The Design Explorer

The Ashlar-Vellum User Newsletter

Third Quarter, 2016

Soon to be Obsolete…

Cobalt, Xenon and Argon v6 as well as Graphite v7 licenses will be obsolete as of January 1, 2017. By then all of them will be over 10 years old. As of the first of January, upgrade pricing will no longer be available. To move to the current versions will require the purchase of a new license at the full price.

While you may be happily using one of these older products on Windows XP or Mac OX 10.3 or 10.4, when that hardware breaks, you will be in a difficult spot. To encourage users of older products to upgrade before their software is obsolete, Ashlar-Vellum is running a series of special discounts through the end of the year. The sooner you buy, the greater the discount.

Also worth noting is that Cobalt and Xenon may now be upgraded separately from Graphite.

Upgrade	% Off	Cobalt v6 to v9	Xenon v6 to v9	Argon v6 to v9	Graphite v7 to v10	Use Coupon Code
Regular Upgrade Price		US $895.00	US $695.00	US $395.00	US $795.00	
Until September 30	25	US $671.25	US $521.25	US $296.25	US $596.25	25Sept2016
Until October 31	20	US $716.00	US $556.00	US $316.00	US $636.00	20Oct2016
Until November 30	15	US $760.75	US $590.75	US $335.75	US $675.75	15Nov2016
Until December 31	10	US $805.50	US $625.50	US $355.50	US $715.50	10Dec2016
After Jan 1, 2017		US $1495.00	US $995.00	US $695.00	US $1395.00	

Introducing Linda Minton

Please join us in welcoming Linda Minton to the Ashlar-Vellum and AlphaCorr sales teams. She is quickly coming up to speed on all of our products, a daunting task. But Linda has a special advantage. She's married to packaging designer and long-time Ashlar-Vellum advocate, Mike Minton so she has special insight into customer needs and challenges. Linda is from the Ohio where she grew up and went to college. She is excellent with numbers, is attentive to details and has a delightful Midwestern personality, which makes us feel she'll be an excellent sales person. Like all new Ashlar-Vellum employees, she's spending some time in technical support, customer service and order processing, learning how her job interacts with and affects others.

Welcome Natalia Kiselyk

We'd like to introduce Natalia Kiselyk. Natalia is part of our technical support and customer service team, but during training she's learning all kinds of jobs from sales to order processing. She grew up in Lviv, Ukraine and went to university in Kiev where she studied printing. She's a results-oriented person who likes to figure things out and complete tasks. With her strong English skills, we think she'll be an excellent asset to our customers.

Say Hello to Olga Peshnina

Olga Peshnina is our newest hire. While she is primarily going to be responsible for order processing, we are cross-training her in a number of areas including database management. Olga grew up and went to school in Kiev, Ukraine where she had extensive English-language training. She comes out of the banking industry where her work with numbers and details was paramount. She is well read, enjoys the theatre and cinema, and practices yoga.

Getting 2D Profile or Patterns into Ashlar-Vellum CAD & 3D Modeling Software

Often we are asked by customers how to get a 2D profile or pattern of an object into our software faster than just redrawing it. Perhaps they've received a paper or fabric pattern that they want to cut with a computerized cutting machine. Maybe they need to replace an old part that's not manufactured any more. Maybe they've got a print, scan or photo of an object but not a CAD file.

There are several options for capturing the data and making it ready for importing as a file into any of our CAD or 3D modelling software packages. We've outlined three of these options below and provided links to some companies so you can get more specific information.

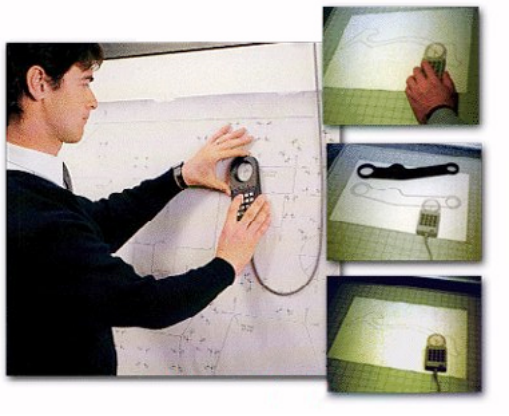
Option 1: Scanners

Scanners are the "least best" solution for creating patterns for cutting machines. Optical scanning machines can trace a part, though the process is often tedious and time-consuming. Roll-feed scanners are also available where thin objects can be attached to a sheet and fed through the scanner. Optically scanned files are always in raster format which means they are a series of dots or tiny line segments. Most often a scanned copy is degraded and inaccurate for cutting purposes because this series of lines or dots creates a slow, jerky, stop-start cutting motion. Raster files, however, can be traced over in Ashlar-Vellum software fairly quickly to create a vector file. Another way to convert them is to use a service bureau like the one discussed further on in this article.

Option 2: Digital Tracing Tablets

Large format digitizing tablets are available in a range of prices. Unfortunately, all of them are only available on the Windows platform, leaving Mac users without an option. Two digitizing systems have recently come to our attention. Digitizing systems create vector-based formats that can be scaled accurately, measured and manipulated on a line or entity basis.

The **FastCOPY** digitizer creates 2D profiles of machined parts. It is intended primarily for those needing to copy and cut complex parts or precision artwork from metal. It converts industrial parts, templates and drawings directly into cut-quality DXF files for a variety of cutting machines. It's a great alternative to tracing or scanning fabricated parts for which there are no available CAD files.

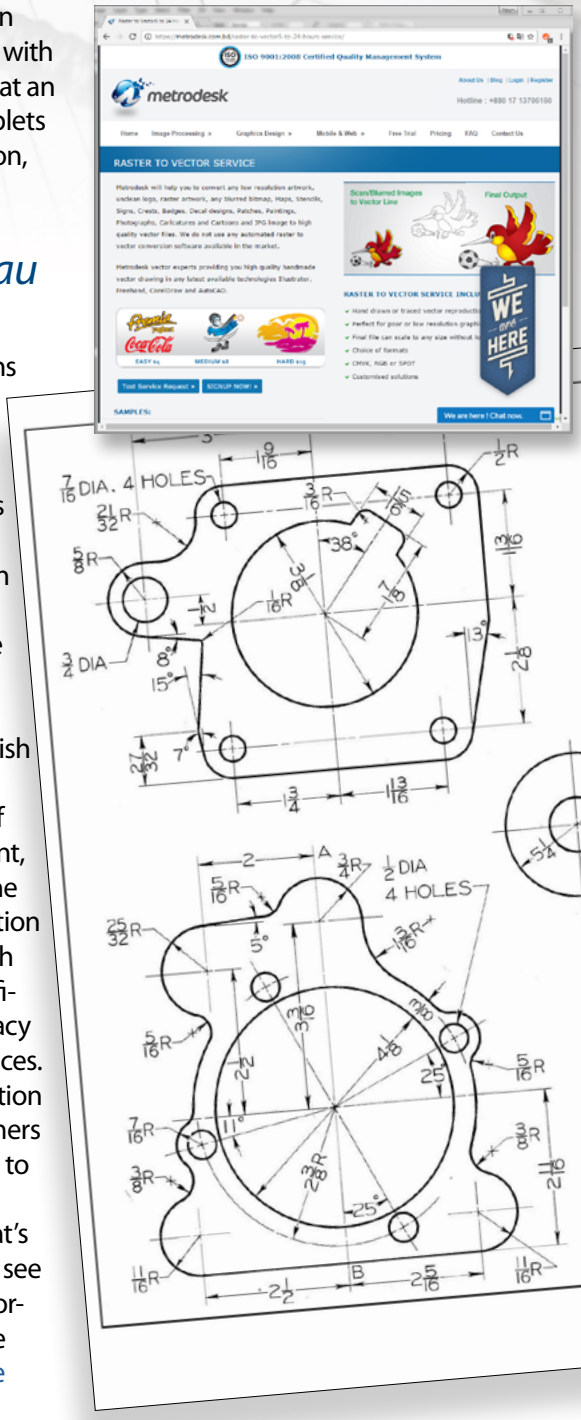


FastCOPY uses mathematics and reverse engineering to recreate the original part of any size without degradation, providing an accurate cutting profile. The FastCopy software sells for US $499 and is compatible with Wintab-compliant digitizers using a 16-button puck. There is an additional cost for software supporting large format roll-up digitizers. Click here to learn more about FastCOPY from the Fast CAM website.

Logic Trace is a more generalized digitizing system that includes a GCTO Calcomp tablet, pen stylus and the Logic Trace software. It quickly and accurately traces a pattern into a vector-based DXF file, ready for use with any CNC or cutting software and machine. Logic Trace supports routers, water-jets, plasma cutters, and cutting machines used for metalworking, manufacturing, wood-working, plastics, furniture, upholstery, and garments. Starting at US $1500, tablet sizes range for 12"x12" to 44"x60", with a number of sizes in between. Standard accuracy is .01" with enhanced .005" accuracy available at an additional cost. Other digitizing tablets are supported. For more information, see the Logic Group website.

Option 3: Service Bureau

The third option for creating a 2D digital patterns for CAD applications is to send a photo or 2D scan to a service bureau. While a photo is not geometrically accurate, it can still be useful for many applications such as cutting a picture. More accurate are 2D scans, which can then be changed from raster to vector formats by the service bureau. One service bureau that comes highly recommended is **Metrodesk** in Dhaka, Bangladesh. While the English on their website is a little clunky, their digital graphics services are of high caliber. Ashlar-Vellum president, Robert Bou came across them at the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA) show in Las Vegas this month where he engaged them in a significant conversation about the accuracy and turnaround times of their services. During the course of that conversation several different Metrodesk customers stopped by their booth specifically to tell them how much they liked and appreciated their services. Now that's a pretty solid recommendation. To see their many services, get pricing information, or get a free trial with three of your uploaded images, go to the Metrodesk website.



Leveraging the Idea

An active lifestyle lead baby-boomer and industrial designer Robson Splane to a number of injuries and surgeries as his body aged. As Robson tells it, "The irony was that after scaling vertical rock faces of 1000 feet, I couldn't get out of a chair."

After hip surgery he purchased a seat assist product that had been on the market for decades and found its limitations disappointing. Having designed hundreds of medical rehab and fitness products he decided he'd build his own seat assist using Ashlar-Vellum Graphite™ and Xenon™ software. After more than a dozen prototypes he eventually decided that the simplest solution was the best. He tells us, "It will lift 100% of my weight without any springs or gears or pistons or motors. It just uses leverage. So the more someone weighs, the more it will lift."

Splane's team had recently changed their business model from designers-for-higher to being design-entrepreneurs with their own production and sales team, forming a new company called DreamProjX-Arise, Inc. In this process, they considered markets to address in their new venture for which they already had products and which could sustain and continue to grow in a down economy. They found that among others markets, medical rehab and assistance products fit that profile.

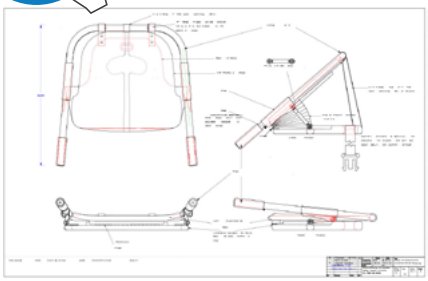
The Splane industrial design team decided they had something special with the ProRise seat assist, so they patented the design and prepared it for production with an eye toward aging baby boomers and wounded warriors. Opening a DBA called RiseAbility under DreamProjX umbrella, they started production of the ProRise seat assist, then the ProRise Plus for larger individuals. They filled out the product line with custom cushions, a tray, a carrying case, a ProRise for the toilet and a model that a caregiver could use with their foot to lift a patient.

The team used both Graphite and Xenon for all processes from design through manufacturing. Splane began using Graphite for 2D wire frame drawing when it was originally called Vellum, clear back in the early '90s. When Ashlar-Vellum came out with our first solid and surface modeling product, Vellum Solids (now renamed Cobalt and Xenon), in about 2000, the Splane Design team took one look and decided to "dump Solid Designer and SolidWorks." As he tells it,

> ***We said, 'This is it' because it was so intuitive. It wasn't [mandatorily] history-based. It had good surfacing and better rendering at the time. We were all used to all the 2D tools. We all said, 'This is what we're going to stick with.'***

He finds Ashlar-Vellum CAD and 3D modelling software is so easy to use that when a new designer is hired, Splane sits them down in front of Graphite or Xenon and if they've had any CAD experience at all, he tells us, "They just start working. They don't even read the manual. They just do it."

Robson Splane and his team feel, "For a lot of reasons it was the better product for us."



Assembly design of the ProRise seat assist.

The ProRise can be used by most anyone to lower to or stand from a seated position using only the leverage of their own body weight. It's lightweight, portable and affordable.

The ProRise fits many kinds of chairs. Attachable extension handles help when extra leverage is needed. Very little upper body strength is required.

Background / Contact

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