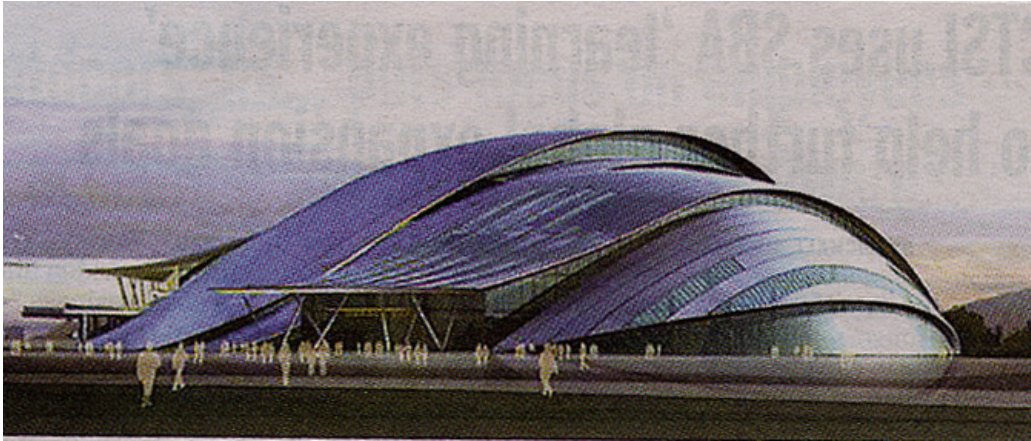


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Next generation of AutoCAD software allows designers to create virtual models



Design by DDB Architecture International using Autodesk Revit Series software

BY MICHAEL SHEFFIELD

Technology has already done away with the old drafting boards, T-squares and pencils for architects, but a new software package is taking the industry even further.

Autodesk, the company that introduced the popular AutoCAD software, which allows architects to create two-dimensional drawings, is now marketing a software package called Revit, which allows architects to create virtual Building Information Models. Those virtual models allow architects to see how a building will look and make changes before having to make them in the field.

Joe Wieronski, a partner at Askew Nixon Ferguson Architects, which has used BIM technology and Revit as its main platform, says the package is similar to what the automobile and aerospace industries have been doing for years.

"We're now catching up to them because they can make the changes before something is even built," Wieronski says.

With Revit, information must be inputted into the program by the users, but it can determine the dimensions and create an actual structure in the computer, instead of having a simple line to illustrate it.

"The computer model allows us to keep all the decisions in one place," he says.

Revit allows changes to be coordinated throughout the project instead of having new plans printed every time a change is made.

"I wouldn't be surprised to see contractors at construction sites with laptops with building plans on them instead of the rolls of blueprints," he says.

Revit's structure resembles a spread sheet, but with the actual building included. The program allows reporting on how much caret, ceiling tile or brick is needed in a phase and that helps keep track of costs. Wieronski says from the beginning to end, Revit, which retails for \$4995, could cut waste by 30%.

Doug Dabbs, senior account manager with Hagerman and Co., the Autodesk reseller in Memphis, says while the software package most likely won't replace AutoCAD, it can be another tool that simplifies the work.

"AutoCAD has been the standard for architecture and several other industries for years, but I see more and more companies adopting new technologies like Revit sooner than later," Dabbs says.

Dabbs says another benefit of Revit is that it can calculate the amount of energy a building will use. As sustainable, or "green" designs, which use environmentally friendly materials in construction, become more popular, that energy feature will become more important to users.

"All of these products are database driven and they allow you to create relationships between everyone that uses them, and maintain it through the duration of a project," he says.

Wieronski says the more information that is available to architects and contractors during a project, the more efficient a project becomes.

"We can reduce waste and increase speed of delivery through this," he says. "That's something that benefits everyone involved."