

# MacDraft 4.0

## 2-D CAD Software

**PROS:** Improved editing features; new database with automatic reporting to Excel.

**CONS:** A bit slow; some DXF glitches.

**COMPANY:** Innovative Data Design (510/680-6818). **LIST PRICE:** \$449.



INNOVATIVE DATA DESIGN (IDD) USED to sell MacDraft and a fancier product, Dreams, until the company simplified things by offering everything in a single MacDraft package. Several optional libraries of general-purpose and special architectural symbols might suggest a product oriented toward architects, but most MacDraft users are technical illustrators or engineers.

MacDraft 4.0 has an easy-to-use database that associates spreadsheet-style reports with each drawing. MacDraft can automatically log the number of each kind of object into a report for an inventory or a bill of materials. You can edit and print reports in MacDraft or clone report information directly into Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, where calculations about price, sales tax, and so forth, can help you

decide how to bid on a project. Watch in terror as changes in a drawing result in a direct cash loss on a fixed-bid project, or smirk with glee as you improve the bottom line by simplifying materials. Database capability like this is found in Graphsoft's MiniCad but not in MacDraft's closest competitor, Blueprint 5.0, also from Graphsoft (see *Reviews*, *Macworld*, January 1995).

Blueprint, though, is generally faster than MacDraft. Rotating a whole 100K drawing on a Centris 610 took 3.7 seconds in Blueprint and 12.4 seconds in MacDraft; a horizontal flip took 3.2 seconds in Blueprint compared with 7.8 seconds in MacDraft. When I performed these operations on drawings translated from other sources,



**Reporter at Large** Report windows in MacDraft can count and list the objects used in a drawing, and you can hot-link report data to Excel.

I found occasional problems reading Autodesk DXF files into MacDraft. The package comes with a long text file that explains how to prepare drawings in other programs for optimal import into MacDraft, and it's required reading. Both programs are acceptably fast, especially on more-powerful computers. IDD expects to release a Power Mac version of MacDraft in January.

MacDraft finally features floating tool palettes and also provides tools that let you build new objects by joining edges of existing objects or by cutting object sections. Tools for mirroring and duplicating objects, for offsetting objects to arcs and straight lines, and for exact positioning of objects across several layers fill out the tool set.

Resizing of objects is now under keyboard control—a great aid to precision in drawing special curves. Also, you can now call up symbol libraries (including ones you construct yourself) in their own little window inside a drawing; this feature neatly automates much of the drudge labor in large, complex drawings. All in all, this is a feature-set upgrade that really warrants the jump from version 3.0 to version 4.0.

**The Last Word** The report links to Excel and the clean interface make MacDraft an excellent choice for use in mechanical engineering and construction. Besides, it's probably the easiest real CAD program to learn.—CHARLES SEITER