

AutoCAD LT Version 2 - Can It Work For You?

By Glen W. Cameron, C.E.T.

With the high cost of AutoCAD Release 13 and the expensive hardware requirements that come along with the program, surveyors are asking if there is a cheaper solution out there. Many surveyors have felt that AutoCAD is a great program and will do everything they would ever need and more, but the price is way to high for the average office to swallow, especially when you need 4 or 5 copies.

The solution that many surveyors have found is the baby brother to AutoCAD called AutoCAD LT. For about 1/7th the price of regular AutoCAD, it is remarkably capable. LT is a Windows only product and works very nicely under the new Windows 95, unlike it's older brother. LT is based upon AutoCAD R12 technology but has a few R13 ideas built in.

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System requirements for AutoCAD LT version 2:

- 386/486/Pentium computer or compatible,
- MS-DOS 3.3 or higher,
- Windows 3.1 enhanced mode or higher,
- a VGA display or better,
- Math coprocessor,
- a Windows compatible mouse,
- 16Mb hard drive space for the installation,
- a 4Mb RAM minimum, 8Mb recommended,
- a permanent Windows swap file, 2 to 4 times RAM size.

Compare the above to what AutoCAD Release 13 requires for hardware and you will see that the overall price difference between LT and R13 continues to grow.

Will LT do what a surveyor needs? The answer is a straight forward "MAYBE." If what you need is a program that will allow you to draw lines, circles, arcs, text, leaders, dimensions, hatches, ellipses, polygons, blocks, attributes, and polylines, then you have found your program. You have the added advantage of the drawing being 100% compatible with AutoCAD R12 and R11. This means you can read drawings from R12 and R11 as well as create drawings in the same format. AutoCAD R13 can read the LT drawings but LT can not read the R13 drawings directly. You can however save from R13 into an R12 format which does allow LT to read the drawings as well.

There are also a couple of disadvantages that you should be aware of. LT is not able to run any of the "third party" software created for AutoCAD because it does not have any programming languages built into it like its older brother does. This means popular add-on packages such as Softdesk, will not run with LT. The only modifications that you can do are menu modifications, scripts, and toolbar/toolbox customization. If you need more than just a drafting program and were hoping that LT would be able to compute contours and volumes then, unfortunately, LT is not the program for you.

If what you need is an additional station to allow your staff to work at home or on a portable computer in the field, we have found that LT fills this niche quite nicely. With a CAD package in the field, you can now increase productivity. Your crews can download from the total station into a program such as MicroSurvey and then DXF transfer the information into LT to finish the drawing and send it to the closest plotting service, or back to the head office. With the ability to work on the road your crews can now save you many hours by checking and maybe even completing their own drawings while sit-

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ting in the hotel room. Of course you would increase their pay to counterbalance this extra work!

With the number of advantages outweighing the disadvantages and the cost being significantly less, AutoCAD LT is recommended by this author for surveyors everywhere. See your local Authorized AutoCAD dealer for further assistance or you can contact me through the AOLS.



"Tips and Tricks" has been brought to you by Glen W. Cameron, C.E.T. Glen has been employed at the AMS Group in North Bay, Ontario, as their CAD Specialist for a full year now. The AMS Group is the largest AutoCAD dealer in Northern Ontario with their head office located in Sudbury. The position allows Glen to maintain and advance his knowledge of AutoCAD, MicroSurvey and Softdesk products to support his current and future clients. Glen has been instructing on and supporting these products now for 8 years and in doing so has travelled from Yellowknife to Bermuda, Newfoundland to Manitoba and extensively throughout Ontario. Glen graduated from St. Lawrence College - Kingston, with honours in Civil Engineering Technology, and has worked in the field, surveying for several years. With his practical experience as well as the extensive, professional training and technical support, his "Tips and Tricks" will undoubtedly assist even the more experienced users!