

What are we looking for from CIB's "Proactive Approach"?

asks **John Duncan**
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The Origin

The Strategic Planning Workshop held in Pretoria in May 1997 suggested that a new approach - involving some centrally-directed activity - needed to be taken to CIB activity, sitting alongside the continued bottom-up activities. Two specific criteria that the Strategic Planning Session and the subsequent Board Meeting decided that the activity needed to meet were:

- Industry will recognise it as something it wants to support with resources, and wants to implement the outcomes.
- CIB will be positioned by the activity as a leading international organisation for the 21st Century.

Why Will These Criteria Be Important For Us?

Worthwhile to industry: When funding for research is under increasing constraint, as it seems to be all over the world, enlisting the voice of the end users in fora where research funding decisions are made is an important advance for all CIB members. Further, since researchers and those who will apply our research work together, all should end up with a more satisfying experience as researchers watch their work being directly applied, and as users find the results shaped to meet their needs.

CIB positioning: There are many bodies which address specific aspects of building and construction research operating around the world. What will differentiate CIB from the rest, and ensure that it retains a role as the leading meeting point for research information in the sector? It surely seems likely to be something which provides a benefit to its members, and has global (or at least multi-regional) significance, and to be something which it would be beyond the normal scope of a single member. Ideally it will build on the strong foundation which CIB activity to date has produced.

The Development Process

The Board appointed a subcommittee, reporting initially to the Programme Committee, to develop this concept. The sub-committee reported to the Programme Committee in Paris in October 1997, and to the Programme Committee and Board in Washington in February 1998.

It came up with suggestions for activities in three areas, suggesting that one be chosen as the focus for the 1998-2001 triennium:

- **An inventory of verified models of various aspects of building performance and the critical issues which need to be addressed.**

There may be a West European attitude that performance codes are not as acceptable as prescriptive codes, but performance-based codes seem to have considerably more acceptability in Pacific Rim countries, with quite proactive approaches in Japan, USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and

APEC as a multinational agency. APEC has projects on loadings codes, housing, and timber products. Aspects of this theme are already receiving very extensive input from CIB groups. Probable liaisons that would be desirable are to ISO, WFTAO, and APEC.

- **Principles and models for process improvement of the construction process.**

A September 1997 US Business Round Table study shows large differences between best and worse performance for 60 major companies undertaking 2000 large projects worth \$300B. The best performers had construction times and cost 30% below average while the worst were 20-25% above average. The study shows that improvements in the construction process are possible; but there seems no agreement on how to measure or consistently achieve a high level of performance. The construction industry and their customers are very interested in this topic, but it is also a field in which terminology/jargon is off-putting to many people. Aspects of this theme are already receiving very extensive input from CIB groups, on subjects ranging from procurement methods, through open building issues, to application of virtual reality and geographical information systems.

- **Principles and models for a sustainable construction process.**

CIB has over the past three years established itself firmly as an authoritative meeting place for researchers with interests in this field, and through its partnership with CERF is opening a dialogue with the wider construction community. Thus CIB already has considerable momentum in this area. There would need to be liaison to CERF and to ISO TC207, which already has an activity in the area.

Managing The Process

Obviously a centrally-directed activity will need to have some sort of preliminary structuring so that members can see where their activities will be most appropriately fitted into the project structure. The outgoing Board decided that since it will not be responsible for the implementation of the project, it would not determine between the ideas which had been raised. Any of them were agreed to have the required elements of meeting an industry requirement, and positioning CIB well. The Board felt though that there needed to be a better example of the way an activity will be structured, and accordingly has authorised the use of a consultant to do this for the performance codes idea in time for the new Board to select the topic for 1998-2001 at its meeting in October 1998.

