Some Cool Links
Since I believe many of you out there reading this article are Architects, I thought you should know about some movements in architecture that are gaining popularity in some circles. http://www.ebcoho.org/ Cohousing is becoming an attractive alternative for housing here in the San Francisco Bay Area due to the rising costs of home ownership. If you're drafting biz is out here in the Bay Area, you might be interested in hearing about http://www.jvs.org/training.htm JVS. They retrain Russian emigrants who have many years of mechanical or architectural drafting experience, but lack the necessary CAD skills to get a job. They teach them AutoCAD or ProE and help place them into jobs. While we're still out here on the west coast, did you remember to register yet for Seybold? The exhibition is free, and you can get some software at great prices! Before you leave SF, check out http://www.mtc2kinc.com/ MTC's job listings - they do post jobs for CAD people, including http://www.mtc2kinc.com/job.asp?who=1229 this one in SF

Viva la Dif
Have you ever sat there scratching your head because you can't figure out where the consultant changed your drawing? You know they made changes and you need to place those changes into your drawing. Unfortunately on a large project that task might be near impossible. Instead of needing a hair transplant you might want to try to http://www.furix.com Compare the drawings and let it find the differences instead.

Express
If you haven't explored in your Express Tools lately, there are probably some commands you might have forgotten, or didn't notice were there. Mpedit allows you to pick multiple lines and arcs, turn them into polylines, and then lets you perform editing on them, all from the one command. TMT2MTXT is one of the commands I use all the time. It allows you to convert multiple lines of free floating text into Mtext to align them, edit it and spit out a nice clean looking paragraph of text. If you right click you can get a menu of options for how it converts the text. Once you are done you can also use the explode command to break it back into single lines of text, which are quicker to move around to move around. Did you know that when you move Mtext it is not only much slower than moving the exact same lines of Text plus Text you can see as you move it. Mtext is shown as simply a rectangular box during the move command, which will make it difficult to place correctly in your drawing. While on text, another Express tool is Tcase, which offers Sentence case, lowercase, UPPERCASE, Title and tOGGLE cASE as ways to modify your text. I've often sat there typing away, not realizing CAPS was off because I was looking at the redlines and not at the screen and had to retype in the whole note. Now I can enter the text and let AutoCAD adjust the text case instead of my spending the next 15 minutes retyping. Finally there is Burst. When I have to send a drawing out to a Mac user, they always want the drawing saved as r12, with everything exploded. Since my drawings often contain Attributes, exploding them will lose the information they contain. Instead, before I explode the entire drawing I use the Burst command to change the attributes into plain text, thereby saving the data that the consultant might need while still exploding it into a format their program can read.

Rebate
If any of you are considering purchasing ACAD Architectural Desktop 2, ACAD Land Development Desktop 2 or ACAD Map 2000 from now till July 10th you can receive a $250 rebate per new seat. Of course you first actually will have to want to own a copy of the current versions of Desktop.

ACAD Layer Tip:
If you are used to r14's DDLMODES command to pull up the layer dialog box. You may also be familiar with it's ability to Show: All, All in Use, All Unused, All Xref Dependent, All not Xref Dependent, All that Pass Filter and Filter. Between these 6 variances plus the Filter you could customize which layers the dialog box displayed. This was useful for checking out which layers were part of the Xref, working only with the layers actually in your drawing and not in the Xref, etc. You also had at your disposal the Linetype tab where you could load new linetypes. In A2k however, there is no DDLMODES command. They have removed it and instead simply typing LA or LAYER will bring up the dialog box. Notice that the Linetype tab was removed, much to my annoyance. If you want to adjust the loaded linetypes you either click on a layers linetype or type in LINETYPE at the command prompt. However I will forgive them for the lack of that tool considering the powerful new revamped filter command in the layer dialog box. The only problem with the filtering of layers in A2k is that they hid the command right in front of you. Unless you normally click on small buttons that don't say anything and experiment, you'll never find it. Thankfully I do like to explore and press all the buttons when I see them. Now, when you first start the Layer command you'll see in the top left hand corner of the dialog box a pull down menu that contains Show all Layers, Show all Unused Layers and Show All Xref Dependent Layers. To the right of this are 2 check boxes; Invert Filer and Apply to Object Properties toolbox. Invert Filter flips the criterion for what's being displayed in the dialog box. For instance if you pick Show All Xref Dependent Layers then check the Invert Filter it will show only those layers that are not part of the Xref. If you check the Apply to Object Properties Toolbar it will take whatever layers are shown in this dialog box and apply that to the pulldown in the toolbar. Now, here's the trick. In-between the pulldown menu and these 2 checkboxes there is a small button that shows "…". There is no toolbar tip, there are no words that say what the button is or does, just the three dots. Click on it! Now you see the Filter command from the r14 layer dialog box right? Well, actually it only looks like it at first glance. Notice that the top line says Filter Name. Type in a name here. Now set your parameters for the filter. You'll notice now that the ADD button is now clickable. Click Add and then click Close. Now, go back to the Show All Layers pulldown and click down arrow to open the list. Notice what's in there? It's your newly designed filter ready to be used whenever you want, from then on in that drawing! This is a really cool and powerful addition to tools.