

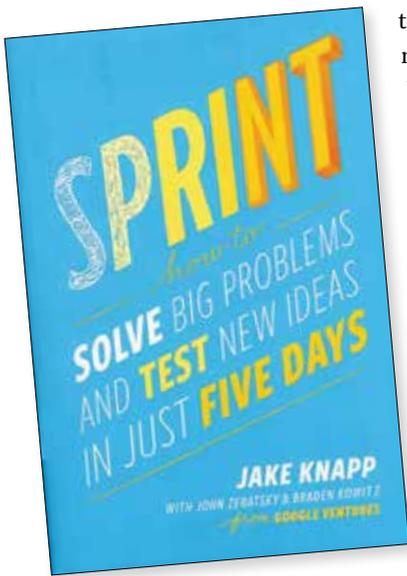
Book Review Editor: Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., P.E., CEFP, AIA

There's more to books for facility managers than the dry, technically focused tomes that often serve as reference volumes for the office bookshelf. That said, it is important that I continue to provide recommendations of a technical nature. To accomplish that goal, this column looks at two books of very different focus and approach. One is good summer reading, the other mandatory for future survival.

SPRINT: HOW TO SOLVE BIG PROBLEMS AND TEST NEW IDEAS IN JUST FIVE DAYS

Jake Knapp, John Zeratsky, and Braden Kowitz, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY, 264 pp., 2016, hardcover, softcover, and Kindle.

Working in an environment of constant change and need for improvement, we need to have viable techniques to deal with this state of affairs. Although these techniques are in constant demand by the high tech entrepreneurs in Silicon Valley and other



creative people throughout the world, those of us providing facility management services need them too. As will be seen in upcoming reports on ISO activities, the need for continuous improvement in facility management will force us all to find methods that work and don't cost too much time or money to investigate. That's where *Sprint* may provide a solution.

In fact, there's not much new about the problem-solving techniques described in *Sprint*, and most of them have been employed by APPA in the Thought Leaders Series meetings. But the part of Thought Leaders that most people see represents the middle of the process described in *Sprint*. Seeing the process from beginning to end is helpful when one considers changes or a new initiative. So what does the whole thing look like and why does it require a book?

The audience for this book is anyone who has an idea or a problem that needs to be tested. The authors are from Google Ventures, so they have a tendency to deal with techies who may be perfectionists or overly focused on details. One of the concepts of *Sprint* is to let go of the details and move fast instead. This makes sense in a world of continuous change where learning from failure is a neces-

sity. It also makes sense for a startup or those with a limited budget to investigate and implement changes to processes that aren't working, or to develop new products or processes to address a need.

The five days discussed in the book are not individual, disjointed days. They are a week—a relatively intense and focused week. It's not all-nighters or other youthful adventures, but five structured days of goal setting, problem identification, solution development and selection, prototyping, and testing. The days and activities are reasonable, going from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with breaks for lunch and other needs, and clear deadlines. There are rules about what distractions can be in the room—none—and the number of participants allowed. Each day is laid out with some flexibility; the appendix has checklists and diagrams including just about everything needed to conduct the sprint to a prototype and test. There are some additional days allowed for evaluation and decisions about the prototype, but they can be done by a smaller group; they are the epilogue to the sprint. For those who have had an opportunity to participate in the Thought Leaders Series, the process will look familiar. It will also be familiar to participants in APPA's Leadership Academy.

The book is clear, engaging, and an easy read. It is written for technical or business people but can be used by anyone who needs to test one or two solutions quickly. Those facility officers looking for some guidelines to tackle problems without spending too much time or money will find *Sprint* a good tool. I've already shared the book with colleagues and hope to use it for some upcoming projects of my own.

THE ROAD TAKEN: THE HISTORY AND FUTURE OF AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Henry Petroski, Bloomsbury, New York, 284 pp., 2016, hardcover.

Henry Petroski is a prolific engineering writer, so much so that he's on the engineering and history faculty at Duke. His writings are not very technical; they are clearly focused on the mass market. So it's appropriate that he provides a description of U.S. infrastructure that is tied to the Robert Frost poem "The Road Not Taken." The poet reminisced on what could have been had he taken a different road; Petroski writes of the road the United States has taken.

There has been a great deal discussed in the press about the condition of U.S. infrastructure. Crumbling roads, failing bridges, polluted water, and train derailments—there is a new issue reported every week in the media. Former cabinet secretaries Ray LaHood and George Shultz have written recently about addressing the nation's infrastructure needs by either increasing or reallocating taxes. There's lots of discussion, but little agreement on how to solve the problems.

As is the case with accumulated capital renewal (deferred maintenance), an area in which APPA has been at the vanguard in research and discussions, the numbers have been too big for most people to contemplate. The infrastructure numbers have been too big even for the U.S. budget. Why is this?

As with accumulated capital renewal, U.S. infrastructure has been developed over many years with the overall goal that it would be "built to last." As such, there is the mistaken belief that having built something to last a long time, it ought to last for generations without significant repair. But another reason the accumulation has occurred is because the public doesn't have a good understanding of what caused the infrastructure to be constructed in the first place, and how all of society depends on it in one form or another. Petroski attempts to provide the historical context for infrastructure, mostly by discussing the U.S. Interstate System, but also by looking at the roads, bridges, water supply, and sewer systems of New York City where he grew up.

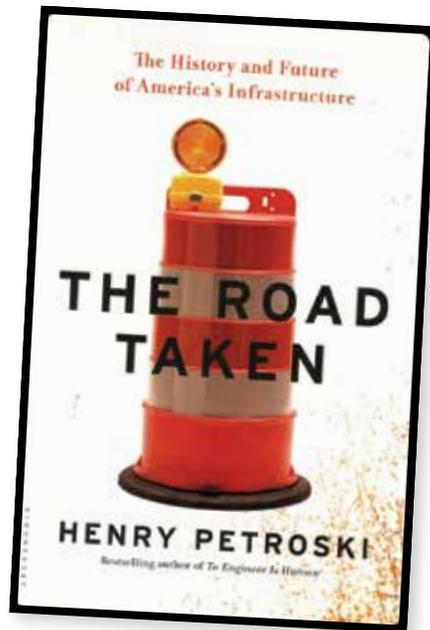
The chapters describing the social and economic

rationale for the development of the Interstate System are excellent. There are also some chapters that are light on details and historical context, probably good for poets but less so for engineers.

The closing chapter, although attempting to sum up the infrastructure problem with a look at solu-

tions on the horizon and suggesting that better days are to come, didn't offer what I was looking for. What the book needs is an outline of how we—as engineers, facility officers, and technicians charged with the maintenance and operation of the greatest infrastructure complex in the world—can articulate and explain the true value of that infrastructure, how it affects the lives of residents every day, and what will happen if we continue to neglect it.

Still, *The Road Taken* is a pleasant read, particularly for the summer or any relaxing time of year. It will remind you of why you got involved in facilities. 📖



Ted Weidner is an associate professor at Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, and consults on facilities management issues primarily for educational organizations. He can be reached at tjweidne@purdue.edu.

If you would like to write a book review, please contact Ted Weidner at tjweidne@purdue.edu.

