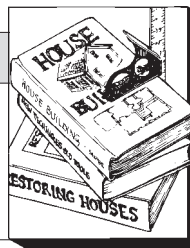


Means Illustrated Construction Dictionary (Condensed Edition)

edited by Kornelis Smit & Howard Chandler.
(Kingston, Mass.: R. S. Means Co., 1991). 501 pages. Paperback. \$49.95.

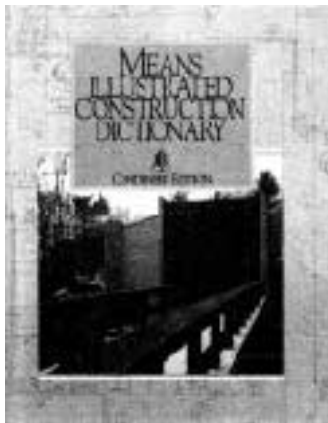


Have you ever found yourself scratching your head over some obscure construction term, such as *detrusion* (the shearing of wood fibers along the grain)? If so, you may be in the market for *Means Illustrated Construction Dictionary*, from the same folks who turn out estimating references every year.

This compact volume contains 9,000 up-to-date definitions, including slang and colloquial terms, plus 1,000 illustrations to clarify the text.

You'll find plenty of familiar terms, like *on-center*, *softwood*, *clerestory*, and *firewall*. But if you care to dabble, you'll also learn the meaning of a horde of esoteric words and phrases, such as *cochlea* (a spiral staircase), *coaming* (a raised curb around a hatchway or skylight), *intrados* (the undersurface of an arch), *xyst* (a promenade shaded by trees), and *zeta* (a small closed room, originally over the porch of a church). Not only will this knowledge improve your literacy, but it will also make you sound like an expert at parties or on the job site. But it will cost you 50 bucks for the privilege, making this a book of more interest to librarians and educators than to most builders or architects.

And there are a few weaknesses to be found. The definitions of *hatchet* and *orthographic projection*, for instance, rely exclusively on words to convey concepts that are more easily presented in a simple illustration. Then there's the "definition" of *Ionic Order*, which is characterized by spiral volutes on the capitals of its columns. If you're in doubt about the meaning of "order" or "volute," you'd better look elsewhere. The editors have left these terms out of the present edition. And how about the sticky term *substantial completion*? The *Means* definition begins like this: "The condition of the work when



the project is substantially complete and ready for owner acceptance and occupancy." Does this mean the job is finished? The definition continues: "Any items remaining to be completed should, at this point, be duly noted or stipulated in

writing." This doesn't clear up the question of why the owner would accept a project when there are still "items remaining to be completed."

Despite these shortcomings, *Means Illustrated Construction Dictionary* is adequate enough, and it's small enough to slip into the glove compartment of your pickup if you care to improve your mind over lunch.

nearly 15 years, I've turned to the original edition of this mini-encyclopedia when faced with an unfamiliar project. It was one of my first references on everything from wiring a three-way switch to roughing-in a toilet and cutting laminate. Other books might offer more depth on a given topic, but this manual is hard to beat for the scope of its coverage and the clarity of its text and illustrations.

The present edition is similar in format to the old one. It offers 17 chapters on topics such as hand and power tools; working with wood, metal, and plastic; masonry, plumbing, and electricity; interior and exterior finish work; painting and papering; windows and doors; furniture repair; and climate control. It includes updated information on new tools, such as Japanese saws, as well as two new chapters, one on emergencies like hurricanes or fires, and another that gives a thumbnail overview of the whole house. There's also more extensive use of color in the illustrations.

Notably absent is the fine selection of do-it-yourself projects included in the first edition. This may have been an economic move, but the new version suffers for it.

If you don't already own the *Manual*, now is your chance to get one. If you have the original, check this one out. You may want to trade up.

— Paul Hanke



Handyman's Guide

Reader's Digest New Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual by Reader's Digest Assoc. (Pleasantville, N.Y. 1991). 516 pages. Hardcover. \$27.99.

My old acquaintance and new editor, Sal Alfano, admonished me "not to laugh" when he presented the new edition of the *Reader's Digest Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual* as a candidate for review. On the contrary, I'm glad to have the opportunity to bring it to the attention of JLC readers.

Although written for homeowners rather than professionals, many tradespeople will find it a useful reference because of its clarity, its breadth of coverage, and the accuracy of its information. In fact, for

Free & Cheap

Recycling Vinyl Siding: The Vinyl Siding Institute now offers a solution for what do with those scraps of vinyl siding left around on your job site. Their 8-page *Directory of Companies Involved in Recycling of Vinyl Siding* provides an alphabetical listing by state of vinyl recyclers, including addresses and descriptions of services offered. For a free copy, write to: Vinyl Siding Institute, The Society of the Plastics Industry, 355 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017; 212/351-5400.

Concrete Compendium: A variety of in-depth and illustrated booklets and guides on working with concrete is available from Aberdeen Group. Booklets such as *Concrete Repair and Restoration*, *Building Safely with Concrete*, and *Troubleshooting Concrete Forming and Shoring Problems* were compiled from articles that appeared in *Concrete Construction* magazine. The price for most booklets is about \$11. For a complete listing of publications or to order, contact Aberdeen Group, 426 South Westgate, Addison, IL 60101; 800/323-3550 or 312/543-0870.

— Josie Masterson-Glen