

What's Up With The NISD?

President John Linn Tells All

Why did you get involved with the NISD?

I could see positives for detailing businesses joining together to solve common problems. It follows logically that greater accomplishments could be attained through a national effort. With the steel detailing industry pulling together, speaking with one voice and with the backing of hundreds of members and a history of accomplishments, the NISD has a position of prestige & influence in the industry. I feel good about being a part of an institute that has so much potential to move this industry forward.



John Linn,
President,
National
Institute of Steel
Detailers

What do you see as NISD's immediate focus?

Our number one focus is the critical lack of steel detailers. Estimates run from 15% to 50% lacking in numbers of detailers available to service the industry. This is a tremendous need. It is the biggest issue facing NISD.

What programs has the NISD implemented to accomplish this goal?

We have given technical support in two areas to the American Institute of Steel Construction. The first was developing steel detailing educational CDs. NISD began the program, got the basic framework done, then when we realized that the scope of the project was too large for our institute to manage, we were pleased to join with the AISC for the financial resources and marketing expertise that was needed. It is a joint program now. Our role is in technical assistance, writing, and editing. We provide examples of steel detailing to be used as aids in formation of the CDs. This is a major effort. Our other area of technical support is assistance with the AISC/NISD joint manual, "Detailing for Steel Construction". The rewriting of this manual is presently underway. It should be finished in late 2000.

We've also become a focal point for a lot of education programs in junior colleges & technical colleges around the country where they have asked us to help them. Local detailers also get involved in helping, such as the detailers in Arizona, Indiana, Alabama, Quebec, British

Columbia, and Georgia. We plan to publish a list of colleges that offer steel detailing courses in a future edition of *The CONNECTION*, our in-house newsletter.

What else do you think should be a focus of NISD?

We have to be the main source of some meaningful statistics about steel detailers in North America. We should be the source. We presently don't have a good grasp on how many detailers are out there, outside of the NISD, or know much about these steel detailers. We need information on detailers' specialties, what software they use, and the size of their companies.

MSC puts out such a list once a year [in this issue] but that really doesn't contain much in the way of statistics. We need to address such questions as how much policy impact do steel detailers have? (NISD especially). What do we represent to the industry? We need to get good statistics. This is important information for the NISD to obtain.

Why should steel detailers join the NISD?

Steel detailers are subject to a great deal of difficulty in trying to do their work effectively. They are under a strict schedule and they have to perform in a very rigid time frame. They are always working under the directive that the drawings have to be 100% accurate. They are faced with numerous obstacles – incomplete design drawings, revision changes, inaccuracies in design drawings. There are sometimes problems with reconciling the steel design with the architectural design, or mechanical design. Detailers are faced with the job of working through all problems & coming out with a product that's accurate and on time. Trying to do this on their own is close to impossible. There is a need to join together with other detailers and having a voice that can be heard by the rest of the industry to solve this dilemma.

Can you tell me something about the Industry Standard publication?

The Industry Standard publication was

brought out in 1995. It has had tremendous acceptance throughout the industry. It is basically an outline of what steel detailing is all about. It provides great information on what our position as steel detailers includes and excludes and it defines our role in the chain of development to produce a steel structure.

Does it show the base services required by a steel detailer? Does it indicate what are extras to a detailer?

Yes. But we can't get involved with things like how much money is charged. What it really does is provide a framework for our business operations, our position in the construction of a steel building. A lot of people, especially engineers and architects, don't have first-hand knowledge of steel detailing. This publication can give them a great deal of good information that they need to deal with the process of building a steel structure.

What, if anything, is the NISD doing to help solve the problem of design drawing quality?

We are working on the publication "Guidelines for Successful Steel Construction". Final editing is now taking place for publication around mid-2000. It still needs a review by the NISD Board of Directors. Right now, we think it should be distributed throughout the industry so it will have the impact of informing architects, engineers, owners, contractors, or anyone who's not that familiar with the problems that steel detailers face today. This document should inform them that they're losing money and time by not giving detailers complete design drawings or accurate information. This publication emphasizes that revision changes greatly impact the steel detailer resulting in serious time and dollar increases to the steel construction project.

What about the avenues of information for the steel detailer? Are they being opened up?

Sure, that's one of our main thrusts. We are the voice of the detailing industry. We've traditionally had a publication, *The CONNECTION*, which comes out tri-annually. This publication has all the information about the business currently being conducted by the institute.

It is also a source of technical information and in-house communication. It brings us all together, to share stories, information, and experiences. We also have a web site (www.nisd.org) which we continually update. This offers a great deal of information about the institute.

That doesn't really help the detailer to get more information from the people from whom he needs it, does it?

The Guidelines document will help in that regard. Detailers need a little more respect from the architects, engineers and contractors. They don't attach much importance to the detailer's worth in the construction process. They don't understand that if the steel detailing is successful it's a wide open door for the rest of the project to be successful. If the steel detailing is bogged down, other sub-contractors can't get in to do their work because the steel frame is not completed, or is being revised, etc. Then the whole project suffers. All the sub-contractors who come after steel, which is virtually everyone except the concrete foundation sub, are going to suffer. They are all going to be behind schedule. Even the foundation isn't right until the anchor bolt setting plan is correct. These early problems are then passed on down the line to all the following sub-contractors.

What is the NISD specifically doing to have the steel detailer take part in the design construction team?

There is some trending to involve the steel detailer in the design process more and more. The engineers and contractors have recognized that if the design is done according to some of the input from detailers, who can help them to recognize efficiency of connections and work towards more complete design information on the design drawings, it can greatly benefit the success of the steel project. In the future, we'll probably be seeing more projects, especially fast-track projects, being done this way.

What are relations with the AISC like?

My own personal relations with AISC are very good. I have a good rapport with Lou Gurthet, President of the AISC, and with many members of their board of directors. I have been invited to attend a part of one of their board of

"Engineers and contractors have recognized that input from detailers, can greatly benefit the success of the steel project."

directors meetings and have also been invited to the annual AISC convention. We're working together on a lot of projects with AISC, for instance, education. In the past several years the NISD has had an obvious presence at the North American Steel Construction Conference, and enjoys participation in that industry showcase. AISC does represent the steel fabrication industry and for NISD to succeed, we really need to work together with them. We feel that this is vitally important to the success of structural steel in the marketplace.

Is the NISD involved in the NASCC?

A lot of the detailing tracks have been provided by our members. Our members were responsible for several of the tracks presented this past year in Las Vegas.

What about international membership?

Steel detailers can get together through the NISD, to share common problems and common concerns and to have an understanding of the problems that are being faced by detailers in totally different parts of North America and the world. As the world gets smaller and smaller, this really becomes a very crucial part of what NISD does today because we've got people contacting us from England, from the Pacific areas, from South America, and Mexico, from Europe and Asia. They contact us at various times with questions about the many problems we've worked on in North America which affect people all over the world.

What about your marketing efforts?

Professionals (as I see detailers) don't have the expertise to, and don't think in terms of, marketing themselves, due to the fact that they are so preoccupied with performing their job. Typically all professionals don't do a great deal of marketing. This has been a negative for the

NISD. Therefore, we need to develop a greater sense and awareness of ourselves, both to detailers and other professional organizations. Right now the thrust is in North America, but it will be worldwide.

How do you see NISD's future?

People from all over the world will look to us to help solve their problems through our experiences. The NISD provides a forum to encourage a dialog among all detailers throughout the world. We see that role expanding as time goes on.

(For more information on NISD activities, see the group's website at www.nisd.org.)