



CIB NEWS ARTICLE

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in Building and Construction

Providing a global network for international exchange and cooperation in research and innovation in building and construction, in support of an improved building process and of improved performance of the built environment.

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Around the Task Groups and Working Commissions

W102 - Information and Knowledge Management in Building

The Problem of Information about Information – A Survey and an Opportunity

by

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When CIB established Commission W102, the agreed mandate recognized that

- "Information is an essential resource in building. It ensures that the processes of building design, manufacture, construction, use and maintenance can be conducted effectively, and in a manner which reflects the potential that can be derived from current scientific research and innovation".

and that

- "Information is an all-pervading ingredient in building, common to research and practice. By giving proper consideration to the flow of information, research results can be usefully translated into innovation and further adapted to provide the knowledge-base for best practice".

The building industry is seen to be recalcitrant in terms of improving its efficiency and adopting innovative ways of working; there are explanations for this, placing responsibility on the structure of the industry and on the prevailing attitude to the use of information for decision-making.

However much the importance of information is recognized, doing something about it is not everybody's "cup of tea". In other words, there is a problem of information and, since little work appears to have been done on this 'information problem' so far, one can also state that there is a problem of information about information in the building sector. A detailed report on this subject can be found at www.grif.umontreal.ca/pages/publications.HTM and click on "Agenda 21: Information and Documentation".

This suggests that research into this two-level problem and its consequences is urgently needed. Indeed, a program of research work can usefully be initiated to build on the scarce (but valuable) work that is being done today in a limited number of centers or groups scattered worldwide. Within the ambit of W102, a two-

step project has been launched, precisely to address this question.

A starting point is to establish a network to coordinate the efforts of researchers who are currently involved with this problem. The first step is to find out who is already working on this problem (through a survey), and to set up a framework (i.e. a network) to coordinate their work; it should then (as a second step) be possible to develop a comprehensive view of the situation and to encourage work in presently unexplored areas.

The first step is under way. Early results of the survey can be found at www.ccic-ccic.ca/info/index.html and more are coming in. The second step (due in mid 2008) should enable a road map of the domain to be prepared, showing where there is scope for original research to fill the gaps – research that can then be justified, precisely because of the identified and unfulfilled need.

Members of CIB who are interested in the problem of information about information are invited to check out the project site (at the above address) to gather more complete information and then decide whether to participate in the survey directly or to contact Colin Davidson at colinhdavidson@sympatico.ca first.



Partial funding for the proposed network infrastructure is provided by the Government of Quebec and by Cibât – the International Building Center in Montreal. The Institute for Research in Construction (National Research Council of Canada) is participating through the site design and management. The survey and its analyses are managed by the IF Research Group (the project leaders) at the University of Montreal (www.grif.umontreal.ca).