



SOFTWARE FOR AEC PROFESSIONALS SINCE 1984

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES

DataCAD's First International Distributor: Don Bidwell

In these days of dot.coms-and-goes, 30 years is surely something to celebrate.

Around 1965 I had my introduction to the world of computing by learning BASIC on an Apple. DCAL was not too formidable years on. It has taken an inordinate amount of time to get to Java, XML, etc.

My introduction to CAD came only a few years later. Foolishly I declined an invitation to join, as architectural partner, what has since become a major and very wealthy IT player in New Zealand and further afield.

I later in 1976, I assisted in creating a mainframe-supported 2D system for a major housing developer. It did its job well, if expensively. Accuracy, standardization and plotting were more important than speed and design in those days.

With the appearance of the "affordable" PC in 1985, I experimented with the applications available in NZ at the time (AutoCAD, VersaCAD, and Generic CADD).

Difficult, uneconomic, illogical - there just had to be something better. So I commissioned a very expensive Internet search and found a reference (via DesignCAD 3D I believe) to a shoot-out in which DataCAD ranked superbly.

An immediate call to Jeff Hotchkiss at Microecture and my copy of 2.5G was shipped 17 September 1986. I was told that this was the first sale outside North America and Cobi was offered distribution at that time.

Although these early versions and their systems were shockingly expensive compared with today I do not think price has had much effect on acceptability by practitioners over the years.

Initial problems with metrication were quickly addressed and within 4 months (3.0G) we had an eminently workable solution that Cobi was able to sell.

In June 1987 I found myself in Washington for the conference and Berry Taylor's eye-opening presentation of the AEC module. The Space program.

Dinners with Greg Lundeen, Mike McClain and Samuel Adams. Porter McNeill generously introducing me to the splendors of Virginia. Charlottesville (must have met Dave then), Griff, Lou and others whose names I have regrettably forgotten. A memorable trip indeed.

A Partner Program was introduced and Ceanet in Australia was appointed regional distributor. Nice guys to deal with and a loss when CADKEY terminated this arrangement.

The grey years of CADKEY – Variable (to say the least) distribution and service by Ceanet and Cobi's replacements. Lost many clients. Product lost credibility with price crashing and static development while competitors took off.

The cavalry arrives and Cobi is reinstated. Damage control and catch-up time. Not there yet, but sticking around.

First meeting of DataCAD Usergroup New Zealand (DUNZ) in February 1995, modelled on DBUG.

Special mention and thanks to:

- Carol Buerhens for her excellent tutorial without which DataCAD would not have as readily spread throughout the world.*
- Dick, Jeff and Laura Kretzmer at CAP for support, encouragement and presence.*
- Evan Shu (and predecessors) for superb quality second tier support.*
- Naturally, techsupport@datacad - where else would one get such service?*
- And the DBUG Forum, my most valuable time-waster.*

Good luck for the next 30 years. Think BIG and keep moving.

Regards,

Don Bidwell