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The CAD Manager Wishlist – 2018 Edition

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Learning Objectives

- Discuss your needs and wishes with Autodesk employees and your peers
- Connect with seasoned CAD managers who may share your experiences
- Share best practices and innovative solutions to common CAD management issues
- Feel like part of a community with common needs to direct future changes to the CAD Manager's toolset

Description

Previous CAD Manager Wishlist sessions focused on the ancillary tools and programs that come with AutoCAD software, but haven't been updated or improved since their release. We've discussed desired improvements to things like Reference Manager, Sheet Set Manager, Standards Checker, eTransmit, and Fields.

In the 2018 edition, we'll focus on your ideas for a perfect CAD management world. We'll discuss your various bottlenecks and challenges, and what you, as the CAD manager would like to see as solutions. These solutions may be updates to current tools, or something that may not even exist (yet!). Attendees will be expected to actively participate, as an AutoCAD Product Team member will attend, so this is an opportunity to have the CAD manager's voice heard!

Speaker



Frank is currently an Applications Engineer at ECAD, Inc. - a Platinum Autodesk Partner in Tulsa, OK, where he provides customer support and training for various Autodesk products.

Frank has worked in various design and CAD Management roles with AutoCAD and Autodesk software since 1986 (v2.62). He currently serves on the AUGI Board of Directors and authors the recurring "Tuesday Tips with Frank" feature on the official AutoCAD Blog.

He was part of a select group invited by Autodesk to attend the inaugural CAD Manager Summit held in San Francisco. As a top-rated member of the AutoCAD All-Star Mentor program, he has provided live guidance and answered questions for over 2,500 in-trial users in more than 50 countries worldwide.

Overview

The CAD Manager Wishlist is now in its third year and has been presented five times.

For the last two years, the initial session filled up within days, a second session was offered, and it too filled up quickly. To all those who have attended in the past, and to all of you attending this year, I want to sincerely thank you.

Five presentations equate to seven hours of your interaction with a member of the AutoCAD product team that you probably had no opportunity to do without this session. My prior AutoCAD Guest Stars; Dania El Hassan, Karen Mason and Sean Corriel got amazing input, and took it all back to their teams to share and discuss. Even without the product rep, I know the attendees learned from their peers, and left with some new ideas on what AutoCAD could do to address the issues we CAD Managers face.

The Wishlist began as my effort to make Autodesk aware of the limitations of some of the tools that were introduced in the early years of this millennium (see the image below for a timeline). These tools have been largely ignored since they were introduced, and I knew that a modern update would significantly improve the CAD Manager's daily routine. I realized that I couldn't be the only one frustrated with this, so the Wishlist Roundtable was born. Given the response, I was right.

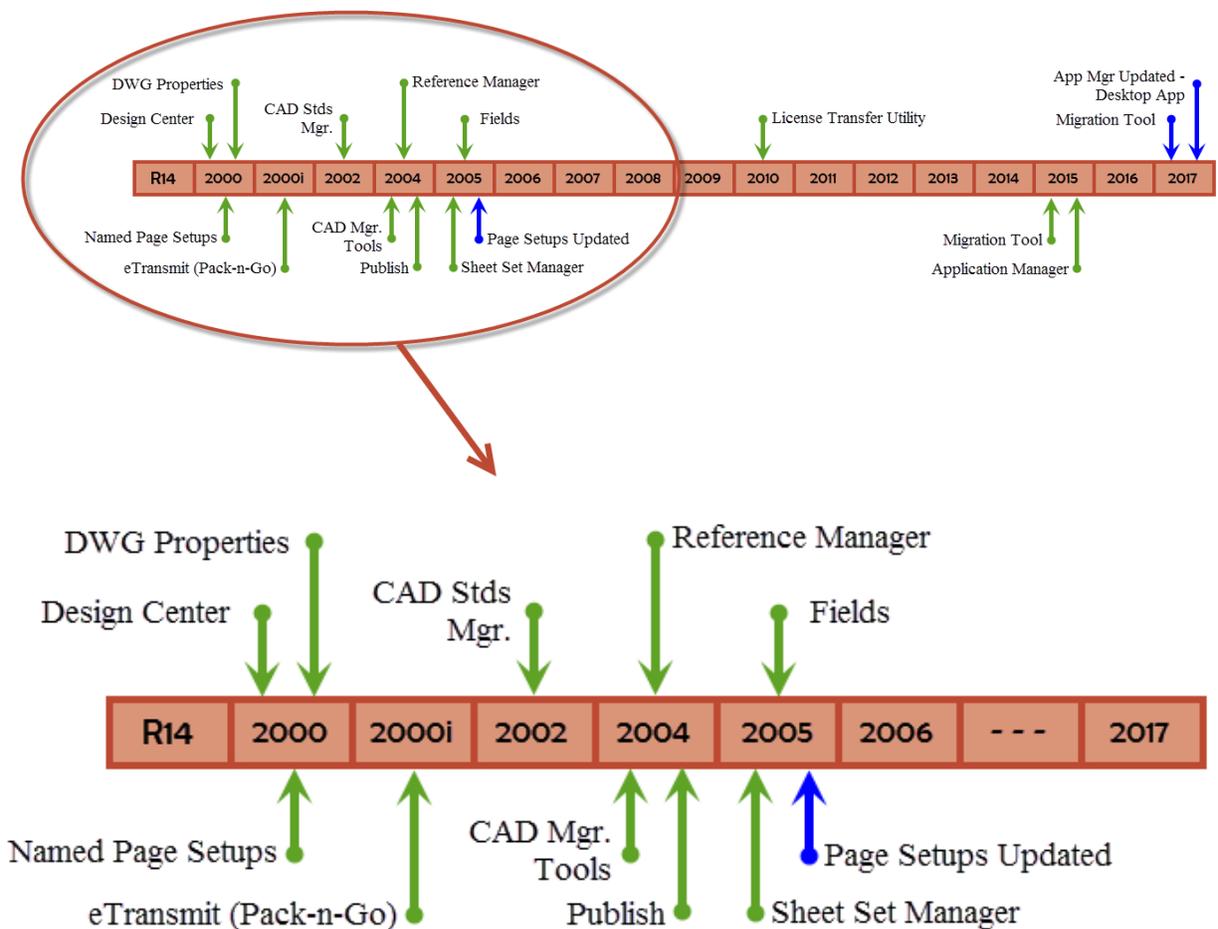


FIGURE 1: A TIMELINE OF AUTOCAD'S CAD MANAGER TOOLS

Looking Back

Previous roundtables focused on these old tools, and what would improve them. In no particular order (and not fully inclusive) we discussed the following:

- Standards Checker
- eTransmit
- Reference Manager
- Fields
- Page Setups
- Sheet Set Manager
- PDF Import
- Publish
- Design Center



What did we learn? Well, not surprisingly most everyone dislikes the dated interfaces, which probably state of the art on Windows 98. Some features aren't used as much as I thought, so their discussion time got restricted. One of which is Sheet Set Manager. Only a few in each session even used it, which was disappointing to me, as it was one of my hot button topics.

Our fellow CAD Managers said eTransmit could do more, such as an option to publish directly to cloud services, along with things like improving its Bind Xrefs function to provide feedback.

Fields could add Lisp expressions (or function calls) and not just offer DIESEL. PDF Import could be better with batch functionality. Page Setups would benefit by being a project-based setting, instead of living in drawings.

Reference Manager, while extremely powerful, is also extremely dangerous, and nearly every attendee agreed that the clunky interface made it more difficult to use than it should be.

Then there's Standards Checker. We consistently found that its use was abandoned after having been implemented. Why? Mainly because it's obtrusive, and users hate it. And again, it doesn't do enough. It only checks four things (which makes sense, since that's all it *could* check when it was introduced back in 2002). And, while it does have a batch function, there is no actual functionality. Run it, and all you get a report.

All these discussions were great, and while I was at first concerned about the format expanding to 90 minutes last year, we actually found ourselves running out of time. Most everyone was like me, in that they could talk about these topics all day. Personally, I enjoyed the interest from our AutoCAD product team member. They genuinely wanted our opinions, and I believe they were shocked to hear some things they had never thought of.

Moving Forward

While the topics we covered in the last three Wishlist sessions are not off limits, this year I want to focus on the overall dynamic of what a CAD Manager does, and what could be done from a product standpoint to make our lives easier.

So much of the development focus on AutoCAD (and its “verticals” or “toolsets”) is on the design and documentation phase – and rightfully so. That’s what the programs are for. But there are other things that happen during the lifecycle of a project that are just as important to streamline, as they impact the bottom line as well. That’s where we typically come in.

Our design and drafting teams do not see all the up-front work we do. It’s usually our job to get a project set up correctly. Templates, blocks, standards, etc. Conversely, our job doesn’t end after the project is completed. We still must consider client deliverables, clean-up, preparation for archiving... just to name a few.

All these topics deserve discussion, as they can all be improved. And, by no means will we leave out what we do during the design and documentation phase of a project. Something always happens that requires us to put on our wizard hats, wave our magic wand and save the day.

Often, this magic is performed with the tools Autodesk has given us, such as Reference Manager, eTransmit, Sheet Set Manager, or even a knowledge of Lisp or other API’s. Again, I’d love to see improvements to these existing tools, but just maybe, there are answers out there that haven’t been considered yet. I’d like to think it could be up to us, the CAD Managers, to bring these roadblocks and solutions to Autodesk’s attention.

Expectations

Quite simply, we’re going to discuss what we do, how we do it, the problems we run into, and how we’d like to see it improved. Sounds easy, huh? One thing I have learned from both previous sessions and just talking to other CAD Managers is that we all have frustrations and similar problems.

Given that, you won’t find a bullet list of topics here, nor in the slide deck for that matter. My biggest expectation is simply participation from everyone. After all, you signed up for a roundtable session, knowing what it entails. My Autodesk guest and I will do our best to facilitate our discussion, but in the end, this is about you. Where do you want to see the product go in terms of what we do? This is your chance to speak up.

