

editor's note



WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, WE ALL LOOKED FORWARD TO FLYING CARS, WRISTWATCH PHONES AND ROBOTS TO DO OUR ROUTINE HOUSEHOLD CHORES. Unfortunately, not much has changed. We're still dreaming about flying cars, wearable computing is all the rage and we're "just around the corner" from everyone having a Rosie the Robot.

Not much has changed on the professional front, either. When I first started at MSC in 1989, the constant lament filling my ears was:

1. The increase in fast-track construction is making our jobs more difficult.
2. The quality of design drawings is declining.

And I know I'm not alone in hearing these complaints. I was reading a magazine yesterday and the first paragraph started out with:

"As the construction world moves toward ever-faster schedules...."

All I could think was that at some point the construction schedule will be so fast that the project has to be completed even before it begins!

But the reality of the situation is fast construction schedules and the quality of design drawings are interlinked. There's a financial incentive for owners to want buildings built as quickly as possible, which means fabrication often needs to start before the design is complete, which means drawings will often be incomplete. Truly, though, the situation is no worse than it was two decades ago.

So let's stop complaining that things are getting worse and instead let's look at methods to improve the process, starting with BIM.

While BIM is definitely not a panacea, it is a step in the right direction. As one

session at next year's NASCC: The Steel Conference (March 26-29 in Toronto; get your passports now!) promises: "The recent growth of building information modeling (BIM) has affected the way most design professionals complete their work. Its adoption has heralded challenges to traditional corporate workflows as well as apprehension about sharing information with the design team and other members of the construction team. However, BIM has also revealed opportunities to those who are looking for innovations."

Of course, nothing is a cure-all. Fortunately, the Steel Conference also offers a wide range of programs on improving the way you work and interact as a project team (from hiring new staff to defusing project risk). The full program will be available shortly at www.aisc.org/nascc.

But while embracing BIM and improving workflow may result in better design drawings, I'm skeptical the complaints will vanish anytime soon.

Oh, and by the way, I'm still waiting for my flying car.

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