



Information Eye-ful

The Visual Handbook of Building and Remodeling by Charlie Wing (Emmaus, PA; Rodale Press, 1990). 487 pages. Hardcover, \$39.95. Paperback, \$19.95.

In *The Visual Handbook of Building and Remodeling*, author Charlie Wing has attempted to write a "what-to" book to complement the "how-to" books that line most of our bookshelves. The intent is to describe *what* to specify for various construction situations, as well as how to install it properly.

Wing covers the full range of construction activity, from site analysis and concrete work to trim and painting. He includes general design principles for systems such as heating and cooling, passive solar, sound control, and lighting. There are sections on construction math, beam span tables, and formulas for laying out stairs. Other chapters compare the relative merits of different types of siding, roofing, caulking, and other materials.

Indeed, *The Visual Handbook* is a sort of encyclopedia of generic information and construction details for virtually every aspect of residential construction. Each chapter begins with a one-page overview of the information to follow. The balance consists mainly of drawings, accompanied by brief explanatory text, which illustrate problems, solutions, and details. In some cases, as befits a volume calling itself a "visual" handbook, there are literally pages of illustrations showing, for example, molding profiles, plumbing fittings, or sample wall sections.

There's a lot of useful information packed into almost 500 pages. Some of it you may already have, some of it you may have lost or forgotten. The main advantage of *The Visual Handbook* is that Charlie Wing has collected all of it in one place.

The downside of attempting to provide this kind of comprehensive treatment is that the depth of cov-

erage is limited. You will find more detail on laying hardwood flooring in certain product literature, for instance, than you will in this book, although Wing's treatment is certainly adequate. And even though you can find out how much slab area to provide for a given amount of south-facing glass, you won't necessarily understand how all the factors influencing solar design work together.

I found myself puzzled by a few parts of the book, like bedroom floorplans that don't show door swings, and Wing's use of the term "unit dimension," which conflicts with the way some window manufacturers use it. Despite some drawbacks like these, and the generic nature of the book, I'd certainly take Rodale up on its free 21-day examination offer. Or look it over carefully in a bookstore to see if *The Visual Handbook* fills a niche in your information system. — Paul Hanke

Everything But Prices

Construction Estimating Reference Data (Craftsman Book Company, 6058 Corte del Cedro, Box 6500, Carlsbad, CA 92008; 7th printing, 1990). 360 pages. Paperback. \$26.

Unlike many estimating manuals, *Construction Estimating Reference Data* contains no prices. Instead, it provides the information estimators need to calculate quantities of material and labor. The book is organized under the 16 divisions of the CSI format, and each section contains four kinds of reference data: descriptions, conversion tables, material tables, and labor productivity schedules.

The descriptions often occupy

several pages, and include general information on material types and installation methods. There are plenty of illustrations to help the estimator visualize the work.

The conversion tables are just what you'd expect. Some, like "Surveyor's Measure," you may never need, but there are others, like "Inch Fractions to Decimal Equivalents," that can be useful. The main advantage is having them all collected in one place.

Material tables and labor productivity schedules are the heart of the book, and will be the most useful. Here you can find out, for example, what the coverage is for wood shingles, given various weather exposures, or the labor required to install a square of wood shingles or shakes. Sometimes the two are combined into a single chart, as in a table called "Labor and Materials for Asphalt Roofing."

You can usually find information by thumbing through the section that covers the particular component you're looking for. Unfortunately, the tables and charts aren't in any particular order within each section, so it can be slow going until you become familiar with the book.

Estimating references are sometimes confusing, especially when it's unclear what's been included and what's been left out. In this case, the author avoids the problem in two ways. First, he provides a lengthy introduction in which he defines his assumptions and the reasoning behind his calculations. He explains, for example, that his productivity schedules are not based on ideal conditions, but rather on what you would expect on a moderately sized, reasonably well-planned job. He also makes it clear that things like loading and unloading materials

or setting up staging have been included, but non-productive supervision has not.

Similarly, each table or chart includes notes that highlight special considerations. In a chart called "Labor and Materials for Bevel Siding," for example, the note explains that quantities include 5% waste, and that all openings over 10 square feet should be deducted.

Not many other references of this kind present the data so clearly. *Construction Estimating Reference Data* is a book you can use with confidence. — Sal Alfano

Free & Cheap

The Compliance Guide to the Americans With Disabilities Act describes how to hire employees and stay on the right side of the new law protecting the disabled from discrimination. To order, send \$14.25 plus \$1.50 shipping and handling to Small Business Legislative Council, 1156 15th St. NW, Suite 510, Washington, DC 20005; 202/639-8500.

Performance Standards: The American Plywood Association has published a brochure describing performance standards for structural wood panels and the different types of performance-rated panels available, including APA-rated sheathing, stud-I floor, and siding. The *APA Guide: Performance-Rated Panels*, a 12-page brochure, includes descriptions of plywood, oriented strand board and composite, discussion of performance testing and span ratings, and examples for ordering and specifying APA performance-rated panels. Write to APA, Dept. F405, P.O. Box 11700, Tacoma, WA 98411-0700. The cost is \$1 per copy. (APA charges a \$2 minimum on all literature orders.)

— Susan Saunders