

MacDraft 3.0

MacDraft graduates from draw program to solid drafting tool.

At last, MacDraft lives up to its name. The latest release provides a solid set of precision 2-D-drafting tools that enable the program to compete successfully with other low-cost 2-D-CAD programs, including Autodesk's Generic CADD and Graphsoft's Blueprint. And MacDraft's clean, easy-to-use interface makes it an ideal tool for novices.

Another Dimension

With version 3.0, IDD completely revamped MacDraft's dimension tools to conform to ANSI standards. The new tools use informative on-screen prompts to help you identify the start, end, and anchor points of dimension lines. MacDraft supports all common dimension types, including linear, radial, diametral, and angular. The only missing features are ordinate dimensioning and labeled leader lines. The handy circle-center-mark tool indicates the centers of circles, arcs, and ellipses.

Associative dimensions are objects that can incorporate a variety of drafting formats, including witness lines and extension gaps. You can reposition dimension lines and alter dimension values in objects by simply dragging selection handles: MacDraft resizes witness, extension, and leader lines accordingly. One inconvenience, however, is that the program doesn't provide an easy way to individually modify the number of decimal places used for each dimension in a drawing.

New geometric tools include a parallel-line, a parallel-polyline, and a parallel-polygon tool, which support left, right, and center alignment; various styles of end caps; and beveled or plain-corner joints. Parallel-extrude tools let you quickly create pairs of lines by using an existing line, rectangle, or polygon. Together, these new tools streamline the process of creating such things as walls for architectural plans and pipes and cables for piping and wiring diagrams.



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Other helpful enhancements include a perpendicular-line tool that automatically draws a line at a right angle to an existing object; a tangent-line tool that draws a line tangent to an arc or a circle; and a regular-polygon tool.

You can edit your drawings by trimming and extending lines, creating chamfers and fillets, and snapping to grid points. MacDraft also lets you snap to arc and circle centers and to object end points; the program doesn't let you snap to object midpoints or intersections.

One especially nice feature is the ability to move a selected line segment by dragging the selection handle at the line's midpoint. Most other CAD programs require you to move each end point separately. Object rotation is also nicely implemented. You can rotate objects in 1- or 5-degree increments or use constraints to rotate objects in minutes, seconds, or decimal fractions of degrees. A Distribute On Line command evenly distributes selected objects along a line.

Missing, however, are automatic commands for creating rectangular or circular arrays and a convenient way to scale objects.

The MacDraft drawing environment supports English and metric units as well as a wide range of drawing scales. You can associate different scales with different drawing layers.

Not only is MacDraft a fine drafting tool but it's well suited for presentations too. A new slide-show feature treats each drawing layer as a slide, and you can even create master slides. Because all the slides associated with a particular drawing use the same coordinate space, it's easy to create simple animations to demonstrate moving parts.

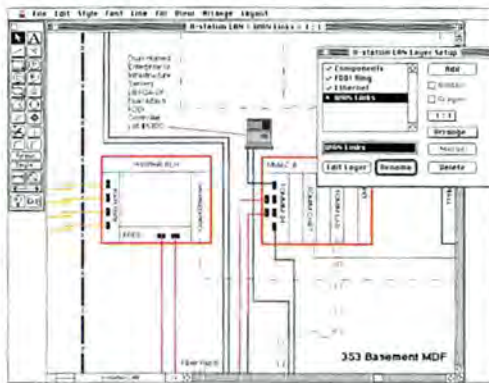
MacDraft can read PICT files and write to them, directly import MacDraw II documents, and read drawings and symbol libraries created with Dreams, IDD's discontinued high-end drawing tool. A built-in file converter transfers drawings between the Mac and Windows versions of MacDraft.

Compared to the competing low-end drafting packages, MacDraft comes up short in several areas. It lacks the DXF-conversion tool, extensive symbol libraries, and level of drawing precision offered by Generic CADD. Compared to Blueprint, MacDraft offers users a simpler interface and better dimensioning tools, but it is missing several important editing features, such as object scaling, arrays, and Boolean object operators.

The Bottom Line

With version 3.0, MacDraft takes its first serious step into the CAD arena. New ANSI-standard dimension tools are an important addition. And although MacDraft still lacks some features often found in traditional CAD programs, its solid performance and clean interface make it one of the easiest-to-use CAD tools you can buy.

—James K. Anders



MacDraft 3.0 provides a solid complement of 2-D-drafting tools.