

Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute Reflects on a Century of Impact as the Institute Turns 100

by Dr. Ulrich Frisse, Historical Branding Solutions Inc., and Dave Mounce, Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute

Today, the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute (CRSI) is the trusted industry resource and standards, development organization for steel reinforcement, specifically reinforcing bar, in concrete construction. Since its inception, CRSI has continually built on member involvement and partnerships to help shape the construction industry. Through its own technical committees and staff collaboration, CRSI has made significant contributions that have created an enviable legacy.

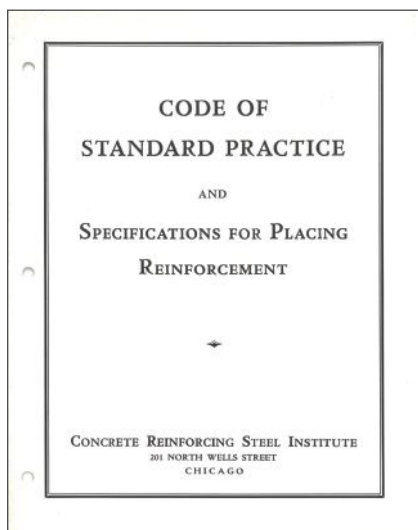
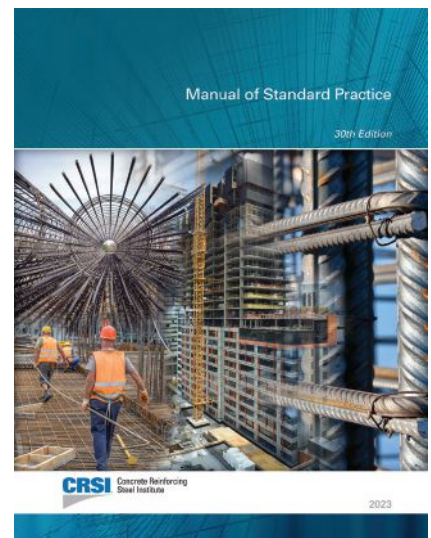
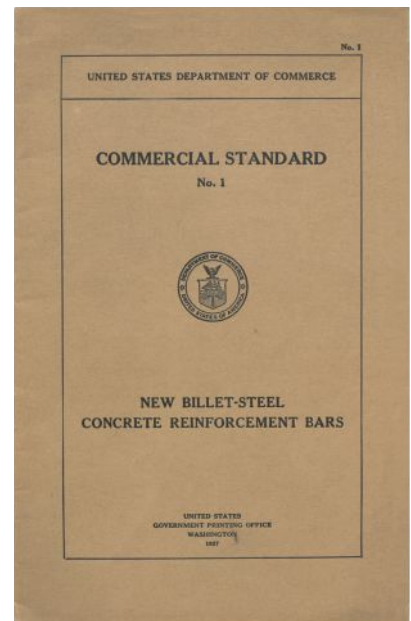
Ultimately, it has been the perseverance of CRSI's membership that has allowed the institute to traverse both political and economic difficulties over the last century. CRSI was founded in the fall of 1924, when 33 owners and executives of 25 companies involved in the manufacture and distribution of new billet-steel reinforcing bars gathered at

the William Penn Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pa. Their intent was to establish a trade association for their industry. The purpose of the new organization was to promote and actively support the use of steel-reinforced concrete in construction, and to address immediate challenges faced by the industry.

Against the post-World War I backdrop, the newly formed CRSI went immediately to work. Industrialization was in full swing, and among the first tasks was developing uniform contracts for fabricator members to gain legal authority to ensure they were paid by their customers. Additional initial goals were to standardize the number of grades and sizes of the steel reinforcing bars that were being produced in the United States and to create a publication addressing standards and specifications of reinforcing bars.

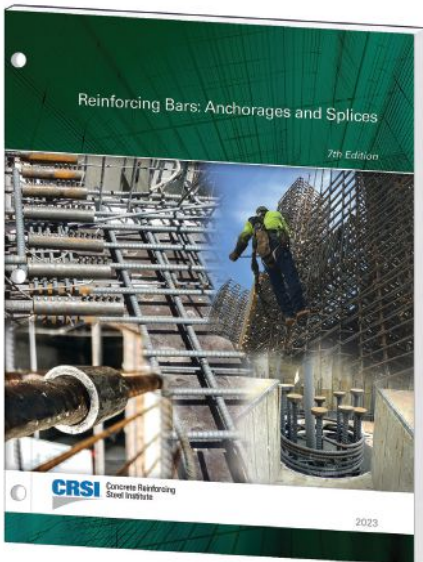
During the institute's infancy, it produced numerous written works that would become major contributions to the reinforced concrete industry. CRSI collaborated with the American Concrete Institute (ACI) to develop the *Tentative Building Regulations for the Use of Reinforced Concrete*¹ in 1928, which was the precursor for ACI's *Building Regulations for Reinforced Concrete* (ACI 318-41).²

Several years later, a new membership structure that included steel producers (mills) bolstered CRSI as it weathered the Great Depression and World War II. Although government intervention and war-time restrictions affected the work of the membership, it was during this time that the institute produced the precursors and first editions of publications that would become industry staples. *Reinforced Concrete*:



The Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute's first industry standard document, published in 1927. All Photos: Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute.

Covers of the precursor (1937) to and the current edition (2023) of the *Manual of Standard Practice*.⁴ Since 1937, this manual has presented recommendations for the design and detailing of steel reinforcing bars.



The definitive source for information on development and splicing of reinforcing bars, *Reinforcing Bars: Anchorages and Splices* has been revised several times since the first edition in 1968.

A *Handbook on Reinforced Concrete Construction Containing Information of Value to the Architect and Engineer*³ (predecessor of the current *Manual of Standard Practice*⁴), *CRSI Design Handbook*⁵ (now produced as a series of design guides), *CRSI Recommended Practice for Placing Reinforcing Bars*⁶ (later to become simply *Placing Reinforcing Bars*⁷), and the *Reinforcing Bar Detailing* manual⁸ were published throughout this period, providing industry education and guidance.

As the industry matured, CRSI evolved with the changing needs of its members, technological advancements, demographic changes, and the advent of new products and related processes. Taller buildings, new highway infrastructure, the developing building code, and corrosion resistance were all topics of focus and research.

Leading up to and entering the new millennium, CRSI expanded its membership, technical committees, standards and codes representation, and research obligations. New services included the development of industry-specific software, plant certification programs, and various initiatives to help members conform to a growing number of regulatory frameworks, from health and safety to environmental protection. The institute embraced government advocacy and developed

the necessary documents for its members to comply with sustainability requirements. It also fostered the research and adoption of high-strength (80 and 100 ksi) reinforcing steel in partnership with the CRSI Foundation, Pankow Foundation, and ACI Foundation. Workforce development and outreach to universities and construction school programs also continue to be key issues within CRSI and the CRSI Foundation.

CRSI's most recent flagship publication, *Design Guide on the ACI 318 Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete*,⁹ was released during the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly after the guide was published, CRSI created a series of companion "Design Checklists"¹⁰ to provide additional time-saving information to designers. Currently, CRSI is developing a comprehensive design guide addressing state-of-the-art seismic design requirements for an early 2025 release.


With the commemoration of the first 100 years quickly approaching, CRSI shows no signs of slowing down. It continues to author and influence the standards, codes, and rules according to which the construction industry ultimately operates. It also remains steadfast in demonstrating its commitment to the thousands of professionals who use reinforced concrete construction in their careers through education, information, and promotion.

The anniversary celebration begins at the World of Concrete in 2024, which is coincidentally observing its 50th anniversary. CRSI will showcase a new centennial-branded booth with special giveaway items and commemorative items for purchase. Twice next year, CRSI membership will gather nationally and revelries will also continue at regional and chapter events.

The institute will come full circle when it holds its Fall Business and Technical Meeting at the same location as its first national meeting in 1925, the Drake Hotel in Chicago, Ill. The event will be the culmination of a yearlong celebration that will allow CRSI members and staff to reflect on the longevity, milestones, and future of a trade association turning 100.



References

1. American Concrete Institute (ACI). 1928. *Tentative Building Regulations for the Use of Reinforced Concrete*. Farmington Hills, MI: ACI.
2. ACI. 1941. *Building Regulations for Reinforced Concrete* (ACI 318-41). Farmington Hills, MI: ACI.
3. Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute (CRSI). 1927. *Reinforced Concrete: A Handbook on Reinforced Concrete Construction Containing Information of Value to the Architect and Engineer*. Chicago, IL: CRSI.
4. CRSI. 2023. *Manual of Standard Practice*. 30th ed. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI.
5. CRSI. 2008. *CRSI Design Handbook*. 10th ed. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI.
6. CRSI. 1959. *CRSI Recommended Practice for Placing Reinforcing Bars*. Chicago, IL: CRSI.
7. CRSI. 2019. *Placing Reinforcing Bars*. 10th ed. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI.
8. CRSI. 2015. *Reinforcing Bar Detailing*. 5th ed. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI.
9. CRSI. 2020. *Design Guide on the ACI 318 Building Code Requirements for Structural Concrete*. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI.
10. CRSI. 2021. *Design Checklist Suite (318-19)*. Schaumburg, IL: CRSI. 

Dr. Ulrich Frisse is the president and creative director for Historical Branding Solutions Inc. in Kitchener, ON. Dave Mounce is the senior director of communications and outreach for the Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute in Schaumburg, Ill.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The Concrete Reinforcing Steel Institute (CRSI) is a member of the National Concrete Bridge Council. Visit their website at www.crsi.org to learn more about CRSI's mission and access valuable resources.

