

Contest

The Mini LISP contest has been extended for 1 month. Please submit your favorite LISP routines before April 21st!

AutoCAD gets some competition

Well Microsoft has finally finished the purchase of Visio. The new version is called <http://www.visio.com/> Visio 2000 with 3 levels of usage. This competes directly with Autodesk's Actrix software. In another realm of the MS takeover, they opened the source code for IntelliCAD and let <http://about.bricsnet.com/about/services/> Bricsnet.com come up with IntelliCAD 2000. Now, the last version of IntelliCAD that I put through the paces was pretty close to ACAD LT, with the added benefit that it could handle LISP. The new version is even better with support now for most everything people thought was lacking in the earlier version. Right now you can steal your copy for only \$150. This very easily could kill the AutoCAD LT market if they publicize it properly. If you have Architects or designers who don't want the overhead that comes with AutoCAD or the hefty weight of an ever increasing price tag you should probably think about buying yourself a copy and supporting some competition in the CAD realm. You might also want to check out their other software for engineers and product information. Next is <http://www.intergraph.com/smartsketch/> Intergraph Software who are now shipping version 3.0 of their SmartSketch software and they have a <http://www.intergraph.com/smartsketch/eval30.asp> free download version available. Now this is isn't for everyone, but it's not bad for the beginner not wanting to shell out allot of cash, but keep in mind that as always you get what you pay for.

Tips for Mtext

Personally I get quite tired dealing with the limitations of the default Mtext editor that Autodesk supplies with AutoCAD. Instead I prefer to use Notepad or WordPad for most of my Mtext editing. To switch between editors simply type in the command MTEXTED and when prompted for your editor of choice, type in NOTEPAD or WORDPAD. Before you can use the WordPad as an editor you need to copy WORDPAD.EXE from C:\Program Files\Accessories\Wordpad.exe to your AutoCAD directory. This is typically found at: C:\Program Files\AutoCAD R14 although this will also work with AutoCAD 2000. You must make a copy for this file for this to work, a shortcut will not do. Unfortunately using either NotePad or WordPad you loose the ability to adjust the font, however I find editing much easier in WordPad, but it's all a personal preference. As a side note, when you use the underline function in Mtext and then convert it to Text by exploding it, the underline does not translate as a %%u code that Text uses for underlines. Instead it simply draws a line under the text. Another thing to keep in mind when changing Mtext to Text is that you loose any extra fonts in the text. Typically this is not a problem though, however in deference to Text, it is faster to move, copy and edit plus you can see the text when you drag it, unlike Mtext. You can also to convert Text to Mtext try using the Express Tool command TXT2MTXT. This works quite well, and if you need to adjust how it works, simply hit return instead of selecting text. Windows and

Crossings both work with the TXT2MTXT command and you can pick the text in any order and the command will import them properly.

Better WMF revisited

Awhile back I wrote a short piece on a small program called www.furix.com Better WMF. For those that missed it, this is a small program that changes your AutoCAD drawing from ACAD into a WMF file. Now true you could simply use the WMFOUT command that AutoCAD gives you, but then you lose line weight, and this little program is great at really nicely placing your drawing into an MS Office document. If you create presentations, fax drawings, etc. you might want to check out the www.furix.com FREE demo version!

Dim Bug

Well I did it again - I found yet another bug. I've been looking around but haven't seen this one documented anywhere yet (correct me if anyone else has seen this posted anywhere). Try this yourself then show your computer AutoCAD guru and watch him scratch his head! Here's what you do:

Open a new drawing then type DDIM and select Annotation. Next pick Units and choose Architectural (not architectural stacked). Now set the accuracy to 1/256 and click OK and OK again, then SAVE and OK. Next draw a line and offset it 121/256", 123/256", 125/256", 127/256" or 129/256". Now, do a DIMLIN and select the endpoints of the lines you just drew. Do you see 1'? For some reason AutoCAD thinks that those 5 distances are 1' and not their respective distances. Any other offset value gives the correct number. Change the Accuracy or the Units and it will revert to the correct amount!

Handheld CAD

I've mentioned a few times before how nice it is to take the CAD into the field for doing as-built drawings. Now, if you have a Palm PC with a <http://pda.tucows.com/wince/files/setuppalmcad.exe> SH3 and not a MIPS processor, then you might like to try out Palm-CAD. If on the other hand you had a bit more money to spend on your toy then you might want to check out SketchCE for the HPC with either the <http://pda.tucows.com/wince/files/sksetup.exe> SH3 or <http://pda.tucows.com/wince/files/sksetup.exe> MIPS processors. Both products are compatible with AutoCAD's DXF format. Of course you might simply prefer something simpler like <http://pda.tucows.com/wince/files/palmitchsketch.zip> PalmItchSketch which is just like the old Etch-a-Sketch from your childhood!

CAD on a hot tin Wire

You might want to check out <http://www.cadwire.net/> CAD Wire where they compile all the latest news and reviews each week that are happening in the CAD world. Actually if

you look closely you might notice our last article on Xref's and Pirates was linked to -
Thanks for noticing!