

editor's note



I LOVE WHEN A GOOD PLAN COMES TOGETHER.

It might be something as simple as my daughter's hair color. When she stated she wanted brightly colored streaks in her hair, I could have freaked out. Instead, I told her sure—as long as Ms. Pamela agrees. Now my daughter, Julia, dances. A lot. And she's constantly in one performance or another. Had I said no to the hair streaks, there might have been screaming and pouting and definitely a lot of whining. But when her main dance instructor said it would interfere with performing, that was the end of the subject. No whining. No complaints. I love when it works the way it's supposed to.

Years ago, AISC used to produce and sell some simple software. But more than a decade ago, we decided we weren't in the software business. We weren't particularly good at it and there were commercial developers producing better products more efficiently. We did remain a key information provider and obviously most steel design software utilizes AISC information. One of the useful tools we provide is the AISC Shapes Database. The database provides electronic access to dimensions and properties of W-, M-, S-, and HP- shapes, channels (C and MC shapes), angles (L- and 2L-shapes), tees (WT-, ST-, and MT- shapes), hollow structural sections (HSS), and pipe (P, PX, and PXX) as given in the AISC *Steel Construction Manual*. (A companion product provides information on historic shapes from 1873 to 1952). This tool is available free to all AISC members at www.aisc.org/epubs (and many commercial software providers also use it in their software).

A few years ago, we introduced a service that has morphed into steelTOOLS (www.steeltools.org—note the domain is .org not .com; the .com address takes you elsewhere). The idea was that many designers created spreadsheets and other simple tools that simplified their professional lives. Wouldn't it be great to provide a forum for designers to share these design aids? So far, it's been very

successful and many of the tools have been downloaded more than 1,000 times. (In addition, SteelTOOLS provides a social networking site for the steel design and construction industry. It's a place to comment on what's happening on specific subjects of interest to our community. Check it out and post a comment!)

One of the really cool things about steelTOOLS is to see what people have done with the Shapes Database. For example, in the blog section there's an announcement that David Homes has created an iPhone application containing the Shapes Database.

In the library section the friendly folks at NYacad have posted an Access-based shapes viewer designed for the quick creation of a list of structural shapes used in a current project. (The program is presumably based on the Shapes Database though this isn't explicitly stated).

Redem Legaspi, a popular poster on steelTOOLS, posted a great utility called SteelPro. While primarily a search utility for structural steel shapes (utilizing the Shapes Database), it also provides an allowable beam load calculator, a bolt group coefficient calculator, and a weld group coefficient calculator.

But my favorite version of all is by steelTOOLS' top contributor, Alex Tomanovich. He created an Excel-based utility called AISC 13.0 Properties Viewer. It's simply the Shapes Database in a more user-friendly form. In other words, he did exactly what we hoped someone would do: Take the Shapes Database and make it better.

Yes, I love when a good plan comes together. Check out Alex's, Redem's, and all the other utilities at www.steeltools.org (just click on "steelTOOLS Library" to see all of the amazing utilities available).

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