

## Software Review: CADnection links AutoCAD to SharePoint

Many corporations use Microsoft SharePoint Server as a way to exchange, manage, and collaborate on Microsoft Office documents throughout the organization.

But because the information repository is geared towards the business software, it provides no effective way to handle AutoCAD engineering data during design projects. Fortunately, the CADnection program solves this problem, letting users incorporate AutoCAD drawings and reference files into SharePoint managed workflows.

Installing CADnection requires standard IT administrator experience and should take less than a few hours to complete. However, it is good practice to have an experienced SharePoint administrator on hand to establish new workflow processes in SharePoint after CADnection is installed.

Once in place, CADnection works inside AutoCAD, providing designers a menu with tools to manage, maintain, share, and control critical design data. For example, clicking the Save Drawing to SharePoint button saves the file into the repository and ensures data integrity by rebuilding drawing relationships and mapping attributes in the drawings title block.

CADnection additionally lets users activate SharePoint's search capabilities to review data on the server, retrieve drawings, and even locate text information in drawings. The program also makes it easy to reuse existing data without losing track of related files. Designers need only insert blocks of design data directly into a new drawing or use the Attach command to create an XREF (external reference) file that then appears in the File References panel.

What's more, users can generate DWF files so anyone on the team can see drawings inside SharePoint for fast visual identification. (DWF stands for Design Web Format and is Autodesk's lightweight CAD format.) CADnection also facilitates the use of Design Review with SharePoint to enhance multisite collaboration and workflow processing. This function is vital for many companies with dispersed or outsourced design and manufacturing operations.

Despite CADnection's many capabilities, a downside is that the software does not support bulk loading. This means that companies must spend additional time and money to process data into and out of SharePoint, for example, while transforming DWG to DWF files. In addition, the loading process stalls with any potential file duplication. These tasks currently require manual input before processing.

The developer provides immediate telephone support for new customers, ongoing free telephone support, and free upgrades under the maintenance contract. The software also comes with a comprehensive digital (PDF) installation and maintenance guide.

CADnection requires Windows XP and Vista-based clients with Windows Server 2003 and SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007.

The software comes from CADnection Inc., 1592 North Batavia, Building One, Orange, CA 92867, (877) 887-7833. The website is [www.CADnection.com](http://www.CADnection.com).

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