VirtualWork

Worth the Wait!

Don't hold your breath, yet, but VisualAnalysis 6.0 is coming soon!

Features galore. An engineer's dream. An upgrade to beat all upgrades. VisualAnalysis development is nearing completion as we have solved most of our major technical hurdles in reorganizing features to make you more productive and better equipped to deal with the current round of building codes.

General Look & Feel

- High Quality Graphics for Model View
- Expanded Undo with Unlimited Redo
- Simplified & Consistent Units System, Easier Access to Change Units
- More…

Design Improvements

- Current Building Codes: AISC 2005, ACI 318-02, NDS 2005, AISI 2005?
- Automatic Design Group Creation
- Edit Multiple Design Groups Simultaneously
- Diaphragm Drift Report, Column Drift Report Tables
- Member Connection Forces Report Table
- More…

Modeling Improvements

- Define Areas (e.g. Floors, Walls, Roof Planes)
- Automatic Area Meshing, with Mesh Refinement
- Create Tab in Project Manager: Generate Models Fast!
- Drawing Members: Snap to Existing Members
- Extend Member Feature
- "Format Painter" to Copy Member Properties
- Auto-Splitting Plate Elements when Drawing
- More…

Loading Improvements

- Load Case Manager Consolidates all Load Case Tasks
- Area Loads (with holes and corridor loads)
- Semi-Automatic IBC 2006 Wind Loading Abilities
- More…

Preview Information Now Available

We have set up a web page dedicated to VisuaAnalysis 6.0 information so that you can watch the progress and stay tuned to beta-tests, feature additions, and prepare yourself for the big changes before they happen.

Testers Wanted: Get Paid to Test VA6!

Due to staffing shortages, we need some customer assistance to help us ensure top quality in this new release. We are looking for VisualAnalysis 5.5 customers to use their expertise and experience to stress-test version 6.0. If you are a VisualAnalysis 5.5 Customer with 10 hours to spare over the next 6 weeks, and are interested in helping IES test version 6.0, you can earn some hard cold cash for a bit of your spare time. All qualified and participating testers will earn at least $100 in cash from IES. Visit the preview site "Extras" tab for details.

An Official Timeline

We have set an official timetable for the release of VisualAnalysis 6.0:

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Missing February?

We are still here, just busy!

You may feel like you missed the Februrary VirtualWork, but it wasn't you. We were all working on VisualAnalysis 6.0, or out skiing (we finally got some snow in February) or out with the flu. No news is good news, though as work on VisualAnalysis 6.0 is coming to fruition and we are wrapping up most of the major improvements…

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Updated Products

Vexing Problems & Issues

Only if it were easy! IES has been working on updates for ShapeBuilder 4.0, AnalysisGroup 3.0, and QuickMasonry 2.0 for the last month. Unfortunately, none of these updates are quite ready for "prime time" yet. Watch the update page on the web site for coming releases. We appreciate your patience as we try to ensure high-quality releases, not just quick fixes.

We do have an unofficial "Hot Fix" available for **QuickMasonry 2.0** that addresses the following issues:

- Wall Weight is incorrectly calculated in the lintel module, in some instances.
- Shear Checks are not appearing in the report for shear walls or lintels.
- Corrects problem with pilaster lateral load "offsets" not getting used.
- There is a new checkbox on the Criteria tab for shear wall design that causes the IBC 2106 Seismic 1.5 multiplier to be used.

If you are experiencing problems with QuickMasonry 2.0, you might try the

Alpha Test (1 week: April 9 - April 13)

Purpose: Get general impressions, prove install software works in a variety of environments, find major crashes or system flaws. Testers should load and play with "typical" past projects, or create a typical project and work with it.

Beta Test (3 weeks, April 18 - May 16)

Purpose: General functionality, completeness. Fix the "routine" kinds of bugs. Testers will help validate one or two specific areas or new features, and perhaps also help us with documentation of those areas as well (for extra $$, of course).

Release Candidate (1 week)

Purpose: cosmetic issues, documentation issues. Verification that beta-test defects were actually fixed!

Release Goal: May 29, 2007. Pricing, product levels, and other "business" details to be announced in April. Pre-orders will be taken starting about April 15th.

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The View from Vista

A new operating system, what does it mean?

Xp is a pretty good operating system. It has been stable and functional for many years now, and we have grown comfortable with it. It has had it's problems and it has had some limitations, especially as new hardware has become available, but for what the average engineer does it is a nice platform for work. So why change?

Microsoft has now released 🌐Windows Vista. Is this a reason to change? The answer, from our perspective, is a definite maybe. We now have Vista running on three machines at IES, primarily to ensure that our products are running smoothly on the new platform and to judge whether we are taking advantage of the new features in the system. So far our reactions to the new platform are positive, but there are a couple pitfalls and cautions for you. If you are considering the switch, and especially if you are planning a new hardware purchase, you will want to evaluate Vista before taking the plunge.

The Good
Vista offers a number of enhancements over XP in the user-interface many of which make it more Mac-like than ever (not that anybody here has gone near a Mac in many years). The glossy "Aero" transparency makes working with stacked widows a little more fun and attractive, but requires a graphics card with lots of horsepower.

Everything seems to have been tweaked a little and it is easy to see that Microsoft has been listening to complaints and suggestions from customers as the most commonly used system features like control panel applets, and the start menu have been significantly refreshed to be easier to use and more functional. Connecting to my little wireless "notwork" (it's the cute term I've given to my hybrid little network that never seems to work as it should) has been relatively painless in Vista--I was able to copy some files easily to my son's Windows 98 machine.

The XP start menu could easily get "out of hand" with long menu lists and cascading menus. Vista keeps things much more orderly with auto-collapsing sections and sorting. Windows explorer is easier to use, and offers nice "favorites" that are now independent of the the Internet Explorer favorites, making it much easier to navigate to common data folders on your own machine or network.

Perhaps the best new feature in Vista is the "search" window that appears in the start bar or in any explorer window. This feature is not only super-fast but it searches across files AND emails (at least in Outlook 2007) making it a breeze to track down information you saved a few weeks ago and cannot remember where you put it. Heck, even if you know where it is, it is faster to search for it!

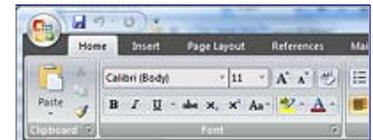Another big change in Vista is the attention to security. All of the system settings are

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hot-fix, otherwise these changes will be in our next official update.

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Office 2007: Ribbon?

Innovative or Infuriating?

Microsoft is **rocking the boat** with Office 2007. If you have not seen it yet, the biggest change is the missing main menu and toolbars that have been part of a standard user-interface for the last 15 years! In their place is a new "Ribbon" control that offers similar functionality in a slightly different arrangement.

At IES, we like to be Innovative with our User-Interface design and also to follow Microsoft's example. By following Microsoft, we make our products easier to learn and use. (We don't have Microsoft's research budget, but we can still take some advantage of their research!)

The Ribbon Debate
For a month now, a couple of us have been using Office 2007 and like the Ribbon and see it as much easier to use (it looks as though Microsoft has done their homework with "usability"). Others, though are not yet convinced because it is so different, and we are accustomed to the **File**, **Edit**, **View** menu paradigm.

The Ribbon has all the same commands as the old Word, just arranged a little differently, with most of the seldom-used commands better explained (not just a button) and quicker access. It's kind of like having a dozen toolbars, but each available with a single click of the mouse.

Give Us Your Opinion
If you have experience with this new ribbon, or would like to check it out, **we would like to hear from you!**

What do you think about a Ribbon in VisualAnalysis 6.0? Do you think it could make the software easier to use, or not?

🌐Read about the MS Office Ribbon

Email IES (support@iesweb.com) with

locked-down so that only an administrator can use them. This includes everything from display settings to add/remove programs. If you attempt to do these things you are prompted to verify that it is really you (and not some rogue virus) attempting the system change. If you are not an administrator you cannot continue the action unless you know the administrator password. Even if you are logged in as an administrator you still need to "confirm" the action. This is both annoying and somewhat comforting--though I have no doubt that the bad guys will worm there way in eventually!

The Bad

There is always the "Change Factor" when upgrading software. Why did they have to move that feature AND rename it? One or the other and I might still be able to find it, but both makes it a real challenge. Though after working with the system for a few weeks now, I can see that the change is for the better, even if it has been painful to learn it.

I have had a few of my software products fail to function at 100%, though most problems have been minor. Depending on what features you expect, you should look closely at the different versions of Vista (Home, Business, Ultra, etc.), as it could make a difference: Vista Business for example won't play a DVD movie in Windows Media Player! You also better have a good hard drive, because it will be cranking away, night and day, doing Vista stuff.

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your thoughts on the new Ribbon and whether or not you would like to see VisualAnalysis 6.0 sporting something similar.

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