Hey Mac, What's New? New Features in Autodesk® AutoCAD® for Mac®

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AC2189 Every new software release brings new features to our beloved software, but how do you keep track of them all? In this class, we discuss new features that have been added to the latest version of Autodesk AutoCAD for Mac software, including interface improvements and new tools, and how to make the most of them in your daily workflows. At the end of the class, join us for a brief interactive Q&A session to gather user feedback about the current release of AutoCAD for Mac and to discuss what can be done in future releases to make it an even more effective design tool.

Learning Objectives

At the end of this class, you will be able to:

- Identify the new features of the latest release

- Use these new features comfortably in your workflow

- Generally understand the features and tools available in AutoCAD for Mac

- Decide if the newest version of AutoCAD for Mac has a place in your workflow

About the Speaker

Jim is the Owner of IMPACT Designs, LLC, a consulting firm based in Maryland. Jim has worked with AutoCAD for 15 years in varying disciplines, including commercial and residential architectural design, mechanical engineering, materials handling, and telecommunications. He is skilled in customization, efficiency and speed, as well as being adept in information technology. He also worked as a genius at an Apple® Retail Store, becoming a certified Apple® technician. Jim combines paper and pencil drafting knowledge with his love of cutting edge technology, both Mac® and PC-based. Currently, Jim travels around the country giving workshops and classes on AutoCAD for Mac® and using Apple® computers in today's design offices, as well as manning his blog macncad.com.

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October 22 saw the release of AutoCAD for Mac 2014 which brought with it some much requested fixes and features after a very long wait. After running through the list in class, we'll engage in a Q&A / impromptu roundtable / discussion regarding the features you want to see most in the next release. This list will be presented to Autodesk as our own wish list of features, similar to the AUGI Wishlist. That said, let's take a look at the new features included in the latest release:

New Welcome Screen

Retina Display Support

**Autodesk 360**

Package a drawing

Default Save-As

PDF Improvements

New Help Interface

New Welcome Screen

The new welcome screen in AutoCAD for Mac is similar to the one introduced in the Windows version this past release. It gives you 3 options, Create, Learn, Extend. Create is probably where you will spend most of your time, as it essentially combines the Open, Open recent and New functions in one window. Learn showcases some new features with short videos. Finally, extend allows you to connect to the Autodesk community and other services to enrich your AutoCAD work and experience. There is a link to the Autodesk forums, to Autodesk 360, to a YouTube channel for more training videos, to the support & services page of Autodesk, as well as a link to training site **lynda.com**.
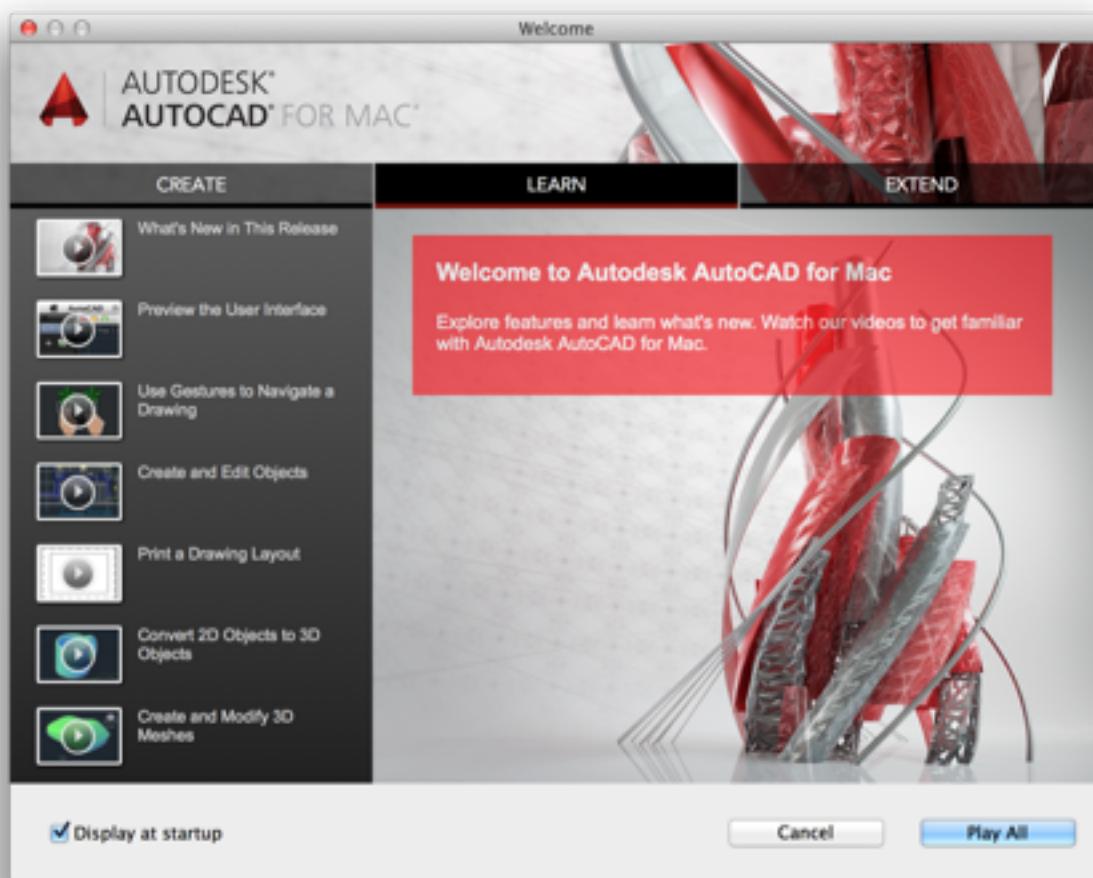
Retina Display Support

In 2010 Apple introduced it's Retina Display classification as one of the main features of the iPhone 4. In 2012 Retina Displays were added to the iPad and the Macbook Pro line with a new 15" slimmer Macbook Pro. As described by Apple, a display is considered Retina Class if it has a high enough pixel density that the human eye is unable to recognize pixelation at a typical view distance. Essentially, while holding a device as you normally would you would not be able to see the little blocks that make up an image. Text looks as clear as on a printed page.

Obviously this technology is a big deal for drafters and now CAD drafters. Eyesight is a huge factor in our work, and eye fatigue from staring at small black lines 8-10 hours a day is something that plagued pencil drafters. Anything that could be done to help a pencil drafter out with eye fatigue was done, from changing the color of drafting boards to the familiar mint green to the old green visors for deflecting overhead light. Now, on a computer screen, aside from colors, we need to be mindful of things like refresh rate and resolution. AutoCAD for Mac 2014 incorporates higher res graphics to take full advantage of the higher res display and is currently the highest resolution CAD program on the market.

AutoCAD for Mac 2014 didn't just raise the resolution of the icons and menus, but of the drawing area itself. Lines are clearer with less pixelation, curves more natural looking.

Fortunately there is nothing you have to do to turn this feature on. AutoCAD for Mac 2014 will adjust to dimply at the highest resolution possible for the display settings you have set. If you drag a window or palette from a retina class display to a non retina display, the palette will downsample to the resolution of the non-retina monitor, and when you drag it back onto the retina display, it will change the resolution when it is released.
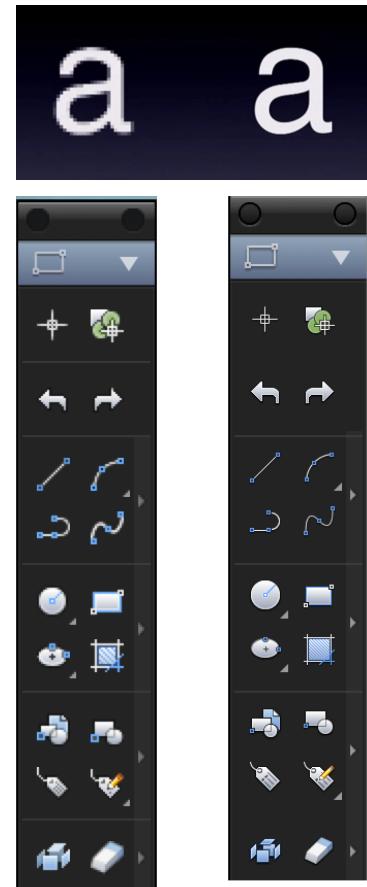
Autodesk 360

Autodesk 360 is Autodesk's cloud service which allows you to load your drawing files and other associate references into the cloud to be accessed from other computers and devices. With AutoCAD for Mac 2014 Mac users can now take advantage of this service by opening and saving files to the cloud and syncing a local folder with their cloud account.
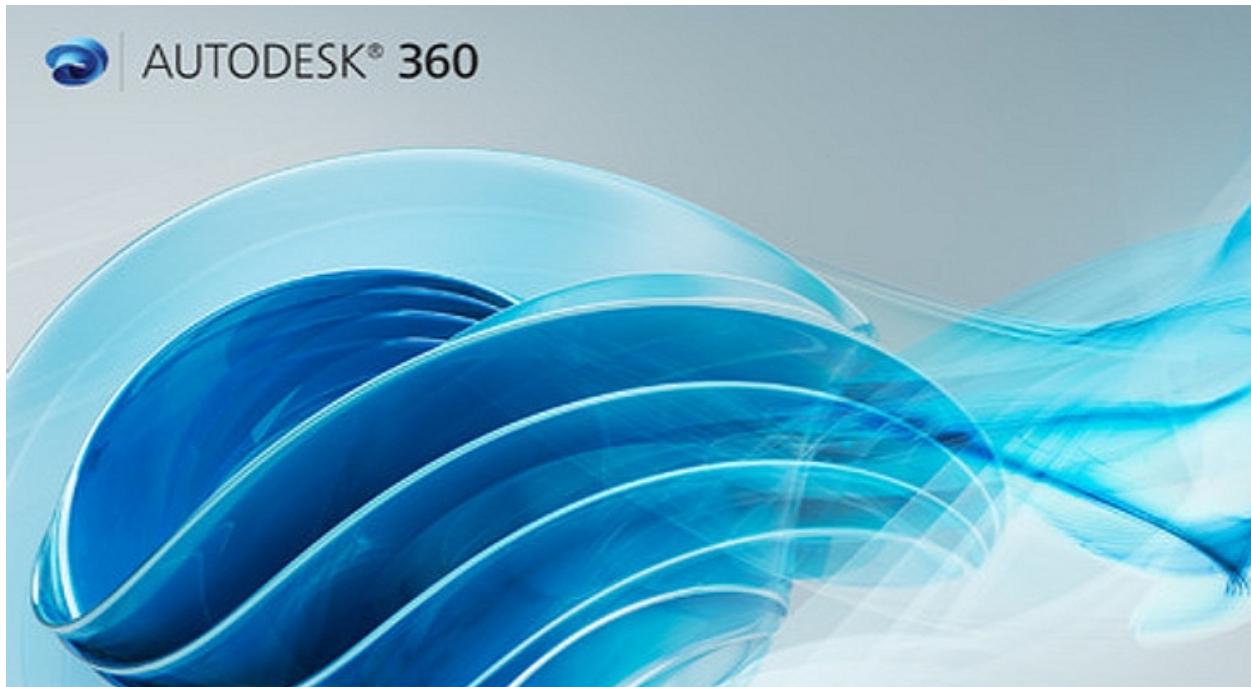
Autodesk 360 gives the user 5 GB of free storage (more if you are a subscription member) to use almost like a Dropbox account specifically tailored to AutoCAD. You can log in to the web portal and manage your account, including viewing dwg files natively, sharing them both with Autodesk 360 users for editing or non-autodesk 360 users for viewing. If you need to edit a dwg file, you can open it using the browser based AutoCAD 360 which allows you to interact with the CAD geometry in a similar manner to AutoCAD on your desktop, moving and editing objects, measuring using OSNAPS, and turning layers on or off. If you are confused by the difference between Autodesk 360 and AutoCAD 360 don't worry. Just remember Autodesk 360 is the file management piece, where you can easily upload, download, share, and manage your files including creating folders and moving files. AutoCAD 360 is similar to the AutoCAD application on your desktop, allowing you to "open" the file and interact with the native geometry.

After creating an account, users can go to Connect in the menu bar and choose to launch the 360 application if it is not already running. Once it is running, you can sign in and then open the local cloud folders to see your files. There is a sync option to manually force a sync when you update a file and want the changes published immediately. You can also control whether the application starts automatically when you log in to Mac OS X by clicking preferences.

Package a drawing

This was a much requested feature of AutoCAD for Mac. Known as eTransmit on the Windows side, Package allows you to bundle all the needed files that go with your dwg file, like fonts, reference files like xrefs, images and pdf underlays, plot styles, and shape files. The process is pretty straightforward, just go to File - Package Drawing and a dialog box opens up. AutoCAD for Mac automatically adds all the files it thinks you would need to accurately view this drawing on another computer. We can add or remove files from this list easily though, using the plus and minus buttons below the file window.

This is helpful if say you want to add other files not necessarily referenced in your AutoCAD dwg, but useful nonetheless, like spreadsheets, bills of materials or even site photos. If we click Package settings, we can change options like:

- Archive format (zip or folder)

- File format (save back to AutoCAD 2000 file format)

- Whether we want to include

  - Fonts

  - Unloaded reference files

  - Material textures

And finally if we want to open the file location in Finder when we are done
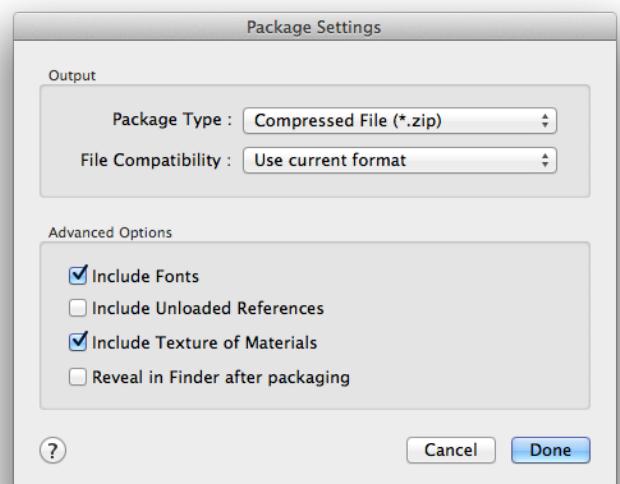
Package drawing can be used for sharing files but is also great for archiving, so make sure you add any files you may need in the future that were related to the project, so you never have to go searching through your archives.
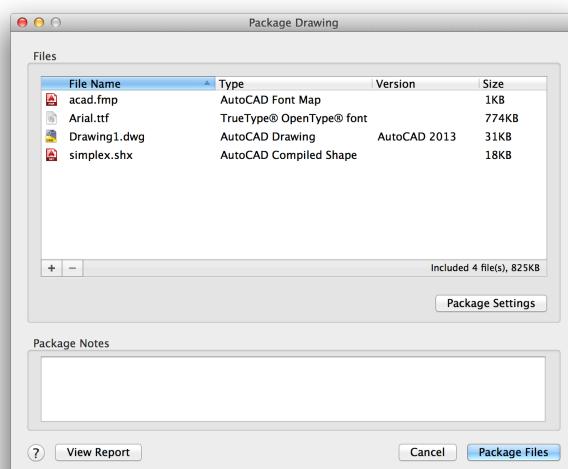
Default Save-As

Another oft requested feature, we can now easily set the default save-as version under preferences. Previously, we could only set this by changing the system variable at the command line to a number which corresponded to a file type. Obviously not terribly user friendly, and without know the code for the file format you wanted it was quite difficult to save a drawing back for compatibility. Now we can simply go to Preferences - General and click the drop down menu and choose your file format.
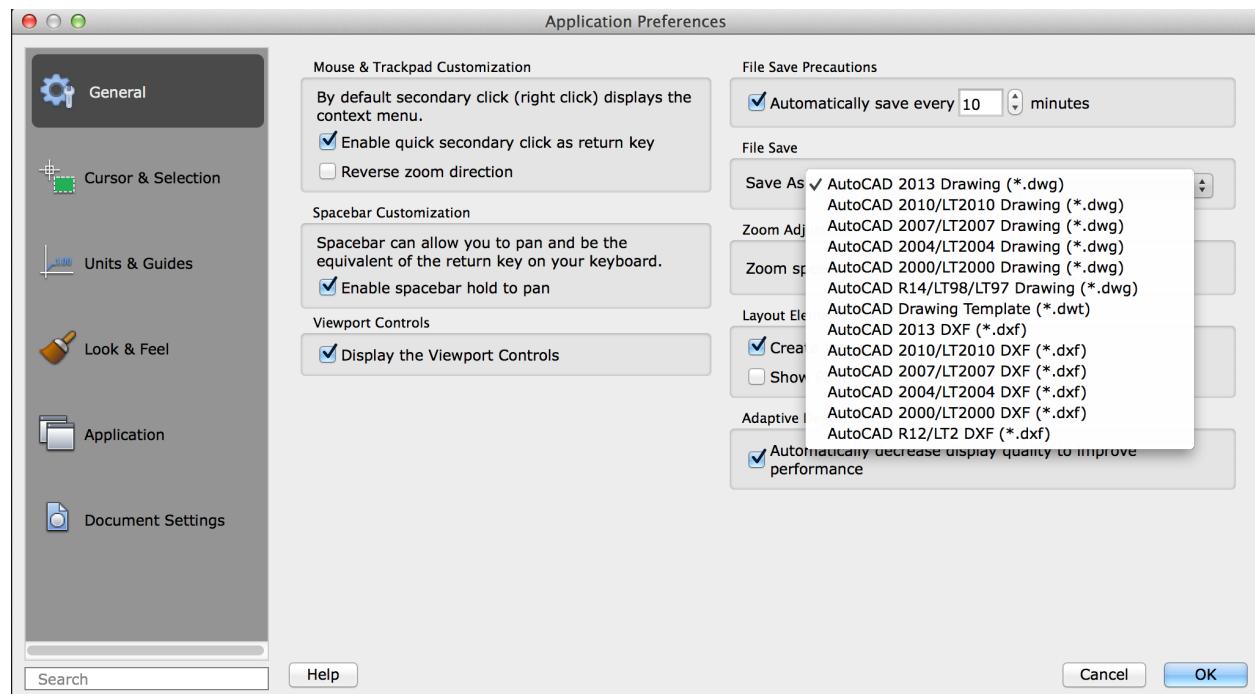

PDF Improvements

AutoCAD for Mac has always used the built PDF engine that comes with Mac OS X. Now AutoCAD for Mac 2014 uses that engine more efficiently to create smaller PDF's. A new button has also been added to the main plot dialog that allows you to preview a PDF of your plot before you create the final plot. This feature has always been available by clicking PDF and Open PDF in preview, but now it is easier to access and more obvious in it's function.
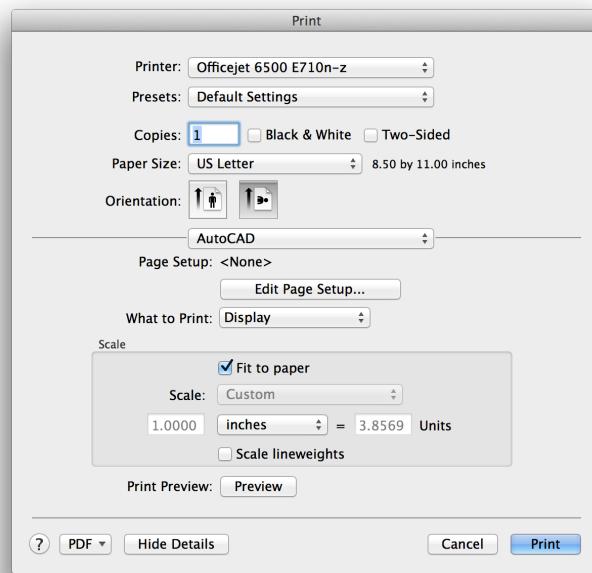
New Help Interface

The help interface has been given an overhaul to make it easier to search topics to find your answers and then save and share those answers. Go to the Help Menu and choose AutoCAD Help. This will open the online help tool in your default browser. On the left we see a search tool, where we can type in any topic you want more information about. Just below the search box are a drop down and a filter button. The drop down allows you to specify what results you want based on who you are, a user, developer or administrator. This will help filter out results that may be of a more programming nature if you are not a developer. The filter button next to the drop down allows you to remove or add categories to search for, like variables, commands and others. Once you have
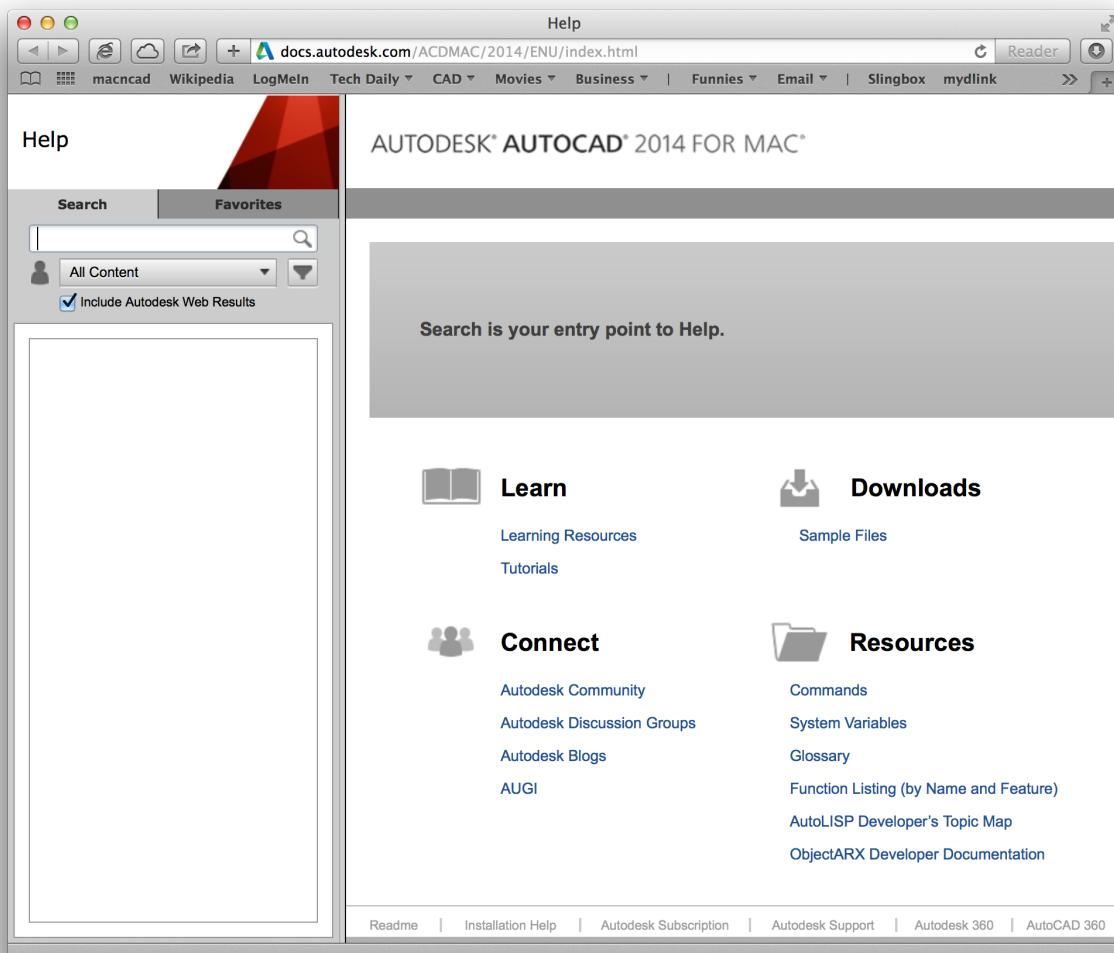
found   the topic you were looking for, you can add it to your favorites for quick reference later, email it to a colleague if you found the answer they were looking for, or print it out.