

Bluebeam PDF Revu 9.0

Greg Corke reports on a low-cost PDF creation tool that also offers a very capable set of markup, editing and collaboration tools.

The PDF (Portable Document Format) is ubiquitous in the AEC sector and files featuring drawings and models can be created from almost any CAD application then viewed by anyone with a free PDF viewer such as Adobe Reader.

Creating a PDF from a CAD drawing used to require a third party tool such as Adobe's Acrobat Professional. However, in recent years this has changed and most CAD applications now feature their own PDF publisher.

For third party software developers, the commoditisation of PDF creation has meant a change in focus. Bluebeam Software, whose first product Pushbutton PDF was used to publish PDFs from AutoCAD, now focuses on PDF-based design/review workflows. Its flagship software, Bluebeam PDF Revu, is in its ninth release and available in three versions.

'Standard' is designed for non-CAD users and includes PDF viewing, markup and editing tools, plus one button and batch PDF creation from Microsoft Office and other Windows applications.

'CAD' is specifically for users of AutoCAD and Revit and includes all of the functionality of 'Standard' plus one button and batch PDF creation of CAD drawings.

'eXtreme' is designed for the so-called power user and includes all of the functionality of 'CAD' plus advanced features such as character recognition, PDF form creation and scripting.

PDF Revu Standard

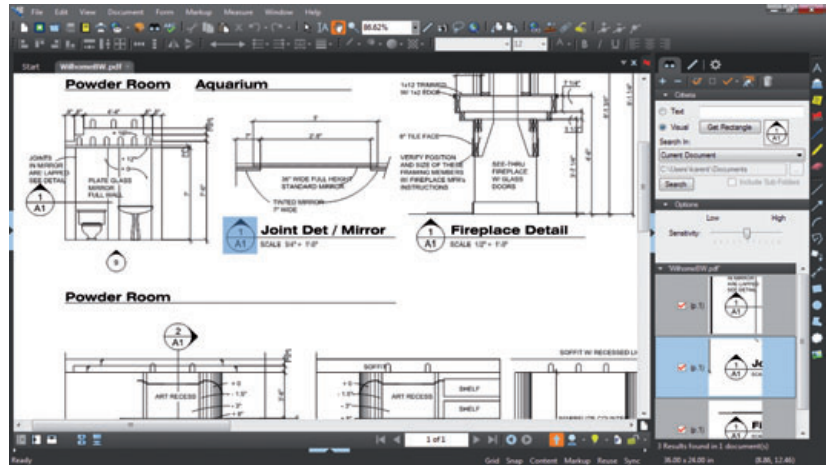
PDF Revu includes a very capable set of markup tools, including text, notes, highlighter, lines, clouds, callouts, stamps and many others. One of the standout features, however, is the ability to customise and re-use markups or comments. This could be a certain shape of revision cloud or a specific symbol. Users can pick mark-ups from a 'recent' list or store them in a library of company standards, which can be shared by multiple users.

To help bring order to the review process the status of markups can also be changed and tasks assigned to different users. In the design phase this could be a structural or building services engineer while in the construction phase the building or electrical contractor. Assigned responsibilities can be displayed on screen in different colours or sorted in a summary list. Bespoke summary reports can also be created for individuals.

PDF Revu has a full set of measurement tools, including lengths, areas, angles, and perimeters. There is also a tool to help count objects in a PDF which can be used for quantity take-off.

New for version 9 is an area cut out tool, which enables users to remove unwanted portions from measurements. For example, to measure the floor area in a kitchen without counting the kitchen island.

The VisualSearch tool allows users to search for symbols in PDFs.



There's also a neat feature for those working on global projects where all markups can be automatically translated into another language using Google Translate.

While PDF Revu has always allowed users to search for text, a new VisualSearch tool allows them to locate symbols on PDFs and apply highlights and hyperlinks to results. For example, if the reviewer decides that all of the sinks in an architect's plan need to be changed he or she simply draws a rectangle around one sink and PDF Revu will automatically identify those similar and annotate them in one go. This neat feature works with both vector and raster data and can also be used to search on multiple PDFs stored in a specific folder as well as the current file or all open documents.

The headline feature is the introduction of 3D PDF viewing and here users can spin, pan, and dynamically zoom around models. To aid communication, specific 3D views can be defined so project participants can be instantly taken to an exact location in the model. To highlight or isolate specific features of a model, parts can be turned on and off, or made transparent.

3D models can be marked up, but this is not yet done directly in the 3D PDF. Instead, the user takes a snapshot of the model, pastes the 2D image into a blank page in the PDF document and uses the standard 2D markup tools in PDF Revu. Pre-defined 3D views can then be referenced on this 2D page.

This 3D/2D markup process is not perfect, but actually works quite well. We imagine full 3D markup capabilities will be added in a future release, as well as the ability to actually create 3D PDFs.

PDF Revu CAD

For this latest release Bluebeam has made some significant enhancements to its AutoCAD plug-in. Much of this is in the area of batch processing where users can change conversions settings of selected files after they have been placed in the queue. For example,

adding a global stamp, changing the page setup options, or automatically adding a prefix or suffix to each converted drawings. AutoCAD sheet sets can also be batch processed now.

PDF Revu eXtreme

For CAD users who create PDFs from scanned drawings, the headline feature in 'eXtreme' is likely to be Optical Character Recognition (OCR), where raster characters are turned into searchable and editable text.

Scripting capabilities are also included in this top-end version so users can automate multi-steps processes such as adding a PDF cover sheet and text stamp, flattening and then emailing a PDF. Scripts can also be shared with other PDF Revu eXtreme users.

Other PDF Revu eXtreme-only features include PDF form creation and the ability to permanently remove confidential text and images from a PDF.

Conclusion

PDF Revu CAD and eXtreme will certainly appeal to those looking for more control and automation when creating PDFs from AutoCAD or Revit. But the platform's real strength lays in its highly-capable markup tools. For many AEC firms, PDFs have become an essential part of the design review process and the software includes a number of excellent tools, some of which are not even available in Adobe's more costly Acrobat Professional.

PDF Revu is also likely to find interest from non-CAD users, such as contractors and quantity surveyors on site marking up plans. It already runs on Tablet PC and there have also been rumours of an iPad version.

Of course one of the real beauties about PDF Revu is the cost. Priced from \$179-\$299 with volume discounts available for five or more seats, the software is incredibly affordable.

Product info

Product: PDF Revu
Supplier: Bluebeam
Price: \$179-\$299
Website:
www.bluebeam.com