



Cadalyst

CAD Manager's Newsletter (#464)

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The Future Risks of Fileless Cloud CAD, Finale

Where do you think your design data belongs? In the vendor's cloud? Your own network? Find out why you should keep control of your data.

In the last edition of The CAD Manager's Newsletter, we pondered an idyllic future world where everything about your CAD experience was fileless and based in the cloud. No more software to worry about, no files to track, just the pure bliss of logging into the software company web site and letting them take care of everything. I posited that such a world would be fraught with danger and would likely only achieve only one actual result — making customers dependent on a single vendor that holds your data.



Image source: BullRun/stock.adobe.com

I asked for reader comments and boy did I get them. I wondered if I'd be accused of being a Luddite or paranoid, but it turns out I'm not the only CAD manager who thinks the future of fileless cloud CAD is scary. In fact, I found the fear and loathing of CAD vendors from readers remarkably consistent. In this edition, I'll share some reader feedback and provide conclusions to serve as a checklist for CAD managers to consider when pondering any moves to a fileless cloud-based system. Here goes.

Whose Property is Your Design and Who's in Control

In [the last installment](#) I asked you to consider the following questions about fileless cloud CAD in the context of inherent risk:

- ▶ Who will control access to your design tools?
- ▶ Where will your design files reside?
- ▶ Who will control the information format?

These questions provoked several reader responses:

RC: "When the software company holds your tools in their cloud, they have control over your productivity. When your data is in their cloud, they have control over your business. All it takes is one time to have a disagreement over your account, and you can have your entire business held hostage."

JO: I agree with your commentary. How do you control an agency submission that cannot change if you cannot control product updates on the cloud software? Algorithms can change and alter calculations; feature updates can alter appearance of plans. This is a giant, "Hell, no!" for me. Now, if it was optional, I could care less but we all know how "options" work in this world.

GB: As long as I have a say, the data files that I oversee will not go to someone else's cloud. It is bad enough that I now have to rent licenses.

Conclusions: When you hold your own data on your own servers, nobody can bill you to look at your own data. Can you say the same about cloud-based CAD tools? From a standpoint of data and financial security, fileless cloud CAD presents a wide range of risks that do not outweigh any perceived benefit for most CAD managers — certainly not the CAD managers quoted above.

Legacy File Support

One reader brought up an issue I'd not thought about regarding legacy files and projects:

JK: Our firm uses CAD files 25, 30, or more years old for new work, be they for new tenant improvements, additions, or remodels. With Cloud software and storage, what guarantee would there be that one could use these files? What if a Cloud vendor decided to not support, say files older than three prior upgrades? With Cloud subscriptions, one cannot even access a file created yesterday should the subscription lapse. Actually, owning the software installed on local machines can guarantee access to older files even if one switches to a different design software. Autodesk's abandonment of permanent licenses just illustrates the point.

Conclusions: JK is right to emphasize that data storage and control is a problem that can span decades. The ability to go back to legacy data and continue to work with it is of paramount concern. Therefore, any data must be stored in formats durable enough to work in the future or the old software must be archived to run later. Will the cloud vendor even be in business in 10 or 20 years, and will those files be supported? Will the old software authorize and run? These are mission critical questions.

The Online Banking Argument

As I mentioned in the last installment, one of the arguments I hear from cloud vendors all the time is, "You do all your banking online and that's an example of using a cloud service, so why not CAD?"

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Tools and Resources

Hannover Messe 2021 Digital Edition

One of the benefits of our current climate is that the tradeshows that are usually out of reach for many, are now available at our fingertips, usually for free or for a small fee. This year's Hannover Messe is a global tradeshow held online April 12–16. This year you for about \$24 (€20) you can watch product presentations, listen to presentations from industry leaders and participate in the digital WomenPower Congress (April 16). Get caught up on new tech in AI, smart factories, digital ecosystems, automation, and more. Keynote addresses from German Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel and more. Find the best information for you by following the channels you're interested in, such as the Intelligent Production Channel (factory of the future) or Industrial Transformation Channel (how digitalization is changing industry). [Read more»](#)

ONLINE BOOK: ArchiCAD for CAD Managers

Architects David R. Russo and Michael F. D'Andrea teamed up with ArchiCAD to write and publish ArchiCAD for CAD Managers, a 100-page online book with the goal to "assist architectural firms in taking advantage of ArchiCAD's capabilities, and of the Virtual Building concept." [Read more »](#)

What's New at Cadalyst.com



NEW! Cadalyst's Fab Freebies for CAD Users 2021

Why buy it if you can get it for free!

The editors of Cadalyst, with help from our contributing editors and readers who are in the CAD trenches day in and day out, have updated everyone's favorite guide to helpful tools and resources that don't cost a cent. [Download our guide](#) and you'll soon be asking yourself, "How did I live without this?"

The latest edition of the "Fabulous Freebies for CAD Users" guide has something for everyone, including unit converters, file and text utilities, PDF converters, BIM tools, CAD management tools, and more!

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Herrera on Hardware

Graphics Drivers—Purpose-Shaped for CAD Use

Keep up to date with CAD-oriented drivers and get the power you need to drive your designs. [Read more »](#)

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