library be intuitive, easy to use quickly, and available to all. Information that cannot be accessed quickly will not be access at all. Getting the staff to comment on new and old material can help.

The “eighty percent rule” should be used. That is, things that show up routinely in eighty percent of your particular area of practice should be readily available and kept current with links to other sources of general interest.

Keep your ears open for comments on what works and what doesn't work. The Internet changes so quickly that it might be a good source for the need for change. You need to seek out and fix every time someone tries to use the resource and can't get the information that they need. If it is the go to place, everyone will use it. The specifier is a good choice to collecting and have a final say on weeding, but should not be the only source as a good technical library should address different points-of-view.

Technical resources are especially important to designers and project architects early in the project. A preliminary Table of Contents early in SD and DD with cut-sheets of major items to be included in the roof and exterior enclosure walls, may help develop well thought-out building sections based on Codes, project goals and budgets.

"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](mailto:mstinson@rees.com)



Save the Date



Join us for education, training, networking and some time  
to enjoy the Lubbock Arts Festival!

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**Feb. 2015 through Mar. 2015**

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Feb 1	2 Ground Hog Day	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Planning Mtg, 3:00 pm, 2010 N. Loop 610, Ste. 170	11	12 Lincoln's Birth- day	13	14 Valentine's Day
15	16 President's Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23 CSI Houston Board / Chapter Meeting- Hess	24	25	26	27	28
Mar 1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10 Planning Mtg, 3:00 pm, 2010 N. Loop 610, Ste. 170	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19	20	21
22	23 CSI Houston Board / Chapter Meeting- Hess	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	Apr 1	2	3	4