

# The Bookshelf

Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., AIA

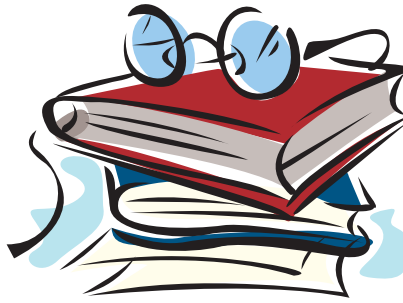
The two books reviewed this month come from the publications department of the American Society of Civil Engineers. Engineers can be good authors for facilities folks because they have been in similar situations or think the same. I believe these two books provide further proof of that.

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**Professional Communications: A Handbook for Civil Engineers**, by Heather Silyn-Roberts. Reston, Virginia: ASCE Press, 2004 (www.pubs.asce.org), 256 pages, softcover.

When I went off to college, we used to share a cartoon of a goofy guy saying "Four years ago I couldn't spell injuneer, now I am one." Many engineering students thought that knowing how to model a system using partial differential equations was more important than knowing how to communicate simple facts in verbal (both written and oral) form. The cartoon was often a sad commentary on what engineering students thought of clear communication. The reality is that clear verbal communication is an essential element for anyone in a technical position.

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*Professional Communications practices what it preaches. The language is clear and the figures are well organized.*

*Professional Communications* is written by an engineer for anyone who needs help with verbal and graphic communication. It addresses written reports and oral presentations and provides suggestions for graphic material within the reports or presentations. It is well organized, beginning with an outline in each chapter which presents the main points that will be discussed and ends with exercises and opportunities to practice.

*Professional Communications* practices what it preaches. The language is clear and the figures are well organized. Examples are appropriate and relevant to the main topic. It is not a difficult read and while it ought to be read in its entirety, it is possible to pick this book up and focus on a single chapter. Facility managers are regularly challenged with issues that require getting a clear message out to administrators, faculty, and students;

*Professional Communications* provides tool to make one a more effective communicator.

\* \* \*

**The Lead Dog Has the Best View: Leading Your Project Team to Success**, by Gordon Culp and Anne Smith, Reston, Virginia: ASCE Press, 2005 (www.pubs.asce.org), 164 pages, softcover.

**Catchy titles** sometimes get a reviewer's attention; that is probably what happened in this case but there's more to it. There are hundreds of books, actually Amazon.com shows 16,470, and so the catchy title was important. However, the content of the book is the most important factor. In this case, *Lead Dog* delivers.

First, *Lead Dog* is not overly wordy, it doesn't spend page after page getting to the point. It is pithy and gets the message across. The first chapter presents the "triangle of needs" and 12 leadership characteristics. Like the three-legged stool of capital projects, the triangle of needs looks at content, procedures, and relationships. A project leader blends the three needs in varying levels to achieve success to a given problem. Not all projects have the same needs, but all projects do require some.

The 12 characteristics are very similar to Covey's *Seven Habits*, and include simple characteristics such as honesty, vision, decisiveness, an inclusion that every leader must have. These characteristics work in tandem with the characteristics of other team members and their work style. The Myers-Briggs style preferences are discussed quickly; extraversion vs. introversion; sensing vs. intuition;

thinking vs. feeling; and judging vs. perceiving. The leader recognizes each team member's preferred style and leverages talents.

Then the authors discuss direction-setting, planning, delegation, monitoring, and knowing when the goal has been met. The triangle of needs plays a role in each of these areas by showing how concentrating on content, procedure, or rela-



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tionships is required at each phase of a project. There are helpful checklists and exercises; also do's and don'ts. For those who are creatively challenged, there are some example worksheets and forms. They can be used or ignored but they help make the concepts real.

In our business we need a quick and easy way of getting up to speed and bringing a large organization or people to perform a task or goal. Taking days or weeks to plan out goals and objectives for an everyday problem just doesn't cut it. *Lead Dog* provides the busy architect or engineer with the essential, yet intangible elements of leadership. I'm making use of it already. 🏠



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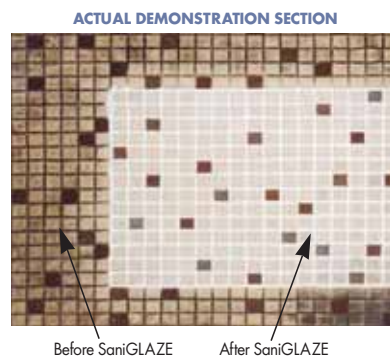
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