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The “Connection” is the official publication of the National Institute of Steel Detailing, Inc., 2600 Kitty Hawk Rd., Suite 117, Livermore, CA 94551. Editor, John Linn

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This Connection highlights our Annual Meeting held in Orlando, Florida last April. As we have done for several years now, this year’s meeting was held in conjunction with NASCC. It is more economical to hold both events together and enables attendees to save by having one air fare and one travel time for two meetings.

In addition, having our meeting with NASCC gives us a much bigger bang for our buck. It looks like more of our members are starting to realize this, as attendance has grown every year since the low attendance years we had during the great recession.

Our Vice President Alden Prier has been doing a great job of finding good speakers, most of whom address topics of interest to our profession. I always come away from the meetings with a more optimistic outlook for our future. One of the biggest reasons for that comes from meeting new and impressive people who understand what steel detailing is and can discuss similar business experiences and ideas to solve common problems.

What it comes down to is that it’s nice to know that you’re not in this thing alone. Like any business we have both good and bad times and so does everyone else.

I hope to see greater numbers of attendance at the next meeting in San Antonio, scheduled for March 2017. Give it some serious consideration and make plans to be there to celebrate your great profession along with some of your fellow travelers on this great journey.

I want to thank Larry Laws and Glenn Ihde for their job site articles in this issue. I also want to thank Kerri Olsen for the many articles she has undertaken to write for this issue and many thanks to all of you who have contributed in any way.
Hello Everyone,

I hope the summer finds you with lots of fun and family time. If you’re like me it seems like we as detailers either have too much work or are busy trying to find work. I hope you will take time for yourself and your family this year to enjoy the summer and all that goes with it.

If you were not at the AISC NASCC, or able to attend the NISD Annual Meeting in April, we missed you. Both conferences were full of interesting sessions and people. The NASCC had almost as many attendees as last year’s record crowd in Nashville. We held our NISD Conference immediately following the NASCC as we have for the last couple of years, in order to hopefully save on travel time and costs for our members as well as our speakers and guests. We had a wonderful meeting with some great speakers and guests. As always, our Vice President, Alden Prier had a great agenda of educational and interesting topics. We wrapped up the weekend with a wonderful dinner where we recognized what is usually the “Man of the Year”. Our “Person of the Year” this year was Kerri Olsen. I would like to congratulate Kerri and thank her for her tireless work and support of our organization. She represents the NISD at many functions, contributes articles, gives talks and is a great champion of all our programs.

Next year, in March, the NASCC is in San Antonio and once again we are planning on having our Annual Meeting immediately following the AISC conference. I hope you will make plans to attend. You don’t know what you are missing if you haven’t been to one of our meetings.

One of our sessions this year was given by Bill Issler, CEO of FabSuite. His topic was about giving back to others. In the last few weeks, this topic has been on my mind because my family has been personally touched by the last few weeks of life of my father-in-law. As we have been at his side while on hospice, I have witnessed a steady stream of people coming to pay their respects to a simple country man who has spent a lifetime giving to others. Whether witnessing to them about his faith, giving them food from his garden, cutting their grass or visiting them in their times of crisis or need, so many have remembered his kindness and service. His example didn’t take a lot of money, only love and time. I would encourage all of you to take time to give back to others wherever you can. Whether through your church, your community, or even your business or a volunteer organization like the NISD. It will pay great dividends and leave a legacy that goes beyond your lifetime.

Have a great summer!

Training, Safety, Leadership – Training Spotlight

AISC and IMPACT Introduce Steel Detailer Training Series

Originally developed by AISC and the National Institute of Steel Detailing, the AISC Detailer Training Series is being made available as a free web-based service thanks to funding from IMPACT.

The DTS program provides an introduction and overview of the roles and responsibilities of the steel detailer. This program consists of 10 Modules – most with multiple parts. Each of these parts consists of a series of videos, followed by a quiz pertaining to the concepts covered in that section. Click on a module listing on the DTS page to begin. At the end of the (entire) course is a final exam. A certificate of completion is earned upon passing this exam. Each exam can be repeated until a passing score is achieved.
Annual Meeting Event Sponsors - Summer 2016

Thank You!

NISD would like to give special thanks to the generous sponsors who contributed to this year’s Annual Meeting.

If you ever have the opportunity to thank them personally please let them know that you do appreciate their participation and contributions to our annual meeting.

Welcome Reception Cocktails Provided By – Apex Structural Design, LTD

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Kerri Olsen 2016 Person of the Year Award

President Joel Hicks presented the NISD Person of the Year award to Kerri Olsen. Kerri is a steel professional with 37 years trade experience, with a strong background in steel estimating, steel detailing and project management. After spending many years as VP of Operations and Production, Kerri also became a business owner specializing in steel estimating and steel detailing.

Kerri is currently acting as Marketing Chair for NISD. She has traveled to numerous industry conferences to represent our Institute. At these many events she has introduced NISD to hundreds of people who previously knew nothing about us. Through her work-associated travels, Kerri has had the opportunity to visit with steel fabricators across the US. This broad-based contact has helped Kerri to better understand that design drawing and steel detailing issues are the same nationwide. This presence with the steel fabricator enables Kerri (when asked, and they almost always do) to educate the fabricator as to the root cause of their woes. Further, she may then explain that the best remedy is to first hire a steel detailer of high caliber. This is when the conversation turns to the NISD, what we are and what we do, and why we are different than the others.

Kerri is a published author, having written many articles regarding steel detailing for The (Seattle) Daily Journal of Commerce, Modern Steel Construction, ENR Magazine, Structure Magazine, and NISD’s Connection. Kerri also authored the Commercial Steel Estimating manual, which is distributed and sold by The Industrial Press, or Kerri’s website at www.steeladvice.com, or any bookseller.

Kerri’s extensive promotion of the NISD, through personal contact and in the articles she writes for so many publications, is what has made us aware of her continued commitment to the industry. It is in recognition of Kerri’s past and present work that it was decided she should receive the much deserved Person of the Year award.

These events are great ways to stay current on trends, and network with others. Join us for any of these events in 2016 & 2017.

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<td>October 18, 2016</td>
<td>BIMForum Conference – Atlanta, GA</td>
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<td>November 15-17, 2016</td>
<td>Autodesk University – Las Vegas, NV</td>
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<td>March 22-24, 2017</td>
<td>NASCC: The Steel Conference – San Antonio, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 24-25, 2017</td>
<td>NISD 49th Annual Conference – San Antonio, TX</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 27-29, 2017</td>
<td>45th Annual SEAA National Convention – Myrtle Beach, SC</td>
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Behind Every Principle There is a Promise

by Kerri Olsen

National Institute of Steel Detailing

Industry Standard

Every new member of the NISD gets a copy of the National Institute of Steel Detailing Industry Standard with the package of publications sent out from the home office when they join. A copy may be purchased individually using the Publications Order Form linked to the NISD website.

While the document itself is only about 50 pages long, it is a very well written and it can be a powerful tool for those who use it as part of their business practice. When you read this document, the thought comes to mind that while WE may know and understand this content, our customers and other industry partners may not have the same understanding.

Included with the Industry Standard is a CD loaded with a batch of standard forms. These forms are intended to support the steel detailer with a format for implementing the elements of the Standard as part of their daily business practice. There are forms to assist with design drawing review, analysis and evaluation, estimating, proposals, task outlines, submittal schedules, drawing logs, RFIs, extra work, change orders, authorization to proceed and Impact notices.

Using the Industry Standard format and forms provides the steel detailer with a method and the tools to help them stay in front of their projects. The idea is to prevent becoming overrun with undocumented and unproductive activity, which then invites confusion and frustration for both the steel detailer and the client. When misunderstandings occur it is almost always the undocumented items which cause the most difficult problems.

The Industry Standard is a compilation of many years of steel detailing industry trade experience. This valuable experience is being shared for the benefit of the entire construction team. Begin with a good plan, maintain that plan, and your work will have the best chance to come to a successful end. It is the proven history of this behavior that is defined within these pages. We have but to follow it to maintain good business practices.

Chapter 1 – Introduction and Commentary

The first paragraph of the first chapter titled Statement of Purpose sets the tone for the entire publication. It states, “This document defines and comments on the business, technical and professional principles and practices of the steel detailing industry. It provides a basis for evaluating services provided by steel detailing firms that will assist both those firms and others within the construction industry.”

This first chapter describes the history of steel detailing, the beginnings of the NISD, and it outlines a suggested guide regarding the relationship between the steel detailer and other trade professionals. That contractual relationship is defined by what services are routine and what is considered to be extra work.

Also in chapter one is the NISD Code of Ethics and Standard Practices. It describes in detail the detailer’s relationship with other detailers, clients, engineers and other trades.

Reading through these items brings to mind the importance of documented communication, and how that communication is a two-way street. Meeting the needs of our clients is paramount, and educating our client as to how they may best facilitate their own work may be a continuing process.

Chapter 2 – Overview of the Steel Detailing Industry

This chapter for the Overview describes the industry demands for the steel detailer, what the steel detailer provides as a service to their client, and to the rest of the construction team regarding the relationship, expectations and responsibilities.

This Overview is significant as it provides clarity as to what is required and expected as the function of the steel detailer, as their work goes beyond the preparation of shop detail drawings with the need for a broad-based gathering of information within the critical path task of the project schedule.

Continued on page 15
Classification:
☐ Senior Detailer – Class I: Minimum 10 years experience including checking
☐ Detailer – Class II: Minimum 5 years experience

Category:
☐ Structural/Miscellaneous  ☐ Bridge

Submit:
• Experience history, and
• Either a letter of recommendation from a steel fabricator, a Certified Class I detailer, or a NISD National Director.

When your application is processed, you will receive a sample test and a list of publications to study for the test.

IDC Test Fee Schedule
At time of application + 10 days prior to test + proctor fee (if applicable)

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### AISC/NISD Detailing for Steel Construction Manual
[Third Edition] Contact AISC at 847-364-1222 or [www.aisc.org](http://www.aisc.org)

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Congratulations!

This regular feature recognizes detailers who have recently taken and passed the IDC test. The listing is by discipline and class.

Structural/Miscellaneous

Senior Detailer — Class I

Paulo Aguero
Dean Tropical Metalico S.A.
San Jose, Costa Rica

Bobbi Fletchall
HME, Inc.
Topeka, KS

Yuxiu Liu
Precision Steel Detailing, Inc.
Baton Rouge, LA

Alexander Manrique
Industrial Services Enterprises
Randolph, NJ

Darin Schneidewind
Haas Metal Engineering
Topeka, KS

Howard Stice
Haas Metal Engineering
Topeka, KS

Jorge Vega
Dean Tropical Metalico S.A.
San Jose, Costa Rica

Qingfang Wu
Precision Steel Detailing, Inc.
Baton Rouge, LA

Detailer — Class II

Aaron Blair
Dennis Steel, Inc.
Leander, TX

Bridge

Senior Detailer — Class I

Douglas Weaver
Weaver Bridge Corp.
Granville, OH

Ace & Stewart Detailing, Inc.
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Russell Jay Neal

Individual Detailer Certification Program

Industry professionals are in search of talented detailers who have the knowledge and capability to produce quality shop drawings within the framework of various codes, specifications and contract documents.

NISD created the Individual Detailer Certification Program in response to the steel industry’s need to measure the skill level of individuals performing steel detailing services.

This is not a test of memory but a test of ability. The exam’s emphasis is based on a candidate’s knowledge of the various techniques, codes, and specifications involved in detailing.
It was wonderful to see our old friends and familiar faces at the Friday night Welcome Reception; even more exciting was to meet new members and to re-acquaint ourselves with those who have been absent awhile. The welcome reception is always a great way to reconnect, and to get advice from other industry professionals who are living the same dream as you are. It doesn’t matter if you are a steel detailer in the US or in the Philippines; we all have the same business, personnel and software concerns for which we seek a better resolution! It helps to explore those options by discussing our experiences with others. As is always customary, this “icebreaker” event helps to encourage lively discussions and socializing. Thanks again to Apex Structural Design Ltd. for their generous contribution to sponsor the Welcome Reception!
We were surprised and pleased to have Ian Coates of Autodesk join us for the annual meeting this year. Ian has not been able to attend for a few years now so it was wonderful to see him again! Ian talked to us about the progression of Graitec to Advance Steel to Autodesk, and what the program offers from modeling to a complete set of detail drawings. The program is being offered free to technical colleges. Autodesk has changed its sales policy, so the program is now available as subscription-based software. This opportunity makes the program both affordable and accessible.

William Ikerd
Ikerd Consulting LLC

Will updated us as to the list of accomplishments for the past year. NISD is an active partner with him in the CD-BIM Program: The Building Information Modeling Education Program – cd-bim.com. Will talked about how the AGC received the CD-BIM Forum with open arms. The webinar series is for all disciplines. Will also brought up the question: ‘What is the definition of the obligations regarding steel detailing and BIM?’ And this discussion brought up many questions as to the potential impact on the work of a steel detailer. There is a calendar of webinars available at the NISD website – just click on the ‘Webinars’ tab to view.

Bill Issler
FabSuite, LLC

Bill discussed how his career began, how much it has grown and changed, and how his commitment to support the steel detailing industry remains strong. Bill shared with us his own personal experiences relative to his foundation as a steel detailer at the beginning of his career, and then spoke about how his career progressed to where he is today as owner of FabSuite, LLC. Bill then opened the floor to discussion and encouraged each one present to share their own story about how they got their start as a steel detailer. It was very interesting to learn how many of us really didn’t start out with steel detailing as a career goal, but then ‘caught the bug’ due to our exposure to steel fabrication and steel detailing. Bill is a wonderful speaker and his presentation reminds us of how important it is to keep things in perspective and to remain positive and optimistic.

Kerri Olsen
Steeladvice.com

Kerri talked about the challenges we all have endured over recent years regarding our effort to get steel detailers to work more closely with the design team. Technology has changed the way we produce our shop and erection drawings, and while CAD programs have simplified some of the work, the manner by which we do it is more complicated. Kerri spoke about the need for more education regarding the NISD quality certification programs to design groups and other industry professionals. Kerri also discussed the opportunity now available for interested individuals to obtain a technical diploma in structural steel detailing through the Flex Learning Virtual College program being offered by the North Central Technical College in Wausau, Wisconsin. The Structural Steel Detailing Project Management course is focused on presenting the NISD Industry Standard, which provides a solid foundation for good steel detailing business practice, and which is helpful for every steel detailer in their day-to-day needs with estimating and managing their projects.
**Regular Membership** is open to any company that conducts its office in the Americas for, and is regularly engaged in, the business of steel detailing. Such office shall have been conducted for a minimum period of one year. A member in this category may be chapter affiliated or a member-at-large, and has all privileges and benefits of membership including voting and holding office.

**Fee Schedule:**
- $290 for companies with a gross annual income of less than $250,000 [June-September]
- Prorated dues when joining October-February $200 March to May 31 of the following year (15 months) $290
- $450 for companies with a gross annual income greater than $250,000 [June-September]
- Prorated dues when joining October-February $305 March to May 31 of the following year (15 months) $450

**Associate Membership** is open to any company, national or regional trade or professional association interested in enhancing the detailing profession or the activities of the NISD, whose primary business is not in structural steel detailing. This category includes all privileges and benefits of membership except those of voting and holding office.

**Fee Schedule:**
- Annual membership fee is $360 [June-September]
- Prorated dues when joining October-February $245 March to May 31 of the following year (15 months) $360

**Individual Associate Membership** is open to a person employed as a steel detailer or other person interested in the future of the steel detailing industry but who does not fall in the category of Regular or Associate membership. This category has limited privileges and benefits of membership, which precludes them from voting and holding office.

**Fee Schedule:**
- Annual membership fee is $65
- Annual dues of $65 are renewable on June 1st

**Overseas Membership** is open to any company that conducts a regular office for, and is regularly engaged in, the business of steel detailing outside the Americas. Such office shall have been conducted for a minimum period of one year. Members in this category may vote (no proxy votes), but they may not hold national office.

**Fee Schedule:**
- Annual membership fee is $450 [June-September]
- Prorated dues when joining October-February $305 March to May 31 of the following year (15 months) $450

**Member Emeritus Membership** is open to any individual who was a former regular member of the NISD and has retired from the competitive field, but wishes to remain active in the NISD. Members in this category may not hold office.

**Fee Schedule:**
- Annual membership fee is $100
- Annual dues of $100 are renewable on June 1st

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The undersigned hereby applies for membership in the National Institute of Steel Detailing, Inc.

Name ______________________________ Title ______________________________

Company Name ____________________________________________________________________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________________________________________________________________________

City __________________ State/Province __________________ Zip/Postal Code __________________

Country __________________________________________________________

Telephone __________________ Fax __________________

E-mail __________________ Web site __________________

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**Payment in US Dollars**

Membership Fee: US$__________

Postage/handling, add: $40 for Canada $__________

Central & South America $__________

$45 for International $__________

TOTAL ENCLOSED US$__________

**Method of Payment**

- Check, payable to: NISD, Inc.
  2600 Kitty Hawk Rd., Suite 117
  Livermore, CA 94551-9699

- MasterCard
- Visa

Number:________________________ Expiration Date:________

Signature:________________________

To receive a free subscription to *Modern Steel Construction* magazine (U.S. only) go to: www.modernsteel.com/subscriptions
This is truly the toughest job of all to accomplish within a timeline, especially when you understand all of the different construction disciplines included with creating an accurate and complete set of shop detail drawings.

The talents and abilities needed for steel detailing are defined in the lists for the Technical, Project Management, Visualization and Communication requirements bound within the basic steel detailer’s abilities. These lists are not necessarily all inclusive, for as technology continues to advance, the need for greater technical competence among steel detailers also increases.

The development of the role of the steel detailer has moved from serving only the steel fabricator into being the informational and technical resource to the entire construction project. Beginning with the introduction and continuing development of steel detailing software, and now with the inclusion of BIM modeling, including the steel detailer as part of the design team is the most efficient way of supporting the Critical Path Method for any project.

I am aware of a recent situation with an NISD steel detailer who was having an extremely difficult time getting some very necessary dimensions from the design team on a project. The Architect of Record simply stated that they did not need to provide them. I received a call from this detailer asking my opinion. My advice for how I would handle this was the following: Immediately, stop work on the project. Send to your customer a very nice, yet detailed letter outlining every point of issue, together with a copy of the Guidelines for Successful Presentation of Steel Design Documents and the NISD Industry Standard.

They followed my advice. The project manager for the general contractor, in an attempt to keep the project moving forward, sent the detailer marked up PDFs of design drawings with their scaled dimensions. Shortly thereafter, the architect sent out a notice that they ‘had to do significant rework’ to their design drawings, so the project was put on hold until the corrected drawings were to be released.

This is a significant win for the steel detailer, not to mention a big save for their fabricator customer and the general contractor who has an inexperienced project manager working this project. One can imagine the consequences for all concerned if the steel detailer had continued down the destructive path that the rest of the team was driving them to follow. By utilizing the RFI system, the steel design guidelines and the Industry Standard, the team may expect a much better outcome than the one for which they were headed.

Sometimes the guy in the caboose needs to notify the engineer that the train has derailed.

Publications from NISD... 
These reference guides are available. 
Order them online at www.nisd.org
On the Job Site — Will Rogers Memorial Center

NISD member Glenn Ihde & Co.

Location: Fort Worth, Texas

Our NISD Secretary-Treasurer, Glenn Ihde, recently completed two new structures at the Will Rogers Memorial Center at Fort Worth, Texas. From what I have learned about Fort Worth, it could justifiably lay claim to being the king of all the cattle towns in the world. In addition to the Will Rogers Memorial center there are several other stockyards located in the immediate area. They all center around cattle and livestock auctions, rodeos and all things “cowboy.”

The Will Rogers Memorial Center is huge. The site encompasses over 86 acres with over 40 acres under roof. That calculates out to 1,742,400 square feet of roof area. Over a million people visit the site each year to enjoy checking out the 28,000 head of top quality livestock on exhibit there.

Glenn Ihde & Co. detailed two 300 foot long adjacent buildings. Both have arched roofs. The tower promenade is narrower and is framed using rolled wide flange roof beams. The wider cattle barn is framed using curved roof trusses with in line column braces and lateral braces at every bay. There was obviously a great deal of repetition throughout the 300 foot length of each building.

In learning about this project, I was impressed by the enormous size of the livestock business in Texas and I was pleased that this facility is dedicated to that great cowboy philosopher Will Rogers. We would all do well to bear in mind one of his favorite lines: “I never met a man I didn’t like.”
... I was pleased that this facility is dedicated to that great cowboy philosopher Will Rogers. We would all do well to bear in mind one of his favorite lines: “I never met a man I didn’t like.”

Cattle Barn:

Framed using curved roof trusses with in line column braces and lateral braces at every bay.

Tower Promenade:

Framed using rolled wide flange roof beams.
On the Job Site — A Beautiful Stair in Portland

NISD member Larry Laws Steel Detailing, Inc.

Location: Portland, Oregon

The Vintage Plaza Hotel located in Portland, Oregon really knows how to make a good impression on its visitors and guests. As you can see from the photographs, their coffee house stair is a beautiful circular design inside of a beautifully appointed room. But what really makes the stair so unusual is that it has one stringer along the outside of the curve, but has no stringer at the inside curve.

The ½” plate treads are fillet welded all around to the single HSS16x4x5/8 outside stringer. The treads cantilever 3’-10” out from the tube and also carry quite a heavy railing which is composed of vertical flat bar 2x1/2 spaced at 3-3/16 inches on center. The risers are actually made of clear glass.

This little jewel of a stair was detailed by long time NISD member Larry Laws Steel Detailing, Inc. Senior detailer, Douglas Coffman, told me that the stair was shipped to the job site and erected in one piece. The cantilevered treads are strong and firm. They have no vibration even when put to the test of two detailers jumping up and down on them as Larry and Douglas have done.

If you ever get to Portland, you might want to stop in at the Vintage Plaza to check out their beautiful staircase and coffee house and enjoy a nice cup of coffee in colorful and stylish surroundings.
Front View - Notice the steel has a lacquer finish, and see the tiny lights at each tread.

... what really makes the stair so unusual is that it has one stringer along the outside of the curve, but has no stringer at the inside curve.

Rear View - Note the cantilevered treads.
The Ever Changing World of Steel Detailing

by Kerri Olsen

So much is going on right now in the world of steel detailing. Many of us steel detailers are unsure of what really matters to us personally and professionally as we navigate our way through the day-to-day work load. Understand this though – our lack of attention and action on our part will land many of us in a place we do not want to be.

Proof of activity beyond our input and control became very apparent during the annual meeting discussion regarding BIM modeling. Right on the heels of the BIM modeling update, member discussions began about the proposed new AISC ‘Certification Standard for Steel Fabrication and Erection, and Manufacturing of Metal Components section 1.7, Detailing.’ This section on Detailing, which outlines the requirements for the steel fabricator to ‘prepare and use detailing standards describing technical preferences and requirements,’ assumes that the steel fabricator fully understands the work of a steel detailer. Some steel detailers may wonder then if the fabricator will try to do this on their own or if they will consult with the steel detailer to accomplish this task.

The time for public comment on the revisions to the AISC certification standard is now closed, and while many of us did provide our comments, it is unclear how our comments were received.

BIM Modeling – As modeling becomes a more prevalent requirement as part of the steel detailer’s scope of work, many questions are raised regarding our level of responsibility. Coordination of the work through modeling may be mentioned in the project specifications, though the interpretation of the work involved is generally assumed by the general contractor and our customer, and not necessarily in our favor.

While involvement from members of our group is not specifically invited at this stage of development, it does warrant our immediate attention. Our level of participation and subsequent costs may be isolated from the regular cost of production, and should be part of discussions at the time of bid for any job, and should definitely be discussed and determined prior to the award for a project.

Often, much of the work involved may not present itself until the work is actually executed. How are we to know the time we will actually spend in coordination with other trades? How is this time to be quoted? When this activity is not given specific parameters at a time prior to execution, we leave ourselves open to take on all of the responsibility to obtain every bit of information needed to complete the model.

However the model coordination work is determined, steel detailers need to be aware of the amount of their own work that may be involved with this requirement. Then the steel detailer may specifically include or exclude this work in their quote, or offer an added alternative with specific qualifications.

For those who want to learn about BIM, there are many formats available for education. For more information on the information and education available, go to the NISD.org website and click on the tab for Webinars. Register for the next available – there is no cost – and find out what is going on!

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The Ever Changing World of Steel Detailing (Continued from page 20)

Steel Detailing Boom – With the construction industry still booming, the demand for steel detailers is still running at a very high level. The availability of IDC- and/or QPP-certified detailers does not keep up with the demand. The winter 2015 Connection article ‘What Does Membership Mean to You?’ mentioned the need for an offload networking system, designed for supporting and keeping our customers through this busy time. When we turn business away, we are opening the door for our competition, and may not see them return.

The environment to which we send our potential customers and workload is like quicksand; once they walk into that pit of cheap detailing they may be lost forever. The available competition is likely not educated in the same way QPP- or IDC-certified steel detailers are, and while our potential customers may survive the impact, in spite of all else, they only remember the low price. Fabricators often attribute their project woes as just a typical course for the work. Trying to convince them otherwise is like talking to the wind.

It has been reported that steel detailers working in other economic environments often have a top pay scale of $5.00 per hour. Steel detailing companies that provide an American face to out-of-country workers make sales offers at significant discounts to potential US clients. Often, our home grown customers do not recognize the difference with drawing presentation, nor do they appreciate the benefits of good business practice sense executed by properly educated steel detailers. Steel fabricators are buying into the ‘savings’ for steel detailing, and then ignore the shop chaos caused by substandard drawings.

The root cause of the shop chaos and cost overruns is beyond the comprehension of most steel fabricators, and so is not attributed to the steel detailer they hired.

As we continue to be unable to meet our customer needs locally, the work goes elsewhere. The competition amongst the companies themselves that pay the $5.00 an hour for steel detailing increases, as does the demand for steel detailers. Over time, the hourly wage goes up, as does the pricing for steel detailing. For some, this is not happening fast enough.

Our hope for our industry partners and member steel detailers is that during this time of transition, the demand for educated and quality steel detailing increases. The demand for more educated and certified steel detailers will result in better shop detail drawings and serviceability to the customer as well as faster increase in pay.

Education – A degreed engineer does not a steel detailer make. Nor is someone who can produce a shop detail drawing using any of the CAD programs a steel detailer. The difference lies in the drawing editing, and this talent only lives with the experienced steel detailer.

... A degreed engineer does not a steel detailer make.

The little nuances often missed by our customers speak loudly to the shop and field, and without them the workability of the shop and erection drawings is gone. The project manager for the fabricator will often not notice, for this level of education often only comes with experience. So they don’t know. Because editing shop detail drawings only happens by experienced steel detailers, we are talking about a level of knowledge that is not specifically anywhere else beyond on the job experience.

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The Ever Changing World of Steel Detailing

If the steel detailer in the shop or hired by the steel fabricator does not know or understand proper editing, then even if the drawings are ‘correct’ they will not be workable due to the improper editing status.

So, let’s talk about steel detail drawings that have been created without being properly edited. Can you fabricate without them? Yes, but not without consequences.

Can the field erect without them? Yes, but not without consequences.

When does the steel fabricator usually find this out? For the shop, almost as soon as they are released. For the field, as soon as they try to install the steel.

Even when the steel fabricator doesn’t know the first thing about properly edited drawings, the first clue should be the amount and type of questions from the shop. The second is the amount of busy work they have to do to set things right after a question or issue has come up. The quantity and type of questions from the field will be next, lasting until the last piece of steel has been installed. Often our customers do not realize the root cause of this fact of fabrication life. A discussion about what you as the steel detailer are offering them, as a contrast to what they have been buying for steel detailing, would help them to understand.

We write much about the Individual Detailer Certification and the Quality Procedures Programs, but a couple of significant factors are often not mentioned strongly enough – time and experience. The requirement for the IDC Class II Steel Detailer is 5 years. The Class I Senior Detailer is 10 years, including checking. The application for QPP includes a listing of projects going back 10 years, and two letters of recommendation within the past year.

This requirement of time and experience is not just about service, it is about the knowledge, which comes from years of service. Proper drawing edits is included with that knowledge and experience, and is part of the IDC testing.

The field of competition includes individuals who may have been detailing a year or less, BUT they have an engineering degree. The steel fabricator thinks this is a good thing, and tends to rate this above a trained steel detailing professional. This is an education issue. Unfortunately, it is an education that the fabricators’ project managers get too late in their careers unless they are lucky enough to have steel detailers who are motivated enough to help educate them.
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