

CHANGES IN THE CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS INSTITUTE PROJECT MANUAL ORGANIZATION

By Lisa Strine Lassi, PE, CDT



In 1963 the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI) developed the first standard for organizing construction information. This standard, which later became known as *MasterFormat™*, provides the organizational format and standard location for arranging Project Manuals. The Project Manual, which contains the various documents involved in a construction project, is utilized to guide the construction process. Over the last forty years, *MasterFormat* has become the leading standard for organizing construction specifications and is frequently utilized by architects, engineers, contractors, and owners.

MasterFormat organizes information about construction work results, requirements, products, and activities into a standard sequence using a master list of numbers and subject titles. Because construction projects use many different delivery methods, products, and installation methods, successful completion of a project requires effective communication among all the involved parties. CSI developed *MasterFormat* in order to effectively communicate construction documentation utilizing the “four Cs”: Clear, Concise, Correct, and Complete.

Over the years, many revisions and expansions to *MasterFormat* have occurred due to changes in the construction industry. The most recent revision to *MasterFormat*, issued in 2004, included a significant expansion and reorganization of the Project Manual Division numbers. *MasterFormat* 2004 was created because the previous version, *MasterFormat* 1995, was overcrowded in many Divisions and could not continue to meet the needs of building engineering and facility services. In addition, *MasterFormat* 1995 did not adequately address facility management and operations activities for the whole life cycle of construction projects. In some Divisions, *MasterFormat* 1995 had become more of a product listing system than a system for organizing Project Manuals, as was originally intended.

MasterFormat 2004 divides the Project Manual into two groups: the Procurement and Contracting Requirements Group, and the Specifications Group. The Procurement and Contracting Requirements Group, Division 00 in the Project Manual, contains introductory information, procurement requirements, and contracting requirements. The Specifications Group contains the following five Subgroups: General Requirements (Division 01), Facility Construction (Divisions 02-19), Facility Services (Divisions 20-29), Site and Infrastructure (Divisions 30-39), and Process Equipment (Divisions 40-49).

MasterFormat 2004 utilizes a six digit section number in each Division allowing for more section numbers than the five-digit section numbers utilized in *MasterFormat* 1995 Divisions. The section numbers consist of three pairs of numbers, each pair separated by a space, with the ability to add a fourth pair of digits at the end, after a decimal point, when needed for very specific or user defined topics. In addition, there are now 50 Divisions available, as opposed to 16 Divisions under the 1995 version. This new numbering system allows for more than 100 times the number of subjects at the same level when compared to the old numbering system.

Today *MasterFormat* is used by many people in the construction industry including design teams, owners, contractors, and suppliers. Chastain-Skillman, Inc. has been utilizing *MasterFormat* for many years as a means of effectively communicating the construction process to our clients and to their contractors. The conversion to the 2004 Standard requires a major effort to review, revise, and re-categorize specification sections. We are in the process of converting to the *MasterFormat* 2004 standard for all of our Project Manuals. This includes conversion of our specifications to an industry-recognized database program, BSD SpecLink. The conversion will allow Chastain-Skillman to provide a higher quality product, conforming to the *MasterFormat* 2004 standards, while automating and speeding specification production. Our licensed Construction Documents Technician (CDT) is available to assist our clients in understanding these major changes in specification format and to review conversion issues.

Lisa Lassi is a Senior Project Manager in the Environmental Engineering Department of Chastain-Skillman's Lakeland office. Ms. Lassi has been with the firm for twenty-seven years. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering and a Master's Degree in Environmental Engineering from the University of South Florida, and recently received certification from the Construction Specifications Institute as a Construction Documents Technologist. Ms. Lassi is responsible for the design, permitting, and construction of water and wastewater projects for various municipal and private clients. She can be reached at (863) 646-1402 or llassi@chastainkillman.com.