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2011 ASLA Design Awards

Green Industries Data Toolbox Merit Award

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Research & Communication

“GREEN INDUSTRIES DATA TOOLBOX
A Comprehensive Guide to Useful Information”

SUMMARY

A new reference manual useful to students and professionals in the Green Industries has recently been released: ***Green Industries Data Toolbox—A Comprehensive Guide to Useful Information*** is full of useful bits of reference material in 11 sections - a handy-sized 300 page manual with data useful in design, construction and instruction value.

PURPOSE

The manual was compiled and edited by two landscape architecture practitioners in Colorado, who say the “toolbox” name is intentional. “When you need a small Phillips screwdriver, you want to know it’s in your toolbox. It’s the same for data. You may not have to convert acres to square feet very often, but when you do, it’s great to have the resource at your fingertips.” This is also why the manual is sized as an 8.5” x 5.5” spiral bound book - it fits on a desk, in a glove box or in a backpack. It also has divider tabs for quickly referencing the data that appears in 11 major categories and an appendix.

Landscape architects and others in the Green Industries need bits of obscure information that are exceedingly critical when they need them—and that is especially the case with students just starting up the learning curve. The editors have both found that beginning design students won’t necessarily know, for example, that there’s a standard for a turning radius when designing a circle driveway in front of a home. There’s also a valuable process when thumbing through a book; on the way to getting to that turning radius, you will also run past other categories of information you never knew existed

The manual came out of many years in practice and the realization that there was no comprehensive book of data that could be accessed almost daily. They knew that over years of practice, most landscape architects steadily expand their personal file of useful information. What in past years may have been a file with bits of paper, details and notes, now is contained largely within the world-wide web. Still, that information may not always be readily at hand, if you’re on a job site, for instance, or easily searched when you’re at your computer.

CONTENT

The categories of knowledge as part of the data manual are as follows:

- 1. Calculations and conversions**
- 2. Site Inventory and Analysis**
- 3. Soils**
- 4. Site Planning and Design**
- 5. Planting and Nursery**
- 6. Arboriculture**
- 7. Construction**
- 8. Irrigation and Hydrology**
- 9. Electrical Systems**
- 10. Lumber, Fencing and Decking**
- 11. Masonry and Concrete**
- 12. Appendices**

ROLES

In the process of developing the manual, the production manager responsible for research and data gathering was a student in the Landscape Architecture program at Kansas State University. She spent eight months as a paid intern and valuable member of the production team with 90% of her office time devoted to the manual.

The editors determined the content and character of the manual and were responsible for day-to-day editing and guidelines for research sources. As required in design or construction projects, the manual was shaped by the editors and “evolved” into its present format and content in the preliminary stages and throughout production.

SPECIAL FACTORS

Aspects of the ‘design’ of the manual include:

- The introduction of GreenCo Foundation into the process included their willingness to be the seller and distributor of the manual. For this service they receive much needed revenue and the editors and their staff were removed from the sales and distribution function.
- Near the end of draft production, the decision was made to add one final section considered appropriate to the Editor-in-Chief’s experience. That section was Arboriculture and, for many readers, will serve as their first introduction to the world of arboriculture.
- The process for developing the manual was segmented very similarly to a design project. In this case, the project was divided into three segments:
 1. **Research/data collection.**
 2. **Production/printing.**
 3. **Promotion/sales.**

Of all the segments, promotion and sales may become the most difficult because of the niche of manual content and resultant limited reader pool. The expansion of the manual to twelve sections was partly an attempt to widen the reader pool with potential increase in sales.

- Because the available information is always expanding and yearly data was used in some sections, a cut-off date was established that determined the time at which research stopped and final production began.

Whatever the final outcome of the Data Manual as a profitable venture, revenue source for the GreenCO Foundation, highly sought after textbook or other use, its production was a learning experience and a labor of love. As sales increase there will be additional opportunities for advertisers and subsequent printings. Long term goals are to update the manual to a second edition, sometime after a three-year requirement with advertisers, to adapt it to six or eight regional locations throughout the United States, and to promote content in a format through the latest form of electronic media.

SIGNIFICANCE

The manual has already become a notable reference for students, landscape architects, contractors, other design professional and non-professionals on a national scale. It reflects kindly on the profession and the Colorado community of landscape architects with its appeal and extent of content as an achievement in design communication and educational device for every level of designer and contractor.