



# Drafting Culture: A Social History of Architectural Graphic Standards (MIT Press)

*George Barnett Johnston*

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Architectural Graphics Standards by Charles George Ramsey and Harold Reeve Sleeper, first published in 1932 (and now in its eleventh edition), is a definitive technical reference for architects--the one book that every architect needs to own. The authors, one a draftsman and the other an architect, created a graphic compilation of standards that amounted to an index of the combined knowledge of their profession. This first comprehensive history of Ramsey and Sleeper's classic work explores the changing practical uses that this "draftsman's Bible" has served, as well as the ways in which it has registered the shifts within the architectural profession since the first half of the twentieth century. When Architectural Graphics Standards first appeared, architecture was undergoing its transition from vocation to profession--from the draftsman's craft to the architect's academically based knowledge with a concomitant rise in social status. The older "drafting culture" gave way to massive postwar changes in design and building practice. Writing a history of the architectural profession from the bottom up--from the standpoint of the architectural draftsman--George Barnett Johnston clarifies the role and status of the subordinate architectural workers who once made up the base of the profession. Johnston's account of the evolution of Ramsey and Sleeper's book also offers a case study of the social hierarchies embedded within architecture's division of labor. Johnston investigates what became of the draftsman, and what became of drafting culture, and asks--importantly, in today's era of digital formats--what price is exacted from architectural labor as architecture pursues new professional ideals.

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