

## Why MasterFormat 2004?

The recent release of the section numbers and titles for *MasterFormat™ 2004 Edition* has prompted some to ask why the 1995 edition of *MasterFormat* had to be changed, or why it was changed so extensively. The new edition, to be released in full late this year, is the most significant revision of *MasterFormat* in its 40-year history. The reengineering of this industry standard sets the present and future pace for organizing construction communication.

---

The obligations of the Construction Specifications Institute as a standard-setting technical society include ensuring documents such as *MasterFormat* remain state-of-the-art for information classification systems.

---

While *MasterFormat 95* has served some facets of construction well, it is not fully meeting the needs of the industry, as products and technologies have proliferated and become more specialized and complicated. The old 16-division format, designed for buildings 40 years ago, is inadequate for the horizontal construction work and process engineering construction of today. Reorganizing and expanding *MasterFormat* will provide a tool that facilitates and efficiently organizes construction communication well into the foreseeable future.

Telecommunications is but one example of the need for change. When the original 16 divisions were created, there was one telephone company. It maintained connections needing a single telephone closet for the wiring. Phone lines were used mostly for talking. Today, building owners often provide space for much more complicated equipment, and tenants choose from a myriad of providers for the array of services 'fat pipes' bring into the building. These fast-advancing telecommunications networks, part of nearly every non-residential construction project today, carry voice as well as huge amounts of electronic data and video.

While building technologies have grown in number and complexity, new construction priorities

also have developed. Security and life safety, especially post-September 11, impact project design as never before. Green building and sustainability, rarely mentioned 40 years ago, are growing concerns.

The massive amount of information generated for modern building projects has overwhelmed the 16-division format's capacity. For some time, specifiers have made do by placing information not accommodated by the 16 divisions in project manuals, using logic and creativity. This task may not be difficult for experienced specifiers; however, *MasterFormat* is a multi-purpose categorization system that serves many facets of our industry. *MasterFormat 2004 Edition* simplifies the process of determining where specific subject matter is located.

Users also have tacked on non-standard divisions, such as Division 17. Officially, there is no such thing as Division 17, but many different versions of it have been created in organizations across the country. They cover everything from telecommunications to railway track work to traffic signaling devices. The evolution of Division 17 reflects the inability of some users to properly determine subject matter locations, or to find a location that suited what they were attempting to specify.

Even with a Band-Aid like Division 17, critical project information could be misplaced or left out entirely, resulting in costly and time-consuming change orders, errors, and omissions. The inconsistent use of non-standard *MasterFormat* numbers for subjects not covered by the 16-division structure diminishes construction coordination, and users of construction documents pay for the inconsistencies in time spent searching for information, or the consequences of overlooking information that is improperly located. In this industry, perhaps more than most, time is money.

The new divisions and additional sections make it easier for all involved in the design and construction process to locate information critical to understanding and executing their work. The new edition's reserved division numbers, in concert with its new six-digit section numbering



Edith S. Washington, FCSI, CCS, is immediate past president of the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI).  
Karl F. Borgstrom, Ph.D., is executive director of CSI. They can be reached at (800) 689-2900.



system, provide room and flexibility for *MasterFormat* to accommodate future growth in construction materials and technology.

#### Will it be a difficult transition?

For many specifiers, switching to *MasterFormat 2004 Edition* will take less time than was required by previous editions. Today's word processing software, which has a variety of powerful labor- and time-saving devices, will help users go a long way in automating the reformatting of content while maintaining consistency, including:

- Styles (a more complete way of applying formatting);
- Global search and replace;
- AutoText (to automatically change words);
- Macros (sets of instructions that carry out commands automatically); and
- Fields (special codes representing intelligent data about documents, such as footers and headers for automatically numbering pages, or adding text identifying a specific project).

"If you're using the technology, it's going to be simple," says Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) Toledo member Louise Schlatter, RA, CCS. She is architectural department manager and a senior project architect at SSOE Inc. "[For] the primary users of *MasterFormat* in its previous versions, the change that they will have to make is extraordinarily small."

CSI member David E. Lorenzini, FCSI, CCS, SCIP, an independent construction specifier in Leesburg, Virginia, agrees: "Most of the routines will be search-and-replace-type things," he says. As an example, for section numbers appearing throughout a document, a specifier can globally replace 80 to 95 percent of the five-digit section numbers with the new six-digit numbers simply by adding a zero.

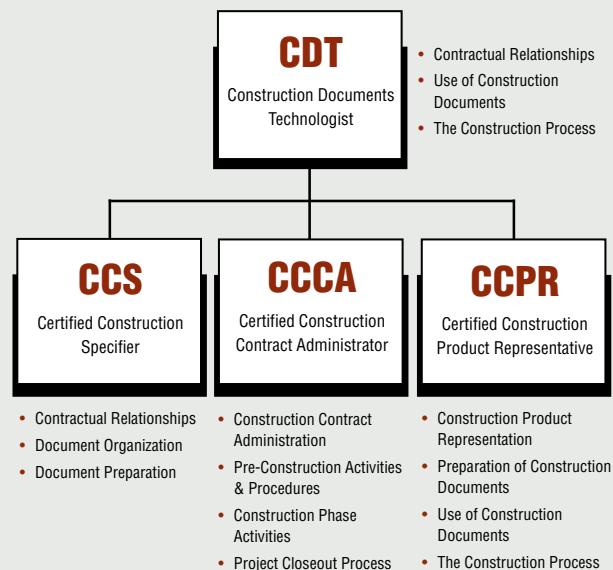
Lorenzini suggests another aid for a smooth transition is to develop, use, and keep current a master specifications template instead of going to a previous project's specs when starting a new project. Templates are special documents that can contain styles, macros, and other automated features to provide a customized basis for new documents. The customized features and automated routines in a template are available to all documents. Making changes to a template means those changes only have to be done once. Lorenzini estimates the conversion for most specifiers will be about an 80-hour task.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a look at *MasterFormat* from different viewpoints:

- For manufacturer representatives, contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers, it will simply be a matter of learning the new numbers applicable to their product or work.

# Reason #24 To be CSI Certified:

"CSI CERTIFICATION WAS A REQUIREMENT IN THE LAST SEVERAL JOB CHANGES I HAD. I WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED WITHOUT IT."



### Upcoming Certification Locations & Dates:

|  |                       |                      |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Southeast Region Conference</b>       | <b>Sept. 24, 2004</b> | <b>Marietta, GA</b>  |
| <b>Middle Atlantic Region Conference</b> | <b>Sept. 30, 2004</b> | <b>Camp Hill, PA</b> |
| <b>Northwest Region Conference</b>       | <b>Oct. 7, 2004</b>   | <b>Union, WA</b>     |

Get more information about CSI's Certification Programs at

**[www.csinet.org/certification](http://www.csinet.org/certification)**

FAX: **(703) 684-8436**

PHONE: **(800) 689-2900**



The Construction  
Specifications Institute

- Architects will find the divisions covering the products they specify comfortably familiar.
- The increased number of divisions related to mechanical and electrical work provides easy-to-find locations for the variety of systems and products engineers must specify.
- Building owners will find *MasterFormat 2004 Edition* works extremely well for maintaining project information, record documents, and other related data critical to facility maintenance and operation.
- Once in place, the expanded system will require less work on the part of those who prepare and disseminate construction information, and allow quick retrieval of information by users.

Any costs incurred for word processing, printed materials, or modifying electronic databases will be more than offset by the long-term usability and expandability of *MasterFormat 2004 Edition*. The cooperation of those who provide construction information resources—ranging from master specifications systems, manufacturer data, and estimating tools—is critical to the implementation of *MasterFormat 2004 Edition*. The major providers

of these resources are working cooperatively with CSI to implement the new edition. Their cooperation will help facilitate and ensure swift adoption by users throughout the industry.

As a final point, the obligations of the Construction Specifications Institute as a standard-setting technical society include ensuring documents such as *MasterFormat* remain state-of-the-art for information classification systems. CSI, with the support and participation of a broad spectrum from the design and construction industry, has recognized the need for change, and led the process of revising *MasterFormat* to meet the future needs of that industry. In addition, the Institute is committed to providing training and tools that support the transition to *MasterFormat 2004 Edition*. ♥

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Read Lorenzini's article in the *The Construction Specifier's* March 2002 issue for more information on the power of today's word processing software. Go to [www.csinet.org](http://www.csinet.org) and click on *The Construction Specifier*, followed by Archives (for 2002), then March 2002.

## CSI Releases Section Numbers and Titles for *MasterFormat's* Upcoming 2004 Edition

The Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) has released the section numbers and their titles for the upcoming *MasterFormat 2004 Edition*. They are available for downloading at no charge from the Institute's website ([www.csinet.org/masterformat](http://www.csinet.org/masterformat)) so *MasterFormat* users can start familiarizing themselves with them in preparation for switching to the new edition, scheduled to be released late this year.

A significant difference in the 2004 edition's numbers and titles is the six-digit numbering system that replaces the five-digit format of previous editions. For example, the number for the section titled Concrete Reinforcement changes from 03200 to 03 20 00. In the six-digit format, the first two digits signify the division number (03) as they did in the five-digit version. The second pair of numbers represents classification Level Two, and the third pair, Level Three. A fourth level is defined for some sections. It is represented by a dot and another pair of numbers (i.e. 03 20 00.00).

By using pairs of digits for each classification level, the six-digit section numbering system provides room for more than 10 times as many subjects—at each level—than is available in

the five-digit format. That will help *MasterFormat* users access far more comprehensive and detailed product specifications data amid the rapidly growing volume and complexity of information generated for modern non-residential building projects.

The new section numbers and titles (and their numbering system) help make the 2004 edition the most extensive rewrite of *MasterFormat* in its 40-year history. With its expanded number of divisions, the new edition addresses project information's dramatic growth, driven by spectacular advances in construction technology. For example, there are new divisions for fast-advancing areas such as computer and telecommunications networks, integrated building automation systems, and electronic safety and security. To easily accommodate future growth, 15 of the new edition's 50 division numbers are reserved to address new products and systems technologies as they develop.

The 2004 edition is also the first to cover engineering-related construction. The Site and Infrastructure subgroup of divisions cover transportation, utility, and marine construction, while the Process Equipment subgroup addresses industrial and process engineering construction. ♥