



DataCAD Boston Users Group

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A Committee of the Boston Society of Architects

DBUG Meeting Notes
at William Mitropoulos Assocs.
Lexington, Mass.
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Full Handouts in full available online at
<http://world.std.com/~eshu/dbug.htm>

Welcome & Announcements

A convivial group of some 25 DBUGers convened at Wm. Mitropoulos Associates for the first meeting of the new year. Mike Smith welcomed the group and had a number of items at a special “show and tell” station, including his newly published *The Official DataCAD Users Guide*, the January “Best of” *Cheap Tricks* Issue, and site information of the Getty Museum www.getty.edu complex in Los Angeles, which Mike had recently visited and recommended highly. Jeff Tagerman also ran a very nice continuous display (3 windows simultaneously!) on his laptop of animations produced with DataCAD Plus (Vis).

After introductions, Mike gave a quick background history of Wm. Mitropoulos Associates, noting that they have concentrated on commercial work for the last five years. Evan Shu announced that the next DBUG meeting would be at the BSA building on Feb. 15th (Thursday). He announced the imminent release of DataCAD 9.03, a free update that would include some new input and snap modes, which Mike would demonstrate quickly later. He also was happy to present to Neil Blanchard, the *Cheap Tricks* Honor Prize for distinguished service to the DataCAD community. Neil has been the foremost hardware guru on the DBUG forum in recent years, and Evan said that Cheap Tricks was very happy to recognize him with the award, which included a free subscription for a year and the “Official DataCAD Users Guide” book. Mike Smith was also overjoyed to find that George Livingston was the “lost” winner of the book raffle at last year’s meeting and George also received his book award.

Customizing DataCAD

Mike then went through some of the primary ways that you can customize your interface in DataCAD. He went through the *Program Preferences* options (*Tools*) and covered the *Tab* selections for

Misc: *Default Drawing File*, *Shader Background Color*, *PgUp/PgDn* (in text menu, replaces the old TXTSCALE=off workaround), *Copy to Clipboard* (entity colors vs. black, line weights or not), *Previous View* (select FreeZoom/Pg Up/Dn/ Pan-Scrolls optional configuration), *Display List* options (pros/cons of *Max Acceleration* on curve display), *Symbol Preview* (3D view option).

Interface Settings are controlled by clicking on small representation of DataCAD Screen:

Menu Buttons (font & size controls display);
Icon Bar on/off;
Drawing Window background color;
Message Window font display;
Status Area (change menu from left/right).

Toolbox is used to change macros in menu pulldown list.

For power users who like to “pop the hood”, Mike then went on to describe some of the changes that could only be made by revising the DCADWIN.INI (initialization) file. (He cautioned beginners to make sure they had a backup copy just in case.)

FONTNAME=ROMANS

The place to fix DataCAD if it won’t open due to a missing font.

CAVWALL=false

When this option is changed to TRUE, insertion of doors and windows into cavity (4-line) walls trims the outer jamb lines to the cavity lines.

CHECK_SYM=false

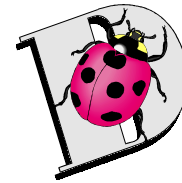
This addresses a bug in the Symbol/Purge function of previous versions. If TRUE, it will “clean” files previously corrupted by the PurgeSym command.

[MenuTextColor]

These settings determine how the DataCAD menu buttons look. There are three sets of numbers after each = sign. This is known as a “color triplet,” and describes the Red Green and Blue color mixtures that make up all the available colors on your computer. Each number can range from 0 to 255. By changing the values of each triplet you can change the colors that DataCAD displays. Use the Windows Color Picker to find the values. [Note: these colors can be changed much more easily with the INI-OUTI utility that Mike Smith wrote. It is included on the *Official DataCAD Users Guide* CD as well as being available via *Cheap Tricks Ware B111*.]

[DropMesh] MaxDivisions=100

This number sets the maximum number of X and Y divisions in the 3D Drop Mesh function. The default value of 100 is a number meant to keep new users from inadvertently setting the X or Y values too high, thereby slowing down the program considerably.



[TemplateWindow] Width=

You can control the width of the template window by adding the pixel width here. 200 is the default. You can try a number like 150 if you want a little more screen real estate in DataCAD with the templates turned ON.

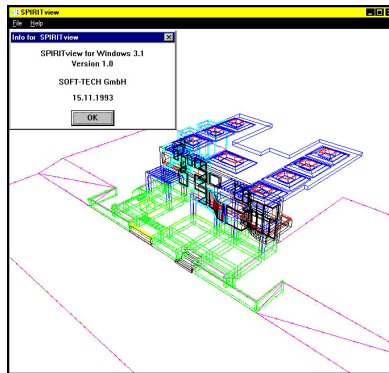
[ToolBox]

These are the macros under the Toolbox option in the drop-down menu. To re-order the macros, just re-order them here in the .INI file, then restart DataCAD.

Mike ended this segment with a previous “Best Cheap Trick” prizewinning default setting that he liked. You can have Draw Marks used only when using the Reference Point (‘) option: first, **Utility/Measures/RefPt** and turn **DrwMarks** ON; then **Utility/Settings** and turn **DrwMarks** OFF.

WINVIEW: DataCAD File Viewer

Evan Shu then presented one of the prize winning *Cheap Tricks* in his annual contest that was submitted by Mark Bell of Peddle Thorp Architects in Australia. (Knowing it’s there is the trick!) This is a simple standalone utility (only 280K) that was originally created in 1993 for Windows 3.1! (It is in the DWG folder, packaged with DataCAD Plus—even the demo version.) It will view any DataCAD or DataCAD Plus file in 3D and the view can be manipulated with the mouse.



LEFT BUTTON DRAG: rotates the model in 3D space

RIGHT BUTTON DRAG (left/right) brings model closer/farther;

It will also read BAK, SWP, ASV versions. It is very fast and can be used to do a simple directory check of what various files are. Neil Blanchard also discovered that if you rename copies of the WINVIEW.EXE file (e.g. WINGVIEW1, WINVIEW2, WINVIEW3), you can actually have multiple files open to compare files. Unfortunately, the limitations are that it doesn’t read text or ZAK entities, so it is best used for quick file checks or for 3D modeling viewing. But it is small and foolproof enough to be sent along with a DataCAD file to a client to view the file.

XREFs

Mike Smith covered again the features of this very powerful new feature that came with DataCAD 9. He stressed that while it is indispensable for the multi-user office, it is still very, very useful for the sole practitioner as well. One of the best uses would be to have a single XREF file be used for all

titleblock information. Now all changes can be made in one file and if that file is XREFed into all the other files of the project, you can rest assured that dates and set versions can be kept up to date. Other good sole proprietor uses include doing keynotes, breaking up a file for faster display and use, and to use the highlighting feature for “ghosting” effects.

He reviewed the aspects of *Inserting a Reference* file (by Abs. Zero for best coordination vs. by Center), and using the *Reference Manager*. He recommended that you insert each XREF on its own layer and then *lock* that layer to prevent accidental additions. He covered the issue of “Orphans” that will occur if you move an XREF file. He explored the use of the BIND command to bring all XREF files into a single drawing file. (Attendees were impressed that the UNDO function will also undo a bind!) Neil Blanchard noted that he has talked with Gary Segal of DATACAD LLC who confirmed a bug that will create an orphan file if the full path and drawing name exceeds 63 characters.

Other XREF issues were discussed by the group as a whole. Project management of the entire job could be done with a blank file in which all the files were XREFed in, so the project manager could quickly check on the progress of the whole team. Neil Blanchard said that a special “message” layer could be used to keep notes or send messages between team members. Mike Smith said that you could use the XREF function to mimic an MSP plot layout by using Clip Cubes and the Enlarge function. Mike also provided info on a technique that Joseph Del Ciotto posted to the forum which will allow you to overlap clip cubes in MSP as well as drawing “outside” of a clip cube. (See full DOC file posted to DBUG web site.)

DATACAD 9.03 Sneak Preview

Finally, in a sneak preview of the soon to be released free update, DataCAD 9.03, Mike showed how the new input mode *DIRDIS* (Direction/Distance) works and the new Snap mode, *Get Snap*. DIRDIS allow the mouse cursor to set the direction of the line. Get Snap allows you to grab just the X coordinate, or just the Y coordinate from another entity. It will even allow you to use another snap point to establish the angle of a line only. These new modes will get rid of a lot of cleanup work that was previously needed to do the same thing. Look for more details in the February DBUG meeting. Other new features to be in DataCAD 9 include a display of *Clip Cube* boundaries and a utility that will map 2D Views to 3D GoToViews.

More good information was presented “after-hours” and “off-the-record” as the meeting disbanded, with appetites for helpful tips and techniques well-sated as usual.

Meeting Notes by Evan H. Shu AIA