

EDITORIAL

One of the first conferences I attended as editor of *LD+A* was the Lighting Research Center's "Bridges in Light" event in the fall of 2003. That meeting marked the 15th anniversary of the LRC and was built around four hot-button topics that seemed poised to make an impact on the profession: sustainability, light and health, LEDs. . . and the value of lighting. Ten years later, three out of four ain't bad, but "we sort of look down at our shoes when we talk about the fourth one," says LRC director Mark Rea. "Value didn't really take off, so we'll try it again."

LRC associate director Russ Leslie explained this thinking during his opening remarks at the LRC's 25th Anniversary Celebration in March: "We thought the way to mark 25 years of the LRC was to look at the next 25 years." As a result, value became the anniversary theme. "The industry gets a D at best for articulating the benefits of light," admits Leslie. "We're good at measuring the lumen but not a lot else." Adds Rea: "In lighting, the benefit you can't measure doesn't exist, and the fault lies with us."

Here's how Rea and LRC size up the current situation: New metrics are the vehicle for communicating the value of lighting, but at the moment, "the lumen and CRI are the two metrics we have," he says. "If that's all we give them, then that's all they'll use." And with such rudimentary metrics, the value story doesn't stand a chance.

Now here's the plan: Rea's vision is to create a better tool box of metrics from which the industry (designers, manufacturers, academia and not least importantly, regulators) can call upon. For example, lighting designer and LRC Council on Value member Randy Burkett imagines micro-targeted metrics that can be cherry-picked according to the application. "A metric might apply in a coffee shop, but not in a museum or an office." Leslie mentioned the idea of identifying general concepts (e.g., driver safety, security and sleep) and then matching new metrics to each (some examples of advanced metrics could be brightness, Class A color and circadian).

The hurdle, says Rea, is when you get five lighting experts together in a room, you're likely to get five different opinions on what these new metrics should be. The good news is that when Mark Rea talks, people listen (see the review of his new book on p. 12), and by sheer force of will alone, he may be the one to provide the impetus to the metrics movement.

So maybe there is hope for a new batch of metrics, perhaps in time for LRC's 30th anniversary, if not sooner.

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