

Standards #2

Last month was my first venture into CADNET Corner. It was a welcome surprise to see the amount of feedback I received. Some questions, some comments, and maybe even a new client or two. If you have any suggestions for topics please send them along for future issues.

In the last article, I discussed Standards. I will continue this week on standards and describe the beginning stages of creating a set of company standards. These tools are all part of AutoCAD Land Desktop. The first tool is called a template file. You have probably seen this file when you create a new drawing. It has an extension of .dwt. A typical one is "acad.dwt."

The template file is basically a drawing that stores the default information you want in each and every drawing you create. The items in a template include layers, linetypes, colors, dimstyles, textstyles, units, etc. You can also insert typical blocks such as titleblocks or logos. I would recommend limiting these items to the bare minimum of what you need for each drawing.

To create a template file, simply start a new drawing from scratch. In this drawing insert all the elements that you want in your template. When you are finished, choose saveas from the file menu and select save as Template file. AutoCAD will add the .dwt extension for you and by default store it in your template directory. The next time you start a new drawing, select the template you created. All the elements you created will be in your new drawing. This is a great way to save time in drawing creation.

I recommend keeping the template drawing elements to a minimum. The reason is that all drawings will have all the elements even if they are not needed. With AutoCAD's Design Center, it is very easy to add elements at a later time. Even with the high speeds of new computers, drawing size should be kept as small as possible.

The next tool I will discuss is the prototypes in Land Desktop. For those of you that are familiar with Softdesk or Land Desktop, when working with drawings, you need to associate with a project. Land Desktop creates a number of different folders and files to work with your data. This takes a lot of info out of the drawings and stores it in a separate directory. That makes the drawing sizes smaller.

When creating a new project, the software asks you to select a prototype. Land Desktop supplies you with two defaults in a typical install. Default Feet, and Default Meters. I bet you can guess the difference.

The prototype is simply a default project. Within that project you can set all the Land Desktop, Civil Design, and Survey settings. This eliminates the need to re-create the settings each time you create a project. Some examples of the setting included in the prototype are Label styles, Contour creation, and Point settings.

There are some other things that you can do with the prototype. Many times I see additional folders in the project folders that are not automatically created by Land Desktop. For example, many companies create a DOCS folder within the project folder for documents associated with the project. You can create this folder in the prototype and it will automatically be created with each new project. You determine which folders get created when the project is created.

Maybe you have default point ranges you use for your points. Traverse points are from 1-99, Topo Points 100-2000, etc. You can create default point groups in the prototype. When creating the project all points that fall into the defined point ranges would already be in the correct group. This speeds up the creation of surfaces in Terrain Model Explorer. (See future article)

You can create company templates and prototypes for all users. You can simply copy them to each CAD station and place them in the correct directory, or better yet, store them on a server or shared folder for all users to access. Then all drawings and projects will have the same settings. Once the defaults are set in a drawing, minor changes can be made easily through Design Center, or from the project menu in Land Desktop.

Having templates and prototypes defined can be huge timesavers. It can cut hours from a typical project in drawing setup time. The added bonus of a central location, such as a server, is that when revisions need to be made, they are only made in one place.

If you want to discuss templates, prototypes or any other CAD or Network related issues, call me at CADNET Services, toll free 1.866.5CADNET or email me at rladd@cadnetserv.com. You can also check out our website at www.cadnetserv.com.