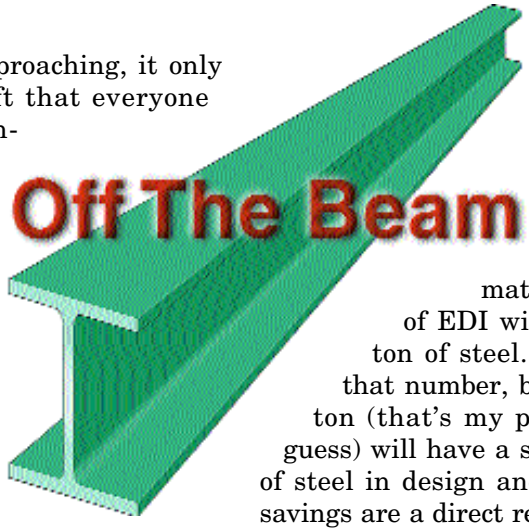
Off The Beam



With the holidays rapidly approaching, it only seems right to talk about a gift that everyone involved in the design and construction of steel structures soon will receive. This gift will affect the way every reader of this magazine works (okay, maybe not you, mom). What is this amazing breakthrough? Electronic Data Interchange (or EDI for short).

Longtime readers of this magazine know that AISC has been talking about EDI for at least six years. But this time, I think the steel industry is serious. A committee has been hard at work evaluating the existing standards and is now preparing a recommendation for the AISC Board of Directors. If the Board accepts the recommendation, AISC will formally endorse an EDI standard, which should give it enough of a nudge that a wide range of companies will adopt it—in essence creating a de facto industry-wide standard.

So what's so special about EDI? In a nutshell, EDI allows a smooth transfer of information from one computer program to another. Engineers can design in a 3D program and transfer the data to a 2D analysis program—without the need for substantial data input. The information can then be transferred back to the 3D design package or sent to a fabricator. The fabricator can use the electronic information to generate mill lists at the same time the detailer is transferring the information to a detailing program. Once the project is detailed, it can be sent back to the fabricator, who can automatically download the information into CNC equipment, as well as into estimating and production packages. While words are nice, figures are better. Some people are estimating that full implementation of EDI will save as much as $200 per ton of steel. I'm kind of skeptical about that number, but even a savings of $75 per ton (that's my perhaps rather conservative guess) will have a substantial impact on the use of steel in design and construction. These dollar savings are a direct result of the reduction in manhours required to input repetitive data at each stage of design, detailing and fabrication. But in addition to the dollar savings, there's also a time savings. It is realistic to expect anywhere from 10 days to two weeks to be shaved from a project schedule—up to a two weeks saving in the time required from the start of design to the completion of steel erection.

If you're interested in hearing more about EDI and AISC's efforts in this area, a whole lot of information has been posted on AISC's web site (www.aisc.org). If you want still more information, contact Steve Hamburg, P.E., AISC's Director of Computer Technology & Electronic Communication (email: hamburg@aiscmail.com; ph: 312/670-5413).So for everyone involved in the design and construction of steel, enjoy your holidays. The best is yet to come.

Scott Melnick

Editor & Publisher

Who's Who at MSC

Editor & Publisher:
Scott Melnick
ph: 312/670-5407
email: melnick@aiscmail.com

Assistant Editor:
Jenifer Golec
ph: 312/670-5448
email: golec@aiscmail.com

Technical Editor:
Abraham Rokach, P.E., S.E.
email: rokach@aiscmail.com

Editorial Offices:
One East Wacker Dr., Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601-2001
fax: 312/670-5403

Advertising in MSC

Account Manager: John Byrne
ph: 847/699-6049
fax: 847/699-8681
email: jabber10@ix.netcom.com

Advertising Offices:
2400 E. Devon Ave., Suite 267
Des Plaines, IL 60018

To receive a media kit, call, fax or email

John Byrne

or view advertising information on AISC's home page on the World Wide Web at:

http://www.aisc.org

AISC Officers

Chairman: Robert D. Freeland
1st Vice Chairman: Robert G. Abramson
Treasurer: Jerry Milligan
Secr. & Gen. Counsel: David Ratterman

President: H. Louis Gurthet, P.E.

Vice President: Morris Caminer
(Finance & Administration)

Vice President: Nestor Iwankiw, P.E.
(Engineering & Research)

American Institute of Steel Construction, Inc.
One East Wacker Dr., Suite 3100
Chicago, IL 60601-2001
ph: 312/670-2400
fax: 312/670-5403