The Best Practices Course - Week #2 - Get Organized (Part 2)

Hello, this is Eric Bobrow with part two of Getting Organized. Week number two of the Best Practices Training Course. We're going to take a look at the concept of a project template for ArchiCAD. Whenever you start a new project you have a few choices. One of them, that we recommend highly, is using a template. If you are starting out ArchiCAD from the way it ships from Graphisoft you'll see that is has the ArchiCAD 14 template listed. Or whatever version of ArchiCAD.

If you've been using ArchiCAD for a while you might have some other ones listed that it will remember. When you say "use a template" and we say "new" it will go ahead and load whatever file is the template. And then after it's finished reading it, it will create an untitled copy of it.

Here you see an untitled file with just four elevation markers. I think this is quite similar to the international version, except that the elevation markers are a bit different. If we look at the project structure we'll see that in the project map there are two stories to begin with.

And there are a few elevations that are preset. Those correspond exactly to the four elevation markers that are pre-drawn. And we have no interior elevations, worksheet details, sections, etc. They await us to start putting in the information. In the view map we do have quite a number of views defined in the basic template. For floor plans and variations such as structural and reflected ceiling plans. The four elevations already have views defined. And then we have what are called clone folders, which define how interior elevations, sections, details, etc. will appear, and will simplify creating views form those view points.

Now if we look at the layout book we'll see that there are a few sheets. If I go to the first floor plan you see that there is a master for a particular sheet size and some markers from the floor plan already showing. And the elevation sheets all ready to go. So if we start to draw a building they will start to show up on the plan sheet and the elevation sheets. This is a good starting point for a project but it's not as good as you can get.

To understand that better, let's take a look at a real project that one of our clients supplied to us. This is the Griffith residence that is designed by Abeer Sweiss of Synthesis, a design firm in Santa Monica, California. Abeer has used ArchiCAD for over 15 years and has taught ArchiCAD at some of the local colleges, and even through our office back a while ago. This particular project, if we look at the structure, it has two stories.

Abeer actually likes putting in the as-built… it's a remodel project so she puts in the as-built on one story and creates a demo plan on another one. Let's take a look at the proposed first floor. You can see, here's one part of it with the garage, I believe. And some bedrooms and the living room. We'll take a look at the as-built floor plan in the

same area. Looks fairly similar but one reason why Abeer does this in the same project is that it makes it easy to show as a trace reference. Let me just bring up the trace and reference palette.

We can go and, perhaps, make it very clear that the original building extended to here and she's making this a little bit bigger. And making some other changes along the way. In this project you'll see quite a few other plan types, in terms of finished plans, roof plans, etc. Elevations and sections, all of these things have been filled in. She's got a lot of interior elevations already done. In this project it's quite well developed and even details at this point... If we go to exterior wall you'll see a detailed drawing here. Now as I click on these...

...You'll notice that it says "independent" and, in fact, these detail drawings are... It appears most of them are set up as independent details rather than ones that came directly from this project. So Abeer actually has these details on a sheet.

I'm just going to guess that the sheet that she has for the architectural details is similar for many of the projects she works on. So these details she'll re-use from project to project. Some of the differences from the standard template is, of course, she has many more sheets set up.

If we go back to the floor plan, any of the views here and I go to the layer dialog box... We'll see that she has, instead of about 10 layer combinations, at least 20 or 30 layer combinations for different types of drawings. If we look at the layers, she has a very long list of layers. Some of which may be imported from AutoCAD for maybe those detailed drawings or things like that. Others she's set up. For example, for all of these layers for DIMs or for dimensions, are for different plans.

So, the roof plan dimensions go here and the interior elevation dimensions go there. And the electrical plan dimensions go there. So she does that for dimensions, fills. You can see lines. This is only one way that this can be done. In fact, we often recommend combining all the 2D information that's on a particular drawing, such as an electrical plan or sight plan, onto a single layer. But Abeer certainly has found this to be a very productive way of working.

It, of course, would be very time consuming to set this up repeatedly from one project to the next. What obviously needs to happen is for each project to start our with all of those layers. And all of the information that she wants to re-use. Here's how you can create your own template. I'm going to go and zoom out a bit here and I'll go open the layer dialog box and select everything. Show them and unlock all the layers. And then zoom out a little further.

With the arrow tool active I'll go to the edit menu and select all. In preparation for creating a template file I want to delete the building. I want to delete everything that's specific to this building but leave the structure of the file intact. So I'll hit the delete key. Now ArchiCAD gives me a warning. It says, if I go ahead I might be deleting section markers, elevation markers, other things that are source markers. That would, actually, potentially delete the viewpoints that those markers were creating.

If I go ahead and do it, and sometimes you do need to proceed and delete the viewpoint... Then those drawings, those viewpoints, would disappear. And on the sheets there would be a missing indicator. There would be a drawing without anything linked to it. What we'd like to do is maintain these markers and their viewpoints and their drawings on the sheets all together. By simply canceling this... When I click "cancel" you notice that ArchiCAD... I'll turn off the trace and reference.

You see that ArchiCAD has left behind just these markers, the sections markers and other interior elevation markers, etc. But deleted all of the building. Let me go up to the second floor. So, I'll just use the project map to go up to the second floor. And you'll see that, of course, I have a lot of information here I have to delete. What I'll do to make it simpler, instead of using the arrow tool I'll switch to the marquee tool and draw a box around this. I'll make sure that I've got the heavy marquee rather than the light marquee.

That will mean that it's going to select everything within all the stories. I can hit the delete key and, again, cancel will keep all of the markers but nothing else. If I go to the sheets and I go, for example, to the floor plan sheet we'll notice that the building's gone. Just some markers. When I start to draw a new building, once I've saved this as a template file, it'll show up on the sheet here. Because this view exists. I'll go to the elevations.

The building has just disappeared but there's a whole lot of stuff in the elevation view. Let's take a look at that. When I open the source view you'll notice that there are things like this that are fills. These were placed by Abeer, for this particular project, on the windows, to give a certain shading or poché or stipple pattern on the Windows to make them read nicely.

That is something obviously that will have to be done specifically for each project so we might as well get rid of them. I'll just use the eye-dropper and then select all of the fills and delete them.

Now I also need to go and get rid of other things, other markers that are not relevant or not generally going to be useful in a future project. So I could select all the detail markers, all the labels, et cetera. The simplest thing to do is to go to the edit menu and say 'find and select'. In 'find and select' we can go and say 'element type is' - instead of 'all types' let's just say '2-D types'. Then select that. Now you can see all of these things that are 2-D will be selected and I can delete them.

Now perhaps there are some things, maybe there is a note or several notes that you would like to keep because when you start a new project and you have an elevation, there are notes that are typical on an elevation and you simply need to move them into position. Or perhaps this is a spline that is used to indicate a revision change and that might be useful to keep around.

So, I'll keep those two things around and delete everything else. I guess these particular revision markers were not part of the 2-D information that was selected so I'll go and delete them manually. So I have deleted most of the stuff here. Perhaps I'll take this and

bring this off to the side so that the main area is clear. If I go back now to the sheet and close up the 'find and select', we'll see that the sheet, this particular drawing is clean.

Now if I am really going to create a template, I need to go into every elevation, every section and other views and delete those things that are not going to be useful. So I'm going to actually skip that part right now and we will take a look at how we create a template file. So I'm going to go back to the view that might be a good one for starting a project, whatever that is, whatever you think would be a good place to start a project. We can leave that as the one that was last open. I can use the escape key to get rid of the marquee.

Now I will 'save as'. I won't do 'save' because that would just overwrite the earlier project. I'll do 'save as'. I'll choose that I would like to, instead of saving this as a solo project, I would like to create a project template. I'll choose where I'd like to load this up. I'll put it into 'my documents' folder, in this case the 'Best Practices Week #2'. But you might put it into your 'ArchiCAD Office Standards' folder and give it a name such as 'New Project Template'. I'm going to overwrite the one that I saved earlier while I was running through this same training and I'll replace it.

So, I have now got something that is a template. I can continue to develop it and clean it up and add to it. But it is ready to be used. So at some point I will go and say 'I'd like to create a new project'. When I say 'I'd like to create a new project' it says, 'What template do you want to use?' I will choose to browse for it. Now it already is in the list here but this is how you would select it. The first time you go again and find where the template is. It is looking for a project template file and therefore all of the other files are grey and it is only going to show the TPL file that is in this location.

So, when I do that it then selects it and it will show up in the menu the next time. In fact, it will be the topmost default choice the next time after this. So it makes it very simple.

I'll create a new file and we are now about to have a blank project, except it is not really so blank because it already has a lot of structure retained from the earlier project. Now there is an error message about libraries. Abeer says that she is using some older parts that give some error messages. She is ignoring them at this point. So we are going to move on.

You can see that we have got the section markers that we just want to move into position after the project gets going. So I'm going to go to the 'wall' tool. We will set up to draw a wall. So I'm in my new project that says 'untitled'. I'm going to create some walls. I'll pick 'wall exterior' as the layer and I will draw just a little basic residential shape.

Now this is on the floor plan here. I want to draw a roof. So I will go to the roof tool. But you notice that the roof layer is hidden. What I really want to do here is switch to the roof plan. When I activate the roof plan, this layer combination has turned on that roof layer so now I can go and say I'd like to create a combination hip roof and perhaps set the plate height up to the 10 foot level that I set for the walls. Then magic wand. You can see that it has created that.

If I go to the floor plan here on the sheets, you'll see that this has shown up and that the elevation sheet, actually we have got the beginning of the building here. The one down here of course has a lot of older 2-D junk that needs to be cleaned up.

Now so far that's not much different than the standard template. But do notice that we have a very extensive set of sheets all organized the way that Abeer had it set up earlier. In fact, the detailed drawings to which I was referring earlier are still in this project. So in other words, instead of having to start fresh, there is already a bunch of content that is useful. So the idea here is that when you start a new project, and this is truly a new project - if you'll notice it says 'untitled' - this project can retain a lot of information that you find useful from your earlier projects.

So anything that you think you might want to reuse, you can leave in the template. Anything that you feel could get in the way, such as the actual building and 2-D information that is not going to be reusable, you get rid of. Then you simply save it as a TPL file.

Now this gives you a whole lot of additional information. It gives you all of these details here. In this case the schedules are still set up the same way that she had her schedules. It has just got a lot of information already built into it, far more than what would be the standard template. If we look at the layer settings we have got all of the layer combinations here, all of her extensive list of layers et cetera. So she doesn't have to start over.

Now I would like to contrast this with another approach. Let's say 'new project' and instead of using a template, either the standard one or the one that we have created for an office, we say 'use latest project settings'. We are going to have a much simpler and almost bare project to start with.

Many people who have used ArchiCAD for a long time, starting with version four or five or six, et cetera, may have this as a habit that they use that because it does create a new project that is a basis for starting work. But it certainly is going to be a lot tougher to run the project because you have to create a whole lot more before you get going.

So, you'll see here that I have got an untitled project but there are no views. So, I have to define all of the views for floor plans and electrical plans and site plan, elevations, all of those sort of things. If I go to the layout book, there is only one layout and there is only one master layout.

So there is very, very little retained. The only things that are really retained are the attributes. So the element attributes, such as the layers are going to be here. So, the layers that we had in the most recent project, the latest settings, are going to be retained as well as other things in the element attributes such as you fill types and line types and composites and materials.

So those are retained but all the rest of the structure is lost. So I don't recommend in general saying, 'new project', 'use latest settings'. I recommend that you use a template. You can certainly use the standard one that comes with your version of ArchiCAD but it

is better to develop your own template once you run one or more projects or to perhaps buy a template.

We will be taking a look at a commercially available template that we have produced, called MasterTemplate, in the next segment of the Best Practices Course: Part Three of 'Getting Organized'.

This is Eric Bobrow, and I'd like to thank you for watching this segment on Getting Organized.

Transcription by CastingWords