

*Our approach to contract documentation is straightforward: Provide only the pertinent information required to specify the scope of the work, materials to be used, and design intent. Means and methods are the contractor's responsibility.*

materials that have the qualities of both visual appeal and durability when we are assessing value versus costs. When evaluating materials, we apply our imaginations. Can a flooring product be used on a wall or a tabletop? Can an inexpensive wood veneer be stained a beautiful color? What if the material was used backwards or upside-down? Is there merit to those applications?

If a material is deemed worthy due to its appeal, it then must be considered for its specific application. Will it meet the Fire Class Ratings, are they maintenance free, will they abrade, corrode, or rust? If fabrics are being evaluated, do they meet the upholster-ability test of the furniture manufacturer, are they the correct fiber content and weight to hold up against stains and double rubs?

Our materials research is not confined to our offices. We have subscriptions to all the major design magazines and frequently use them for inspiration. We attend trade shows, search the Internet, visit showrooms, and even explore Home Depot in search of materials. All of the Interiors staff is encouraged to become materials experts and share their knowledge. And, somehow all the acquired materials samples have to be kept current. Having a good materials librarian is key to keeping your research to a minimum.

There are downsides to using materials uniquely. Most of our work is publicly bid. It is sometimes problematic to receive competitive bids when you are doing something new. The designer feels guilty when the vendor who worked so hard to develop a new product or application is underbid by a competitor who did not participate in the development process.

While some contractors welcome the challenge of using unique materials or building interesting forms, others will charge a premium due to their inability to understand the use of the new material or an unwillingness to do anything out of the ordinary. One solution is to hold a “materials fair” prior to the bid opening so that the contractors can see the specified materials and their intended installation and can speak with the building products’ manufacturers representatives.

By the start of CD, the material research process should be complete. Our next task is to apply our research by correctly drawing and specifying the selected materials.