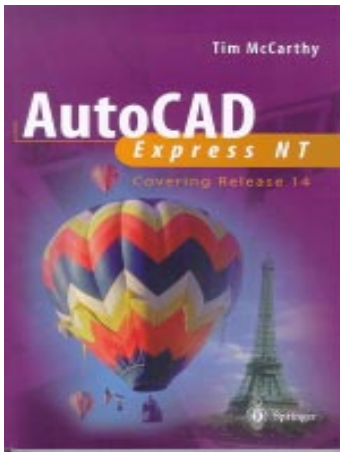


AUTOCAD EXPRESS NT



Tim McCarthy
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Dr Tim McCarthy is a senior lecturer in the Department of Civil and Structural Engineering at UMIST and the book undoubtedly gains much from the author's

experience of teaching students. This book concentrates on AutoCAD Release 14 running under Windows 95 or NT and is aimed at either the first time CAD user, or perhaps someone migrating from another CAD package or a much earlier AutoCAD version. It is written in such a manner that it is easy to follow the exercises at the CAD station on a page by page basis, skipping sections that may be familiar and perhaps experimenting yourself occasionally on the way.

The 'Starting AutoCAD' chapter gets the user up and drawing quickly, describing from scratch how to start a new drawing, setting units and limits, then describing the drawing window, menus, toolbars and toolboxes. The chapter commences with the drawing of simple lines, describing how to draw using co-ordinates for accuracy, then modifying line types, scales and colours. The chapter on cursor and display control introduces the reader to layers and layer control, co-ordinates, grids and snaps in a clear and informative way, then goes on to use these in an exercise drawing a 2D outline of the Eiffel Tower.

Drawing and editing tools are covered in more detail in the fourth chapter, while the next chapter deals with constructive editing (commands that either replicate existing entities or alter their characteristics). Blocks and attributes are dealt with in a chapter of their own, entitled super-entities, although x-ref and x-bind are left to the last chapter on printing and plotting. The book concludes with chapters on advanced drawing and dimensioning and 3D drawing, including surfaces, meshes and 3D-solids.

The layout is easy to follow, with numerous references to what is actually going on at the keyboard, mouse and on screen. Graphics are clear and well annotated. Although the exercises will not appeal to everyone, they are well thought out and provide the necessary level of sophistication at each stage of the book to allow 'learning through doing'. Each exercise develops CAD techniques to solve specific drafting problems.

Although the book has no glossary, the index is thorough and well laid out and quickly allows the reader to locate the desired sections. For the AutoCAD 12 users, there are frequent notes describing differences in the various commands and cheats relating to the use of commands from Release 12, which are sometimes more powerful. For example '-LAYER' allows command line layer control and can be much faster than the R14 dialog box equivalent.

One of my main criticisms of the book is that it is heavily command line based, with many of the interactive parameters having to be typed at the keyboard. In practice it would be preferable for the operator to use an interactive selection window that encompassed the desired object. However, at under £20, this book represents very good value for money. It is very compact and unlike most others at twice the size and double the cost, it does not waste space simply describing every command, parameter and system variable in detail.

Architects, Town Planners, Civil and Structural Engineers wishing to learn AutoCAD 14, will all find this a useful text.

Jeff Johns
 Co-Ordinator
 CTI Centre for the Built Environment