Evolving Specifications - MasterFormat to UniFormat

Just as drawings evolved from linen to electronic models as BIM so must specifications evolve. The traditional MasterSpec specifications served an industry organized by design discipline and construction trade. Today, these distinctions blur as design and construction teams become more collaborative. BIM supports collaboration, while traditional specifications encourage segregation.

Traditional specifications hinder design and construction teams from tapping the power of electronic data describing each construction project. Instead, consider new forms for specifications to meet the ever-changing project delivery systems springing from today's electronic capabilities.

Data until it is organized has little meaning. Organizing BIM, specification, and estimate data by the same means will provide improved understanding of each project element and, therefore, the entire project. Replacing MasterFormat specifications with UniFormat project descriptions allows models, specifications and estimates to be aligned, all under the same organizational system. The direct connection provides an effective means for simultaneous analysis of costs relative to function, performance, and materials.

Like in Edward De Bono’s book "New Think," consider the desired result and then consider how to best get that result. Must construction documents be traditional specifications? MasterFormat Specifications are a convention, not necessarily the only or even the best solution.

So, explore how UniFormat can organize contract documents replacing traditional specification, directly connecting the BIM with contractor's estimate and providing a means to effectively specify BIM objects as functional elements.

David is a registered architect, certified construction specifier, and founding principal of the largest independent specifications consulting firm in the United States servicing clients and project worldwide. He has over 40 years experience in specifications, preliminary project descriptions, and quality assurance reviews.

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