Robert Green's "An Open Letter to CAD Software Companies" and a Response from IntelliCAD

March 13, 2014

If you're one of the many folks out there who don't believe that the developers of your CAD software are listening to you… you're not alone and you should take the time to read **Robert Green's** "**An Open Letter to CAD Software Companies**" in **Cadalyst**. And, as to the part about feeling like you're all alone, here is Robert's follow up describing the **overwhelming response to his open letter**.

I receive email versions of **Robert's bi-weekly CAD Manager newsletters** but had fallen behind and didn't see the original post until yesterday. If I'd read it when it was first released, my response would have been, "Amen brother!".

Just yesterday morning I had a conversation with a colleague

whose company does Landscape Architecture, Civil Design and Land Planning. They are fully invested in Civil 3d (including much blood, sweat and tears in addition to money, money, money) but they're as productive as any company I know of with the program. Their main complaint? They feel like Autodesk is pushing them toward Revit and they have no need for the software.

In my own experience, I see the push toward NavisWorks and 3ds Max. I had two seats of Civil 3d until I downgraded one of them to Map last year – only to be "rewarded" with an upgrade to Infrastructure Design Suite (and more money for Subscription) this year. This was supposedly something that owners of a Civil 3d and a Map license were able to opt-in to. I didn't opt-in. So, it took me several days to get them to un-opt-me-in and revert my licenses back to what I'd purchased. Is it any wonder I'm suspicious of any "bonuses" that come my way **because of this**?

I don't know how much Robert intended to point the finger at **Autodesk** in the original column but, with my experiences described above, the references to BIM (which **we've long argued** was a way for Autodesk to avoid talking about Esri and

GIS) and Cloud and other buzzwords, that's certainly the connection I made in my mind.

Because the **Carlson Software** I sell now includes **IntelliCAD**, an alternative to AutoCAD, I passed links to the open letter and the responses to a few folks to get their reaction. Dave Lorenzo, the Development Director for the **ITC (IntelliCAD Technology Consortium)** took the feedback to heart and, considering the interest in the future of IntelliCAD the past few years, I asked his permission to post his response. I very much appreciate his willingness to let me do so…

> *I agree that the features mentioned are focused on AutoCAD, but the article is not so much about features as it's really about the user's perception if someone is listening. While Autodesk is moving too fast providing features that users don't want or need, we are not moving fast enough to provide the basic productivity features users are requesting, so it appears we both are not listening to our users. That is the perception we need to fix too.*
>
> *Our next release has several user requested productivity features and I hope our users will see we are listening. Actually we have always been listening but our rewrite of*

IntelliCAD 7 took so many resources that there was little time for new features – that situation is finally changing. I believe that there are a lot of unhappy AutoCAD users who want IntelliCAD to be successful, we just need to listen and add those remaining productivity features that are keeping them from making the switch.

End of Year Workshops – New format for 2013

March 13, 2014

After several years of the same format for our end of year workshops, we've changed it up a bit this year.

For the first time, we will have one full day in both Statesville and Raleigh NC dedicated to Surveying and GIS topics and an additional day focusing on Civil and Hydrology topics. Each day will also include a unique presentation of

the popular CAD Tips & Tricks session that, hopefully, sends everyone home with something they can use the next day.

In addition, we're conducting 1/2-day events in Wilmington and Hendersonville (Asheville area) covering a variety of topics.

Each full-day class will give NC licensed surveyors and engineers 8 PDH credits and the 1/2 day events are eligible for 4 PDH credits. All events include lunch, software pricing specials and giveaways.

November 11th, Hendersonville NC – $49 for 4 PDH credits
Download Hendersonville (Asheville) Announcement Here
Register for Hendersonville (Asheville) Workshop Here

November 12th, Survey & GIS Workshop, Statesville NC – $99 for 8 PDH credits
Download Statesville Survey/GIS Announcement Here
Register for Statesville Survey/GIS Workshop Here

November 13th, Civil & Hydrology Workshop, Statesville NC – $99 for 8 PDH credits
Download Statesville Civil/Hydro Announcement Here

Register for Statesville Civil/Hydro Workshop Here

December 9th, Wilmington NC – $49 for 4 PDH credits
Download Wilmington Announcement Here
Register for Wilmington Workshop Here

December 11th, Survey & GIS Workshop, Raleigh NC – $99 for 8 PDH credits
($89 registration thru 10/31/2013)
Download Raleigh Survey/GIS Announcement Here
Register for Raleigh Survey/GIS Workshop Here

December 12th, Civil & Hydrology Workshop, Raleigh NC – $99 for 8 PDH credits
($89 registration thru 10/31/2013)
Download Raleigh Civil/Hydro Announcement Here
Register for Raleigh Civil/Hydro Workshop Here

This looks like a big deal…

March 13, 2014
A colleague pointed me to this post on the **CADTechs** group on LinkedIn:

Autodesk today said it would discontinue the ability to purchase software upgrades on February 1, 2015

Does Carlson Still Work With AutoCAD?

March 13, 2014
File this under “Myths”…

I hope this isn’t widespread, but I received the following email yesterday and think it’s important to respond publicly. The email is posted in its entirety except for the name and contact info of the author.

Hello Jen & Jeremy,

I became acquainted with your site (and I believe Jen was on a "webcast" or video I had watched) when my former employer made the switch from Civil 3D to Carlson Civil several years back. I am an engineer and have been put into the role of upgrading AutoCAD and Carlson or making sure that my current company can continue to do what is necessary, which involves using CAD much less that in my consulting life.

A local Autodesk reseller paid us a visit and indicated that Carlson and Autodesk as companies have not reached an agreement to continue further compatibility. Sounds like a licensing ($$) agreement issue, to me, that may or may not be temporary. This salesperson also indicated that the new version of Carlson would not work with anything beyond AutoCAD 2010 which we are currently running with Carlson 2011. As a note, My former company did not update AutoCAD every year depending upon what features were actually new so I am very OK with not upgrading if not entirely necessary.

I would greatly appreciate any information or insight you

could give on the subject. You can reach me via this e-mail or the phone number in the signature.

Kind regards,

I contacted Carlson and requested a direct reply:

Hi Jennifer,

Carlson Software is a current member of the Audodesk Developer Network (ADN) which gives access to the current Autodesk products. We expect to release Carlson's 2014 products, including those running on top of IntelliCAD, AutoCAD 2014 and AutoCAD OEM, in the Summer of 2013.

Dave Carlson

Also, for the record, I currently run Carlson 2013 on top of IntelliCAD and on top of Civil 3d 2012.

CAD Standards Manager 2013

March 13, 2014
Updated: Next live webinar will be on Wednesday, April 10th

You can sign up here: **https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/859901974**

Sooo…. **This is pretty intriguing**.

Anyone who has attended one of my CAD Standards Round Table classes has heard me say, ***"To have an effective CAD Standard, you must make it easier to do things the right way than it is to do it the wrong way."***

Well, I'm not finished with my research yet, but the **CAD Standards Manager** developed by **CAD Masters** may be just the application to make that happen. It can be installed on top of your AutoCAD-based programs to help organize your

standardized layers, symbols, linetypes, dimension styles, etc. One of the best parts, to me, is that it supports multiple standards. If you have a client that requires you deliver your work product to their particular standard, this program can accommodate that too.

You can check out a pre-recorded webinar demonstrating their 2013 release here or **download this flyer detailing the highlights of the program**.

Or, better yet, sign up for their next live webinar here: ~~https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/621720174~~ **See Above**. It will be held on ~~Tuesday, March 12, 2013 from 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM PDT (2:30-3:30 PM ET)~~ **See Above**. Since this is a live presentation, you will have a chance to ask questions to see if the program will support your specific needs.

I have a simple request… If you sign up for the live webinar, please let them know you heard about it from **That CAD Girl**.

Did you know… About the Flatten Command?

March 13, 2014

FLATTEN is an Express Tools command in AutoCAD and a standard command in IntelliCAD. It allows you to quickly convert 3d objects to a 0-elevation, flat version of itself.

Most of us in the civil/survey world have gotten frustrated when we've received a drawing from someone who used lines more than polylines and apparently snapped to everything in the drawing that had an elevation! The result is that you have lines drawn on a slope and with which it's nearly impossible to inverse distances or even perform simple drafting commands.

So, next time that happens, try the FLATTEN command and see if that helps get things back where they're supposed to be!

Did you know… about all the different selection methods in CAD?

March 13, 2014

Anyone who has used AutoCAD or IntelliCAD for any period of time will be familiar with a few of the selection methods available to you during editing commands… although you may not know the "official" name of the method.

When your Command: line prompted reads "Select Entities:", you can use the following methods to add entities to the selection set:

A **Single** selection is when you use a "Pickbox" to select one entity at a time.

An **Implied Window** selection is when you drag a rectangular area, from left to right, around the entities to be selected. This method will select any entities that are fully enclosed within the area. To force a **Window** selection, you can also type "W" at the Command: line when prompted to "Select

Entities:”. **Window** selections are indicated by the solid outline of the rectangle and a color shading within the rectangular area.

An **Implied Crossing** selection is when you drag a rectangular area, from right to left, around or across the entities to be selected. This method will select any entities that are fully enclosed or touch (cross…) the outline of the rectangle. To force a **Crossing** selection, you can also type “C” at the Command: line when prompted to “Select Entities:”. **Crossing** selections are indicated by the dotted or dashed outline of the rectangle and a color shading within the rectangular area.

So, these are the ones you probably know about. But, what about these?

Again, when prompted to “Select Entities:”, you can do any of the following:

Hold the SHIFT-key down while selecting objects using **Single**, **Implied Window** or **Implied Crossing** selection methods will un-select any objects previously selected.

Type “P” at the Command: line to use the **Previous** selection method. This method will automatically select the same objects that had been selected for the most recent editing command. This obviously doesn’t work if the **Previous** selection set has been ERASEd from the drawing.

Type “L” at the Command: line to use the **Last** selection method. This method will automatically select the entity most recently added to the drawing. The entity must also be visible on the drawing screen in order to be selected.

Type “ALL” at the Command: line to use the **All** selection method. This method will automatically select all entities visible in the current space.

Type “F” at the Command: line to use the **Fence** selection method. This method allows you to drag a line (by picking points) across the entities to be selected. When picking the points for the **Fence**, the sketched line is dashed or dotted. This method is similar to a **Crossing** selection as it will select anything that touches the **Fence**.

Type “WP” at the Command: line to use the **Window Polygon** selection method. This method allows you to sketch an

irregularly shaped area (by picking points) around the entities you wish to select. Any entities that are completely inside of the non-rectangular area will be selected. This is simply a non-rectangular version of the **Window** selection method. **Window Polygon** selection areas are indicated by the solid outline and color shading of the irregularly shaped area.

Type “CP” at the Command: line to use the **Crossing Polygon** selection method. This method allows you to sketch an irregularly shaped area (by picking points) around or across the entities you wish to select. Any entities that are completely inside of the non-rectangular area or touching its outline will be selected. This is simply a non-rectangular version of the **Crossing** selection method. **Crossing Polygon** selection areas are indicated by the dashed or dotted outline and color shading of the irregularly shaped area.

If you have a complex selection set and need to un-select several entities, you may find it impractical (and frustrating) trying to un-select everything by using SHIFT+<select> to do so.

Another way to un-select a bunch of entities is to use the

Remove selection mode. When prompted to “Select Entities:” at your Command: line, type “R” to change your Command: line prompt to “Remove Entities:”. Now, any entities you select, using any method, will be **Remove**d from the selection set. You do not have to hold SHIFT and you can use **Fence**, **Last**, **Window Polygon**, etc. to remove those items.

After Removing entities from the selection set, type “A” at the Command: line to return to the **Add** selection mode. This changes the Command: line prompt back to “Select Entities:” and you will once again be able to **Add** objects to the selection set.

Did you know… About the

Change Space Command?

March 13, 2014

Some of us are old enough to remember life without the CHSPACE command… and what a great addition it was when the command was finally introduced to AutoCAD several years ago. And, with the release of IntelliCAD 7, it's now in that program as well.

CHSPACE is a command that allows you to move one or more entities from Model Space to Paper Space (or vice versa) very easily. In AutoCAD, the operative word there is "MOVE". You have to be a little careful because the command does exactly that: It MOVES it from paper to model or from model to paper. In IntelliCAD, you are given the option of COPYing the selected entities from one space to the other.

The command actually does more than just move or copy selected entities, it also scales the entities by the viewport scale so they're correct size-wise. For instance, let's say that you have a drawing in model space that's been rotated so that it more easily fits on a sheet of paper. Also in model space, you've inserted a North arrow. And, in paper

space/layout view, you have inserted a title block at a scale of 1:1 (18″ x 24″, etc.). Inside of the title block, you've created a viewport you've scaled to 1″=40′.

For drafting purposes, it's desirable to have the North arrow in paper space to that it can be moved around and positioned outside the viewport. If you're in AutoCAD, the first step is to make a copy of the North arrow. If you're using IntelliCAD, this step isn't necessary. Then, while in paper space/layout view, double-click inside the viewport to make it active. Type CHSPACE at the Command: line. Follow the various prompts within the command and Voila! Your North arrow is now in paper space and it's been scaled down by 40 times so that it fits properly on your title block.

Did you know… that you can

print your CTB files?

March 13, 2014

Several years ago when I started my business, my first contract was as an outside CAD manager for a civil & land planning firm. In trying to document their pen weights, screening, etc. I found a utility available on Autodesk's website that allowed me to export all the values in a CTB file to a .csv file that could be opened (and printed) with Excel.

Here is the old Autodesk Knowledge Base article – it still works for anyone using AutoCAD-based programs version 2007-2008.

Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find a more current version of this utility until recently. Govert's Tools has a program called PlotStyleViewer. You can download it here.

In his words,

> *This inspired me to create a CTB/STB view/print application that works completely **independent of AutoCAD and Autodesk tools**! The program consists of just one executable file,*

> *there are no other exe's or dll's needed. It should work with CTB's/STB's from AutoCAD 2000 upto the latest version. The purpose of this tool is that you can **view** CTB's, **print** them and **save as** text file that you can open in Excel etc.*

It's a handy little utility and doesn't seem to be limited to a particular version. Hope you get as much use out of it as I do.

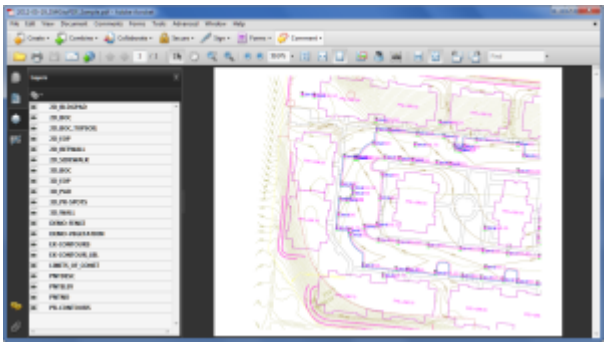
Did you know… about DWG to PDF?

March 13, 2014

Since I have to send so many files to different people in PDF format, I purchased Adobe Acrobat several years ago. Once installed, "Adobe PDF" shows up in my list of available printers just like my HP or Brother printers do. There are also several other programs available online that allow you

to create a PDF printer. Although I've never used them, I've heard good things about CutePDF and Sourceforge PDF Creator and I've used Win2PDF in the past. Each of these have a free version but you may end up getting a watermark or footer or 2nd page that states you're using a Free copy.

Any of these can be installed and will be shown as an available printer in the Plot dialog box of AutoCAD or IntelliCAD. Several years ago AutoCAD started including a DWG to PDF.pc3 file allowing AutoCAD users to use that tool rather than having to purchase a separate application to create PDFs. One advantage of using the DWG to PDF is that there is an option to save all the layers used in the DWG with the PDF file. With this setting enabled, anyone viewing the PDF through a PDF viewer has the ability to make one or more layers invisible. See the image below for an example:



While this is a neat feature, you might not always want your list of layers to transmit with your PDF. If not, it's easy enough to change the option. In the **Plot** dialog, set the current plotter to DWG to PDF.pc3 and then pick the **Properties** button to the right. Under the **Device and Document Settings** tab, you can change several options such as available paper sizes. You can also select the "Custom Properties" item in the tree for special options that are unique to the "printer". You can see in the image below that this is where you can find the option for whether or not to "Include layer information".

