

The Southern Fried Architect

(A clear, complete, concise, and mostly correct, irreverent view of stuff happening in the design/construction industry)

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Happy Anniversary Us

July marks the one-year anniversary of the *Southern Fried Architect*. Originally published as the *MasterFormat Expansion Monthly Update* (two editions) this industry publication has grown from a circulation of less than 50 to more than 100,000. In honor of this auspicious occasion, CSI Institute President, Edith Washington FCSI, CCS, as one of her first official acts in office, has named July 5, **Southern Fried Architect Day**. The day will be celebrated nationally with fireworks scheduled to welcome in the day, in almost every city and town in this country. In an unrelated story, Editor Hall wishes to extend "Birthday" greeting to his twin brother, who will also be celebrating his 49 birthday on July 5.

SFA Announces New Sister Publication

At a major press conference, the editor of *The Southern Fried Architect* has announced that beginning this Fall, they will publish a new industry newsletter devoted to technical subject matter for the design/construction industry. "After more than 25 years of screwing up construction projects and forensic investigations of others screwing up construction projects, we felt uniquely qualified to advise others on the plethora of ways we as designers, contractors, and product manufacturers have found to make attorneys rich" said Editor Hall.

This new publication entitled *Sticks + Stones*, will cast a spotlight on examples of the genius of some of the members of our industry and the impending results of our work. The publication will be organized by MasterFormat number (MF04 numbering of course) and will be written in the same pithy style as you have grown accustomed to in the *SFA*. If you have ever made a design or construction mistake, or have a friend who has really embarrassed himself or their firm, please let us know. If your example is used in the publication, we will send you a clever *Sticks + Stones/Southern Fried Architect* coffee mug. * (This is assuming we get a sponsor for the coffee mugs)

From the E-Mail Bag

Again this month, we have published a few of the many letters and e-mail we have received from our readers, seeking our advice and council on a variety of subjects. As usual, we have changed the names to prevent public ridicule and embarrassment to the senders.

Dear Southern Fried Architect:

I am an architect with a small firm and do not have any problems is specifying projects using the current edition of MasterSpec. Why should I change to the new proposed system?

Bewildered

Dear B:

First, MASTERSPEC is a master guide specification system published by ARCOM that uses MasterFormat as its organizational structure. MasterFormat is a master list of titles and numbers that organizes construction information by work results or typical construction practices. All major master specifications systems use MasterFormat as the basis of organizing their information. Now that we have cleared that up, lets get down to the real question of why change.

This question is at the heart of the issue for many firms. We went through this same issue about 15-20 years ago our firm decided to buy one of those CAD machines. It was expensive to buy and took us twice as long to draw anything on that damn contraption than by hand. The only joy was watching the plotter work and

employees would stand around, amazed at how it did its job. (This was the only work going on in the office at the time) Eventually, everyone learned the software, the pen plotters were replaced by faster laser plotter, work went out quickly, Owners began requiring all projects to be produced using CAD, changes were made faster than by hand, storage of information was easier, and now I can't hardly imagine drawing a project by hand. Boy, things sure do change in a short time period.

I suspect that the evolution from MasterFormat 95 to 04 will be pretty much the same, except we won't have the cool pen plotters to watch. We will go through the learning curve of the paired numbering structure, get use to some new terminology and forget some old, figure out how OmniClass and MasterFormat work together, and of course, change our office master specifications (this is where MASTERSPEC comes in). In the end, all this change will assist in object based design, make it easier to search, store, and retrieve construction information via the internet, and allow us to easily specify not just construction but all life cycles activities of a facilities providing expanded services for the design professional. We will then wonder how we could have every operated using the old, archaic system.

SF Architect

Dear Mr. Architect:

As a general contractor, we often have to deal with drawings and specifications that are uncoordinated and have stuff in the specs that are not a part of the project. How to I deal with this type of problem.

G. Contractor

Dear G:

The concept of coordination of drawings and specs is a lot like the concept of profit, except it seems that firms that don't coordinate all their construction documents still stay in business. Many firms strive for perfection, however since architecture is a complex human endeavor, they but fall short of the ultimate goal. I am still amazed at the attitude of some firms that drawings are custom design documents created to reflect the unique requirements for each project, while specifications are just boiler plate, printed in the last two days before the project goes out to bid. Our ole friend Peter Jordan, AIA, CSI from Houston is working on a program entitled "What Specifiers Wish Architects Knew." He wants to cover the top ten items architects need advice on, but my list could not be limited to just ten. Hopefully next month we will be able to print Peter's list.

Perhaps you should just sent your architect a few dozen of those damn RFI's that you contractors are famous for.

SF Architect

Dear SF Architect:

I was embarrassed that a member of my profession would send you such a terrible e-mail as was published in last month's issue of the *SFA*. While I have not always agreed with everything the MFETT has done, there is no question that CSI has listened to the industry and responded accordingly. Your efforts to communicate have truly been extraordinary.

Red-Faced Architect

Dear Red:

Thank you for your kind words. While the e-mail you speak of in last month edition is not typical, we do get someone every month or so that just goes off the deep end. I don't expect everyone to agree with all the task team's recommendations, however, the name-calling and mean spirited e-mails are unnecessary. Everyone on the MFETT has given a great deal of our personal time and effort to work towards improving the construction industry.

SF Architect

Tar and Feathering: On the Road for a better MasterFormat

Special thanks, to the hospitality shown by the fine folks in Eugene, Oregon, last month. Former CSI Institute President and good friend, Jim Chaney and I spend half a day hiking in the mountains and half a day at the coast during the trip. One of the best parts of this job is visiting with really great people all over the country. Below are a few more places we get to visit this month and make even more good friends.

July 12-13 MFETT Work Group Meeting
July 24 Southwest Missouri AIA/CSI Meeting

I also made my fourth visit in the last 12 months to Las Vegas this month to speak to the IBEE (that's the International Builders Exchange Executives for those you don't speak Acronym) Conference. I learned several things on this trip, but one of the most important is that the "recommendation" from a TSA (Transportation Security Administration) representative that you remove your shoes before you walk through the metal detector is not really a "recommendation". Even if you don't set off the alarm, you will be automatically, "randomly" selected and be strip-searched. Oh yea, you will then be required to remove your shoes so they can be x-rayed, just like the TSA guy "suggested" 20 minutes ago. This is information your TSA representative is not allowed to tell you but we at *SFA* are always looking for ways to provide a public service to our readers.

Quote of the Month

"You get what you inspect, not what you expect."

- *Unknown*

Technical Corner

During my visit to Eugene, I also go to spend a little time with Jim Robertson, Chairman of the CSI, Manual of Practice Editorial Advisory Board (MOP-EAB). Since the MasterFormat expansion process has become a lightning rod for criticism, this has taken a great deal of pressure off Jim and his group. He also has the advantage of blaming a lot of stuff on us, and why not, everybody else does. We are actually attempting to coordinate these two important documents. Expect to see some new terms explained in this documents. These may include, work result, procurement requirements, available information, and others. With the expansion of MasterFormat to include all life cycle activities of a facility, some other terms such as "procurement specifying" may disappear or be redefined. The famous "tower" diagram should also get a major update to reflect the new terms as well as the integration of drawings.

Originally (1978), the MOP was intended as a manual for understanding how to prepare a project manual. Over the years, it has grown to include construction administration, drawing, and product representative information. And while it has a short chapter on drawings, the Uniform Drawing System document is the industry standard for graphic construction documents and serves as the MOP for understand how to preparing this portion of construction documents. We recommend that CSI consider publishing separate documents for each of these areas of professional practice instead of trying to shoe horn them all into one large volume.

If Jim and his committee do their job correctly, and I believe they will, this will be a "must have" book for all design firms. Better start saving your nickels and dimes today, because this hardbound book, to be published by our good friends at McGraw-Hill, ain't going to be cheap. But, having a clear understanding of these principles will be invaluable and worth every penny. Besides, this investment is far cheaper than paying your attorney.

SFA Editorial Section

The OmniClass Construction Classification System (OCCS) Development Committee is schedule d to release the second draft of OmniClass in October. This is the second most important industry standard currently under development and will classify all objects that describe the built environment from conception to demolition. The current release can be downloaded from the OmniClass web site at occsnet.org. You can also download a presentation made by the co-chairs of the OCCS, Gary Beimers and Ken Guthrie from http://www.occsnet.org/presentation/csi_2003_occs_edsessionpresentation.ppt that will help explain what this organizational structure for construction information is all about.

The final workshop before the second draft is released has been scheduled for September 12-13 in Charlotte, North Carolina, home of the *Southern Fried Architect*. This marks the first time in the three-year history of the OCCS, that the governing work group has selected a city outside the capital cities of Washington, DC and Ottawa, Canada for a meeting. While this workshop may not have the importance of the last meeting of the Confederate Cabinet, also held in Charlotte on April 24, 1865 (where the surrender of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston was authorized), it is critically important to make any last minute changes before publication. This will be the last anticipated draft before Version 1 is published in 2005.

Epilog

If you are now reading this, you have probably just completed reading the July edition of *The Southern Fried Architect*, if not, go to the front of the publication and start there. What is wrong with you? This is not a who-done-it novel where the answer can be found on the last page. We have spread the answers out all through the publication. You just need to figure out the questions.

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