



# DataCAD Boston Users Group

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A Committee of the Boston Society of Architects

## DBUG Meeting Notes

February 20, 2008

Host: Mike Smith, Signature Architects

Berlin, Massachusetts

Mike Smith welcomed about 15 DBUGers to this meeting at Signature Architects. In terms of general announcements, he said that his website the *AEC CAD Exchange* <[www.aeccadexchange.com](http://www.aeccadexchange.com)> had just hit 600 registered users this past week, and now holds some 128 details in its libraries. Mike also said his new DataCAD 12 Project Book has been sent to the publisher Tech Ed Concepts <[www.tecedu.com](http://www.tecedu.com)> and should be out within weeks. Evan Shu announced that DBUG has purchased at reduced price the computer projector from Cindy Langdon as Geoff's continuing legacy to DBUG and asked everyone who was able to pitch in a \$20 donation to cover the cost. The March DBUG meeting will be at the Boston Society of Architects building on March 26th at 6 p.m.

**New Features in DataCAD 12.05.** Mike reviewed the new features in the latest DataCAD 12 free upgrade 12.05. The most prominent feature is a BETA feature to Export DataCAD files to SketchUp. In order to activate it you have to insert this in your DCADWIN.INI file:

```
[BETA]
```

```
SketchUp Export=TRUE
```

He said that obviously this feature is still a work in progress. Some glitches are still being worked out, like material scaling, and certain behaviors with wall cuts (like when smart windows/doors are mirrored in DCAD, then exported will appear in SketchUp facing the wrong way) Mike showed an example of a fully rendered house (with material assignments) exported directly into SketchUp. When you do so, the program SketchUp actually opens on your desktop, so expect a little delay. But in general, this feature works pretty well.

Another BETA feature he showed was "Pack-n-Go" which saves every aspect of a project to a single compressed file for easy transport. Again, to activate it, you must put in your DCADWIN.INI file

```
[BETA]
```

```
Pak-N-Go=TRUE
```

We discovered through trial and error, that the unpacking does not go into the same folder as your PAK file as you might expect but into a *DataCAD 12/Temporary Files*

folder. To change this aspect, you must go into the Settings feature of Pack-n-Go. But otherwise, the new feature seems to work pretty well in gathering all the files needed. In extracting, you can also choose whether to extract accessory files such as a) XREFS; b) Bitmaps and Textures; c) SHX fonts; d) Pen Tables; and e) Materials. Also, it asks if you want to "Recreate the Folder Structure" that they came from. These choices can be a little confusing. If your scenario is to transfer to a new site, you will want all the files, but you will not likely want to restore the folder structure as it may be different.

Mike also reviewed the revised Layer Manager that lets you restore the menu text from previous versions. The default setting only shows the icons for the layer manager buttons, but you can right click on the menu bar to check "Show Button Captions" to get back the text. Neil Blanchard pointed out a cheap trick in renaming multiple layers: after you type the first new name, don't hit Enter, hit *Tab* (or *Shift-Tab* to go up in the list), to go through your entire sequence of layers for naming or renaming. To skip a layer for renaming, just hit *Tab* again.

Another cool new feature is that you can "Create New" voids in a closed polyline without having to first draw two polylines (to subtract one from the other) and you can edit void vertices with standard vertices editing tools. This only works for polylines and not for slabs or polygons. This feature works great for Associative Hatching.

### A Stacked Deck: Why don't AutoCADers "stack" their floor plans?

Two very basic reasons that explain this confounding lack of common sense are:

1. *Viewports* vs. *Model Space*: the two do not play nicely together.
2. No *GotoViews* to aid in viewing caused by #1.

*Model Space* is like DataCAD's main Drawing Window. It is where every entity actually gets drawn.

*Viewports* are like a cross between DataCAD's Clip Cubes and DataCAD's MSP details.



For ANYTHING to show up in Viewports, the entities MUST be currently turned ON in Model Space. So if you have a Viewport with the 1<sup>st</sup> floor plan, and another Viewport with the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor plan, both sets of plans MUST be turned on in Model Space. But that means when you go back to Model Space to draw, BOTH sets of layers (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors) are turned ON. If you turn OFF the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor layers so you can work on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor layers, and you return to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Viewport, the second floor entities will NOT show up!

If you then have your ceiling plans for each floor, or now if you have a 3 or 5 or 10 story building, you are talking real trouble.

By NOT stacking the plans, all layers can be turned ON at all times in Model Space, so there is not coordination nightmare with Viewports.

Though more recent versions of ACAD have added tools similar to GotoViews (*Layer States*, etc.), they only turn the layers on/off/freeze/thaw. There is no “going to” a particular view or the extents. These tools are still not used by many long-time users. It is just one more layer in the puzzle of why ACADers don’t stack plans and details.

**DataCAD 12 Smart Objects:** Mike then presented a “non-demo” guide to using Smart Objects in DataCAD 12, trying to show us how you might “really” use smart objects. He admitted that they don’t yet use them in their office practice but will wait for a small project to learn on. As their current work is mostly renovations (large hotels), it may not be worth trying to model the existing conditions and try to coordinate existing, demolition and new. Here are Mike’s tips from his outline.

#### How to work with them.

- Like when we all used CAD for the very first time (because that’s what this is like), you just have to jump in and DO IT, learning curve be damned.
- Realize that making changes to a smart object changes it in the database on your hard drive. So if you want to tweak settings, or make big changes, do a SAVE AS and give the object a new name.
- If a changed object is project specific you might consider creating a directory for that project, and keeping all your smart objects there.
- Smart walls do not yet fill in the triangles at the gable roof ends. But the *RoofIt* macro will. As long as you use the same material on the gable end as for the walls below, the transition will be seamless.

#### Rendering options and how to use them.

- New rendering options will be coming out probably in version 12.06, which will divide the rendering options into separate dialogs.
- *By Entity / By Layer / By Color*
- New in DataCAD 11 was the ability to render materials by color or by layer, but not both. By selecting *Materials by Color* in the Rendering Options area of the dialog, all Red entities, for instance, will be rendered alike, no matter which layers they are on. If you pick *Materials by Layer* in the Rendering Options area, then all entities on the PLAN layer, for instance, will be rendered alike, regardless of their colors. In this example we will stick to using the *Materials by Color* method, but just realize that you can only do one or the other.
- New in DataCAD 12 is the ability to assign a material to an entity in addition to a color or a layer. If you assign a material to a particular entity, that setting will override the material assigned to its color or to its layer. This allows you to control an entities material precisely, regardless of its color or which layer it resides on.
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- Finally, Mike closed the presentations by summarizing “What We Like About DataCAD 12” so far:
  - Save As DataCAD 11;
  - Symbol Editor;
  - Double-click for symbols and XREFs;
  - MSP improvements (selection, pen tables, etc.);
  - Print/Plot settings;
  - Paragraph and MTEXT;
  - Snapping to anything you can see, like Clip Cube boundaries, every kind of intersection, associative hatches (hatches have a setting), etc;
  - Snapping markers and hints to better tell where and what you are snapping to;
  - Imports latest AutoCAD files;
  - Text aspect matches between ACAD and DCAD when importing/exporting;
  - All DCAD fonts remain, but all are now TTF’s, so fully compatible with ACAD and all other Windows programs. In fact, the fonts will be on your computer so you can use DataCAD fonts in your word processing documents;
  - Different Pen Tables can be assigned to different scale details.

With that finished, another productive night at DBUG was concluded.-- *Meeting Notes by Mike Smith and Evan Shu*