

A comprehensive analysis of the evolving needs
and practices of 170 Architects

BEYOND THE SPECS 2025

Insights into Architectural Specification
Challenges and Solutions

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COLLABORATION

AORBIS Inc. would like to thank Russell and Dawson for their initial guidance in the research. Also, in providing the introduction to the study report.

SURVEY ADMINISTRATION AND DATA TABULATION

Poll fish

Preface

The importance of specification writing and the purpose of this report.

Executive Summary

A snapshot of key findings, challenges, and recommendations.

Survey Findings and Analysis

3.1 Criticality of Specification Writing

3.2 Challenges in Specification Writing

- Identifying and ranking the most significant challenges faced by architects.

3.3 Essential Elements of Effective Specifications

- Key components of specifications and their impact on project success.

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John T. Wilcox, AIA
Director of Design



Preface

Architects navigate a landscape of creativity, precision, and compliance. Writing specifications isn't just about documentation—it shapes project success and influences execution.

This survey provides key insights into challenges faced by professionals, capturing the voices of those ensuring accuracy, clarity, and alignment.

The findings are revealing. Time constraints remain the biggest challenge, demanding meticulous specification writing under tight deadlines. Architects must balance technical precision with aesthetics, ensuring structural integrity while preserving design intent, all while coordinating with design teams, consultants, and contractors.

A persistent struggle is ensuring accuracy. Even minor misinterpretations can lead to cost overruns, delays, and disputes. This highlights the need for rigorous quality control, clear communication, and access to up-to-date product information to reduce risks and maintain project integrity.

Specification writing is more than a procedure—it impacts all phases of design and construction. This report is a valuable resource, offering insights to enhance efficiency, collaboration, and risk management, ultimately improving project outcomes.

I commend this survey and hope it sparks discussions on refining processes, leveraging technology, and advancing the standards of our profession.

Executive Summary

Objective

This report presents a detailed analysis of insights gathered from 170 architects, offering a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities in specification writing. It explores emerging trends, identifies gaps in tools and training, and provides actionable recommendations for professionals and stakeholders.

Key Findings

26%

Persistent Challenges

- Time constraints were identified as the leading challenge by 26% of respondents.
- Limited access to updated information is a significant barrier to creating accurate and efficient specifications.

52%

Training Gaps

- Over half (52%) of respondents highlighted the need for tailored training programs to enhance clarity, compliance, and overall effectiveness in specification writing.

45%

Demand for Improved Tools

- 45% of respondents expressed a need for real-time collaboration tools.
- AI-assisted tools and updated specification software ranked as top technological needs.

2025

What's New in 2025?

- Specification writing trends in 2025 reflect a shift toward real-time collaboration tools, AI integration, and the prioritization of updated product information.
- Architects' top priorities include enhancing clarity in specifications and improving stakeholder communication.
- Sustainability considerations are gaining prominence, influencing material selection and specification accuracy.

48.5%

Stakeholder Satisfaction

- 48.5% of architects reported stakeholder satisfaction, while 32.2% noted a neutral response. This highlights areas where improvements are needed.

Recommendations



Invest in Collaborative Tools

- Develop platforms that integrate real-world data and support AI-assisted workflows.



Enhance Professional Training

- Focus on programs that improve clarity, technical accuracy, and stakeholder communication.



Strengthen Communication Channels

- Bridge gaps between architects and contractors to align expectations and reduce revisions.

Relevance

This report is an invaluable resource for media, industry professionals, and stakeholders aiming to stay ahead of trends in architectural specification writing.



Survey Findings and Analysis

Criticality of Specification Writing

Specification writing is widely recognized as critical to project success, as shown by survey responses: 63.52% of respondents consider it highly or very critical, while 28.8% rate it as moderately critical, and only 8.23% view it as not necessary or slightly critical.

This emphasis aligns with the challenges and priorities identified in specification writing. Key challenges include balancing technical details with aesthetics, adhering to tight deadlines, and ensuring accuracy while navigating budget limitations. Clear and accurate specifications not only reduce ambiguity and costly errors but also ensure alignment among stakeholders, ultimately leading to more successful project outcomes.

What You'll Find Next: Key Insights on Specification Writing



Essential Specification Elements

- Clarity, compliance, and sustainability are increasingly vital.
- Younger architects prioritize integrating sustainable practices.



Role of Advanced Tools & Technologies

- AI-driven capabilities enhance real-time collaboration and compliance checks.
- Such tools aim to address key specification writing challenges.



Current Tool Limitations & Future Demand

- 52% of architects find existing tools lacking in integration.
- There is a growing demand for enhanced, collaborative, and AI-supported tools.
- The profession is adopting a forward-thinking approach to specification writing.



The Top 3 Obstacles Hindering Architects Today

Architects face persistent challenges that hinder the efficiency and accuracy of specification writing:

26.3%

Time Constraints and Tight Deadlines

Identified by 26.3% of respondents as the most significant hurdle.

14%

Balancing Technical Details with Aesthetics

Highlighted by 14%, indicating the difficulty in aligning creative vision with practical requirements.

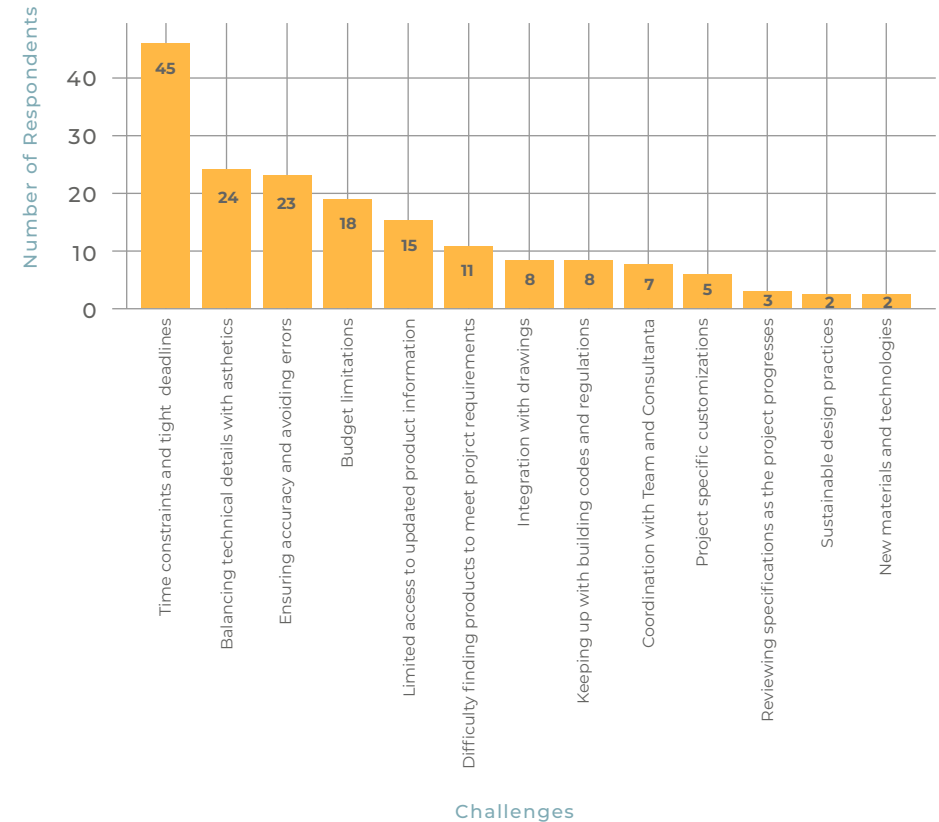
13.5%

Ensuring Accuracy and Avoiding Errors

Writing precise specifications is crucial, as cited by 13.5%, since errors can lead to costly misinterpretations, delays, and rework.

“An architect shared, 'Tight deadlines often force compromises on material research, impacting project quality.'”

Challenges Faced When Writing Specifications for Architectural Projects (Absolute Numbers)



Impact: These challenges contribute to project delays, increased costs, and compromised quality, underscoring the need for industry-wide solutions.

Essential Elements of Effective Specifications

Architects consistently prioritize the following components in their specifications:



Clarity

Specifications should be concise and unambiguous.



Updated Information

Incorporating current standards and product data is essential.



Compliance

Adherence to regulatory requirements ensures project success.



Sustainability

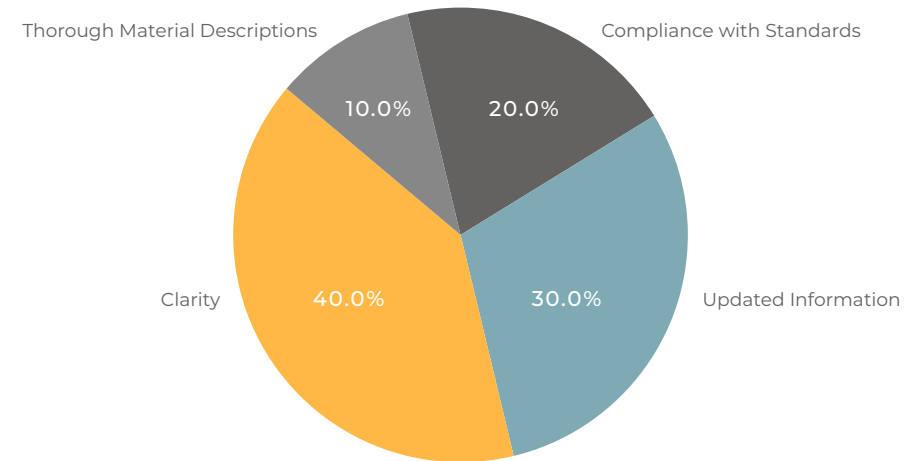
Sustainability factors are emerging as an important specification element, influencing material selection criteria



Demographics

Younger architects (under 40) placed greater emphasis on integrating sustainability standards into specifications.

Essential Elements of Specifications



Impact on Projects: Clear and accurate specifications reduce ambiguity, align teams, and minimize costly errors, making them indispensable to project success.



Tools and Technology - The Future of Architectural Specifications



Current Tool Usage

Architects primarily use:

- 3D CAD software.
- Online resources for product and material research.



Demand for Enhanced Tools

Respondents expressed a strong interest in:

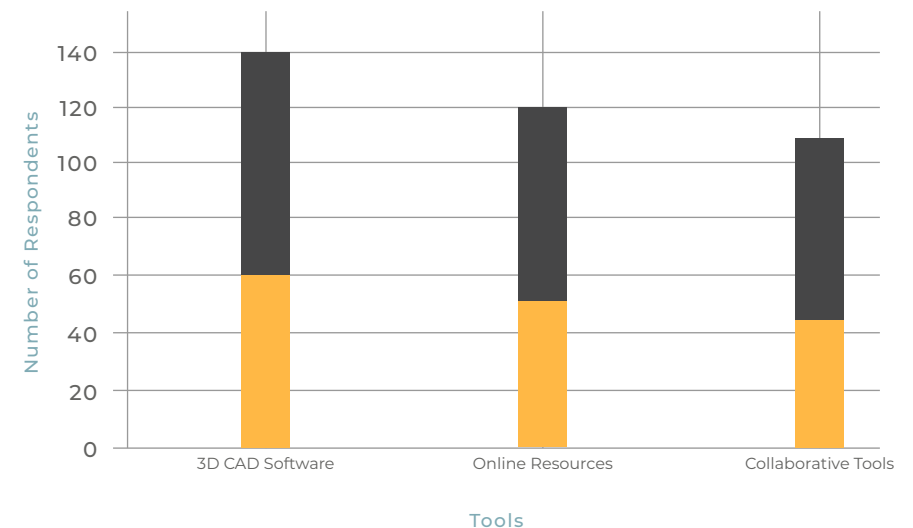
- Tools with real-time collaboration features.
- AI-assisted capabilities for improved accuracy and efficiency.



AI Deep-Dive

- AI adoption in specification writing is anticipated to grow, automating compliance checks and streamlining repetitive tasks. Architects under 40 showed a 30% higher interest in AI-driven tools than their senior counterparts.

Current Tools vs AI-driven Tools in Specification Writing



Category

Current Tools

AI-driven Tools

Key Data Point: While architects rely heavily on 3D CAD software, over 52% believe these tools lack the integration capabilities required for modern workflows.

Stakeholder Perspectives



Satisfaction Levels

- 48.5% of architects report stakeholders are generally satisfied.
- 32.2% remain neutral, indicating room for improvement.



Challenges

Frequent revisions caused by incomplete specifications result in contractors spending an average of 15% more resource time per project.



One contractor noted,
'Misaligned expectations often lead to unnecessary delays and frustration for all involved.'



Stakeholder Satisfaction with Specifications



Impact: Enhanced communication channels can reduce misunderstandings, align expectations, and ultimately improve project outcomes.

Demographics and Trends



Age and Gender Distribution

The majority of respondents fall in the 30–50 age group. Gender distribution reflects 63% male and 37% female respondents.



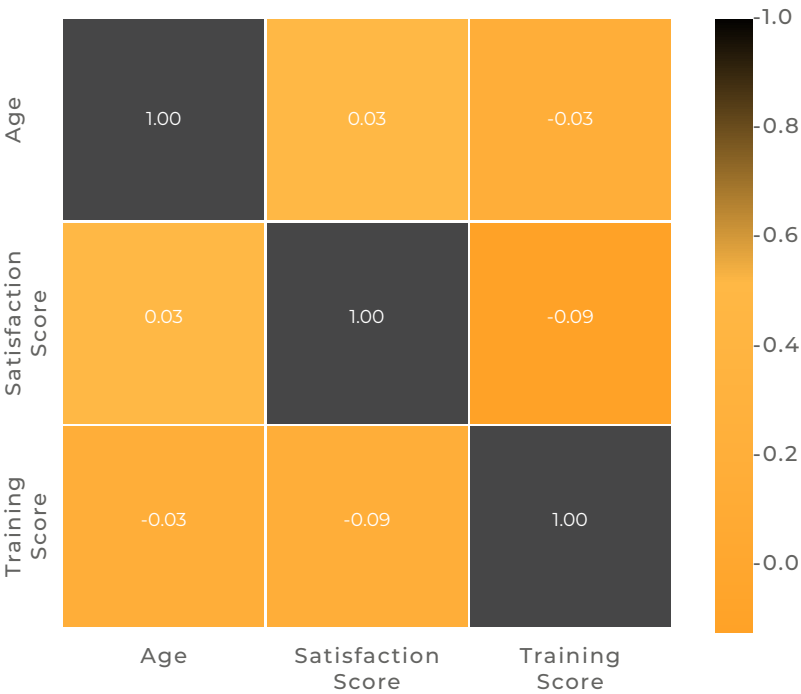
Trends

Younger architects prioritize tools and training, while older architects emphasize clarity and efficiency.



Younger architects (30–40 age group) prioritize real-time collaborative tools, while senior architects (50+) emphasize compliance and efficiency.

Correlation of Age, Satisfaction Level, and training Demand



Visualization Caption:

Age trends indicate differing priorities, highlighting the need for tailored solutions across experience levels.

Recommendations



For Architects

- Invest in training programs tailored to specification writing, particularly on clarity and compliance.
- Leverage AI and automation to improve accuracy and reduce errors.



For Manufacturers

- Create tools with real-time updates and sustainability-focused material databases.
- Develop resources that cater to younger architects' preference for integrated workflows.



For Stakeholders

- Standardize feedback systems to reduce revisions.
- Collaborate with architects early to align expectations.



Conclusion

This survey reveals significant challenges and opportunities in specification writing. By addressing gaps in tools, training, and communication, architects can enhance project efficiency and stakeholder satisfaction.

Industry professionals and stakeholders are encouraged to implement these recommendations and collaborate on innovative solutions for a more streamlined specification process.

Architects, manufacturers, and stakeholders must come together to address gaps in tools, training, and communication. By adopting AI-driven tools and sustainability-focused workflows, the industry can improve efficiency and foster stronger collaborations.



How AORBIS Can Help



Tailored Specifications

AORBIS works closely with architects and contractors to create actionable, clear, and accessible specifications that reduce ambiguities and improve project outcomes.



Powered by AORBIS Intelligent Platform

Leveraging advanced IP-based Intelligent platforms, AORBIS ensures real-time updates and seamless communication, keeping all stakeholders aligned throughout the project lifecycle.



Material Expertise

With deep knowledge of Division 8 and 10 products, AORBIS bridges the gap between design intent and on-site execution, providing detailed material information, availability insights, and alternatives.



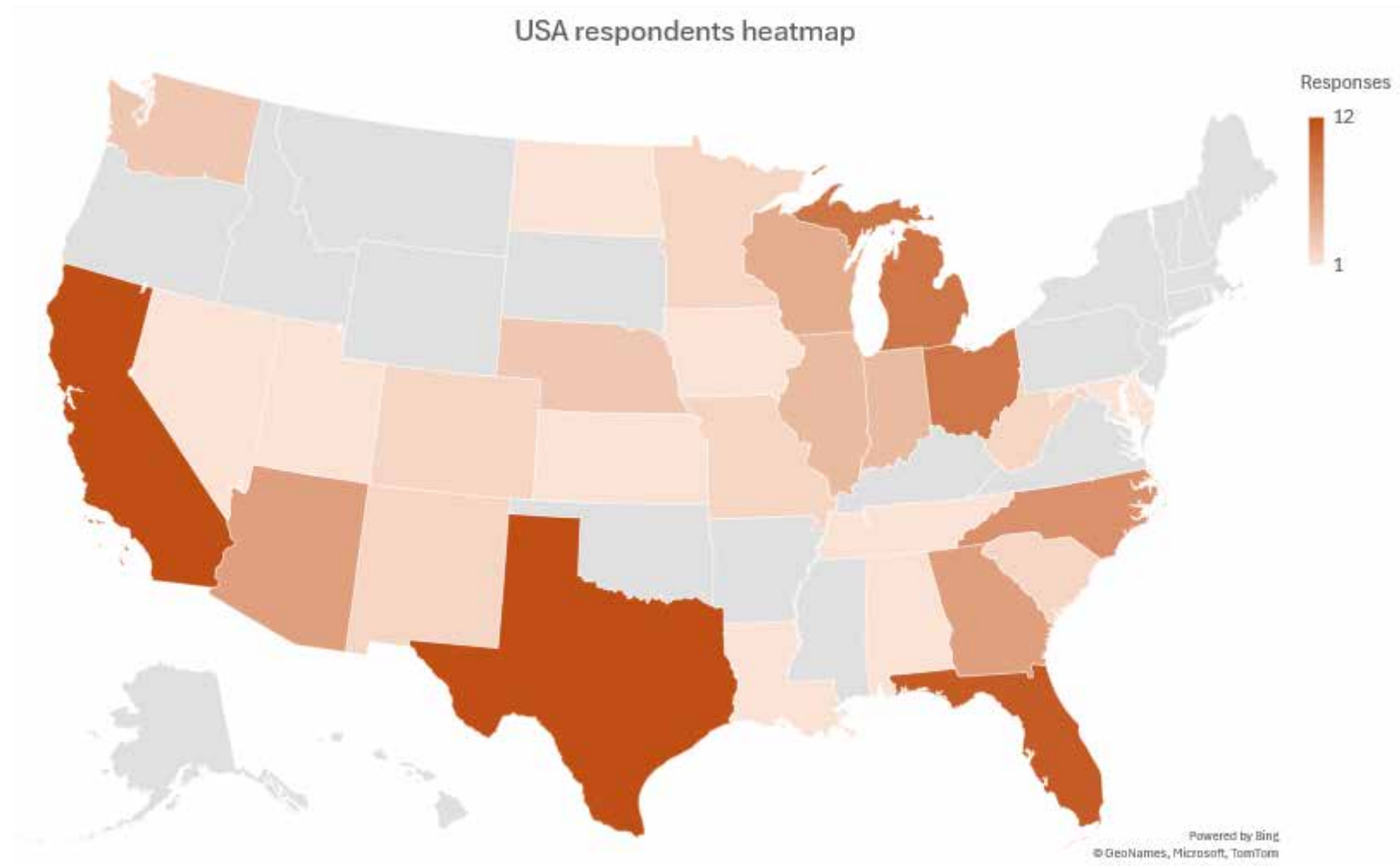
Collaborative Approach

AORBIS invites architects and contractors to participate in a shared specification journey, incorporating feedback from both sides to produce documents that align with design goals, budgets, and real-world constraints.

Join Us in Shaping the Future of Specifications. AORBIS is committed to transforming specifications into tools of collaboration and efficiency. Together, we can build specifications-and relationships-that truly work.

Methodology and Respondent Profile

Respondents (Architecture professionals) were located across the US and participated anonymously in an online survey.





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 Thing

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