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by Mark Kalin FAIA FCSI

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BIM Goes Global

The Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), Construction Specifications Canada (CSC), buildingSMART Norway, and the STABU Foundation from the Netherlands have signed a Letter of Intent to share unified object libraries for a controlled dictionary of construction terminology. While a traditional lexicon uses a phrase to define a term, computers require explicit information to distinguish a particular concept. An object-oriented terminology library identifies terms using a serial number – a global unique identifier and its definition is described by associating the term with others. The rules are dictated by the new ISO Standard: ISO 12006-3, Building Construction: Organization of Information about Construction Works, Part 3: Framework for object-oriented information. Paraphrased from an article by Roger Grant, CSI's director of technical services and development in the January 2007 Construction Specifier. More info at <http://www.icis.org/index.php?page=tc/index.php>

UniFormat Update

Let's wish them luck. UniFormat assemblies should work well in a new BIM-based world. CSI recently appointed a UniFormat Task Team to work to harmonize the various versions of UniFormat currently in use in the construction industry and expand the scope of UniFormat to better address the needs presented by a wider array of project types throughout the project life cycle. Representatives of CSI's task team, members of the American Society of Testing and Materials (ASTM) Building Economics Subcommittee (publishers of UNIFORMAT II) and other organizations were present at the July 2006 meeting held at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to begin this process of harmonization and expansion. CSI plans a meeting of the stakeholders in early February. As you may know, UniFormat II elements include Substructure, shell, interiors, services, equipment and furnishings, and special construction and demolition in a 5-digit system. A little easier to remember than 49 Masterformat divisions.

AIA B214 Requires Green Specs

If you are a specification consultant, better check whether AIA B214 is used by your client when taking on a LEED project. AIA B214 Standard Form of Architect's Services – LEED Certification, 2004 is being used by many firms, and Paragraph 3.4 requires an architect to provide specifications that incorporate LEED requirements for including in to the contract documents, and defines the contractor's responsibilities as they pertain to LEED certification. The owner may require a surety bond from the contractor to ensure performance, and 15 states have legislation that governs energy performance-based contracts. However, if the building energy performance or LEED certification is jeopardized, and if your contract with the architect requires compliance with their contract with the owner, your specs will certainly be involved. Then there's the Spearin Doctrine that says performance based specs get you more off the legal hook than proprietary specs which imply they are suitable for the purpose. So which direction to travel? This is not legal advice as I am not an attorney – but ask yours if AIA B214 is used on your project.

The American Specification Institute

We believe contractors around the country will be pleased to recognize specifications prepared by the American Specification Institute and will feel sure of receiving fair and equitable treatment under the terms of the documents. We promote the four C's of specification writing: Clear, concise, complete and well-coordinated with drawings. Specifications should be fair and impartial. We propose to divide the country into 13 advisory committee districts for our local chapters. While we initially believed in 8 elements of a specification: Contract and Legal, Economic, General Descriptive, Preliminary Preparation, Materials, Design and Construction, Schedules and Results we now propose 31 Divisions. – actual language from The Specification Record of the American Specification Institute, incorporated March 17, 1921 and last heard from in 1931 as the depression began.

Specifications by W. Frank Bower

A comprehensive bound volume of 229 pages long available in which options and spaces are provided as the basis of a project specifications divided into the General Conditions, the Masons Specifications, the Carpenters Specifications, Electrical Specifications, Painters Specifications, Plumbers Specifications, and Heating Specifications. I entertain the hope that I have, perhaps, compiled a work which will make specification writing more sure and systematic and less arduous. W. Frank Bower, 1894,

Master Specifications

From sixty pages of hand-written master specifications compiled in 1856 from specifications prepared by New York, Boston and Philadelphia architects: Expressions in parenthesis () may be omitted, those in brackets [] substituted, those wholly enclosed may be changed. Their definitions included:

Superintendence: The Contractor is to give his personal superintendence and direction to the work, which is to commence at once and finished and the building fit for occupation by year next. Also to furnish all labor, transportation, materials, apparatus, scaffolding and utensils needful for the full performance of the work herein described in best manner, according to the true intent and meaning either expressed or implied of the specifications and the drawings which accompany them.

Quality of Work: All work and materials to be of best qualities in all cases, unless herein especially set forth to the contrary subject to the approval or rejection of the Architect. To be finished with all expedition consistent with thorough and good workmanship.

Power of Architect: The Architect to have full power to reject any material or work he may think unfit or of unsound character and cause same to be immediately removed or reconstructed at Contractor's expense, in case of whose refusal to comply with Architect's orders, the later is to have full power to procure materials and have it done by the workmen and to charge expense thereby incurred to the Contractor and to deduct same from amount due or to become due him. Sound familiar in 2007?

CSI Changes to By-Laws

If you are a CSI member, you'll be receiving a ballot soon regarding changes proposed by the CSI Board and approved unanimously. Changes include reducing the Board from 29 members to 12, creating three Board level committees for Nominating, Finance and Evaluation, and allowing members in good standing who attend the annual meeting to vote without needing that silly delegate card. My opinion, vote yes. CSI will become more dynamic as a result. See the member dialog at <http://www.csinet.org/forums>

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