Ballard Architectural Studio

The Vision

Volume 1, Issue 3 Spring 2020

This Issue will cover

- What are specifications?
- UniFormat Divisions vs. MasterFormat Divisions
- What is BIM?

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What are Construction Specs

Sometimes there is no substitute for being specific. Being vague has its place in certain situations socially. However, there are other times when being specific is desperately needed, like when you are giving someone directions to a location. The results may be detrimental if you are not specific.

When we are trying to communicate any kind of detail to another person or group of people, most of us attempt to be specific, because we want them to hear and understand the message we are communicating. This is common with any type of relationship including business. But how often do we realize that those receiving our messages only understood partially what we were trying to convey. Usually it is too late and there has been some adverse consequence that has resulted.

Roof Structure under Construction

In the construction industry, partial details typically have adverse consequences, such as court battles, change orders, cost over runs, etc... The construction industry, better known as the AEC Industry (Architecture, Engineering and Construction Industry), has organized a formal process of written communication between parties. Decades ago, the need to be specific with details helped to produce construction specifications, or "specs" for short. These are standards documents that give an in-depth written explanation of construction details and the contractual process of a construction project.

Most of us are at least familiar with the term blueprints, which are construction drawings of a building.

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What is BIM

What is BIM and why is it significant? BIM is Building Information Modeling and is one of those game changers in the construction industry. It is a paradigm shift for construction project planning and execution. CAD began the shift from paper drafting to electronic drafting of components of the built environment. However, BIM is a fundamental change for design and construction professionals in the AEC Industry.

BIM is different from 3D computer graphic software, such as 3D Studio or SketchUp software.

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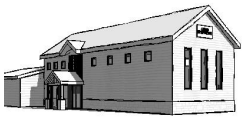
What is BIM (cont.)

These software products do have 3D computer generated representation of building designs. However, the difference with BIM is the "I" in BIM. The "I" represents information in the acronym. The computer is generating a building model in the virtual world, instead of drawings which are made of lines. The model is made up of building system components, such as doors, windows, walls, roofs, and floor systems. This is the game changer in the software. Each of the building components in the building model has the potential to be assigned specific characteristics, the "I" being the information in BIM, could be R-value, fire rating and other pertinent construction characteristics and most of these characteristics are already industry standards.



BIM Software generated perspective drawing

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What are Construction Specs

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Blueprints are the historic name for construction drawings. We could spend quite a bit of time on blueprints and construction drawings, but not in this article. Construction drawings are graphic communication of how a building will look, its size, location on the property and many other important details. Together, drawings and specifications give the necessary details to communicate to the constructors of the building what the details should be about.

There are two formats for coordinating construction details and specifications. One format is the UniFormat™ and the other is the MasterFormat™.

Uniformat is otherwise known as construction systems or construction assemblies.

Uniformat and MasterFormat are different in the following ways: According to UniFormat 2010 manual, UniFormat subdivides a facility by functional elements and MasterFormat subdivides by work results.

Subdivisions of both UniFormat and MasterFormat are also used for estimating and scheduling construction projects. In this article we will only illustrate the structure of the UniFormat Divisions.

The Structure Underlying UniFormat:

A Substructure
B Shell
C Interiors
D Services
E Equipment and Furnishings
F Special Construction and Demolition
G Sitework
Z General

View of basement during construction

The MasterFormat is subdivided into 50 different divisions. We will dedicate another article to an explanation of MasterFormat and its subdivisions.

In conclusion, the benefits of understanding and working within the construction industries specification systems will lead to less generalized and more specific explanations about details and the results will be greater clarity, quality and profits.

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