

ARRIS_USERS

PREMIER ISSUE

A SIGMA SERVICES PUBLICATION

FALL 2001

Welcome

Sigma Services is pleased to introduce the premiere issue of **ARRIS_USERS**. My goal in producing this newsletter is to provide you, the ARRIS user, with useful information and to assist you in becoming more productive with your ARRIS software. Topics will vary with each publication, but hopefully each newsletter will contain something of interest to both new and existing users.

In addition to providing an informative document, I will occasionally be taking a few liberties in promoting my company, Sigma Services. My reason for doing this is twofold: 1) I actually believe that I offer a wide range of technical services that may be of significant value to the ARRIS community and 2) it would be great if more folks were aware of reason #1.

That said, I have included a brief overview of Sigma Services right up front, and then tried to keep a lower profile for the remainder of the newsletter.

About Sigma Services

In case you don't already know me, my name is Gary Thill, and I've been associated with the ARRIS software since 1984. Much of that time I spent working directly for Sigma Design, but I've also invested a few years as an independent ARRIS reseller and ARRIS consultant along the way.

After nearly seventeen years of teaching, demonstrating, documenting and supporting a single product, I'm pleased to be able to offer the highest quality ARRIS training, support and technical services available. Here is a brief list of the types of sales and technical expertise offered by Sigma Services:

- ARRIS & Expert InfoCAD Software Sales
- Beginning & Advanced ARRIS Training (On-site or Off-site)
- Annual Telephone Support
- Database Conversions and Translations
- ARRIS Implementation and Setup of Office Standards
- 2D and 3D Drafting Services

For more information about any of these services, please visit www.sigmaserv.com.

Okay!! I'm done talking about Sigma Services and ready to move on to something more interesting. By the way, if you discover anything useful in the pages that follow, make copies and share them with your colleagues at the office.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below is a list of frequently asked questions that I have collected from technical support calls and from the ARRIS Listserv. Hopefully you will find one or two that you were wondering about as well... thanks to all who contributed:

Q: Is there an equivalent command to the **F10** key that I can map to a mouse gesture?

A: Yes. From the MCI menu, simply map your favorite mouse button to: **=0@0**

Q: Sometimes I'm in a drawing and suddenly every entity I draw (lines, circles, text, etc.) is grouped together. If I query any item, they are reported as crosshatch patterns.

A: Apparently some marker has been dropped along the way. Use this command sequence from the ARRIS prompt line to ungroup the entities:

```
$setvar(#apwall,#xhbound,0) [Enter]
cfga [Enter]
#apwall [Enter]
#xhbound [Enter]
F10 key
All (from options menu)
```

Q: How can I get my *pen 0* lines to be excluded by the translator when exporting an AutoCAD DWG file from my ARRIS database?

A: You can create a *Filter-Out* file (with a .flt extension) and reference the file in the Configuration options of the DWG Translator menu to filter out entities by pen or color. This means that you can't use the Translator's default *SYS STD CONFIG* file. You must create and save a new configuration file instead. The format for the *Filter-Out* file is:

```
PEN=0
COLOR =3,5
```

In this example, entities in *Pen 0* or *Color 3* or *Color 5* will not translate. For RI's, the value for *Apply Filter To RI* should be set to *Indepth* or *Both*.

Q: How can we get an automatic accounting of the all the plots we send out?

A: You can turn on the *Plot Accounting Feature* in ARRIS by adding the following new line to your *\$ARRIS/etc/arris.ini* file: **GPLOTACCT=some_directory** where *some_directory* is typically the pathname to your *Standards* directory. For Unix users, the syntax is: **setenv GPLOTACCT some_directory**. This will create a plot *log* file named *plotacct.tx* below the specified directory that can be formatted and reported by selecting the *Log Report* option below the *Accounting* label of the *Plot* menu. To create this log file in the user's *home* directory, change the reference from *some_directory* to *USR*.

ARRIS CAD Forum

For all of you ARRIS users who are not yet aware (there may be one or two), there is a wonderful source of *free* ARRIS technical support, problem solving, frustration venting and general camaraderie called the *Paladin ARRIS Listserver*. The *Listserver* is essentially an open ARRIS forum that emails each subscriber all the questions, suggestions, opinions and solutions posted by other ARRIS users. Many of the brightest minds in the ARRIS community read and respond to postings from both novice and experienced users. If you're interested in subscribing to this valuable free resource, simply send an email to: *arris-request@paladin.com* and include the word *subscribe* in the body, not the subject, of the email.

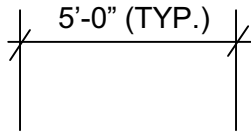
You can also subscribe via Sigma Design's web site by pointing your browser to <http://www.arriscad.com/listservers.asp> and scrolling down to the *Subscribe to Paladin's ARRIS Listserver* section.

Tips & Tricks

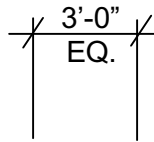
□ Getting More From Your Dimensions

Have you ever wished you could include text in your dimension string such as 'EQ', 'NTS' or 'TYP.'? If you've tried this in the past using *manual* dimensions, the problem has always been

that the dimensions don't automatically update if they are modified later. Here's a trick for including any annotation you want as part of your dimension string, above or below the dimension line. Plus, it will automatically update its length value if the dimension is ever modified later.



Example 1



Example 2

Just follow these steps to create a dimension similar to Example 1:

1. Set dimension *Tx Mode* to 'manual' (from the Dimension Status menu)
2. Begin placing a *Single* or *Running* dimension. When prompted for '*Manual dimension?*', respond by typing: `&l (TYP.)`

(Note that the 2nd character is a lowercase 'el', not the number 'one'. The ampersand (&) character, together with the lowercase 'el', tells ARRIS to maintain the dimension length. You can then type any text you want after the 'el'. Don't forget to include a space between the 'el' and the text you wish to add to the string for aesthetics).

Just follow these steps to create a dimension similar to Example 2:

1. Set dimension *Tx Mode* to 'manual' (from the Dimension Status menu)
2. Begin placing a *Single* or *Running* dimension. When prompted for '*Manual dimension?*', respond by typing: `&l^EQ.`

(Note that the 2nd character is a lowercase 'el', not the number 'one'. The ampersand (&) character, together with the lowercase 'el', tells ARRIS to maintain the dimension length. The caret (^) character tells ARRIS to insert a line break. You can then type any text you want after the '^'. Whatever text you type will appear below the dimension string on a new line.)

Now try stretching the dimension to a new length. It should update automatically!

□ Customizing Right-Click Menu Selections

Are you tired of answering the same prompts or picking the same options for commands that you typically answer the same way every time? To reduce the number of mouse clicks and speed up your productivity, you can customize a *right-click* for certain menu buttons that automatically respond to the prompts the way that you usually do.

Let's say you're creating a preliminary drawing with lots of overlapping construction lines and you'd like to join the corners without having to perform a lot of trim and extend commands. As most of you know, setting the *fillet* or *chamfer* command to a *zero* radius will automatically join (i.e. double trim/extend) any two selected line endpoints. How about customizing the *Chamfer* button so that when you *right-click* it, it will automatically input *zero* chamfer values and quickly prepare you to start joining any two line endpoints? Just follow these easy steps:

1. Select the *Customization Menu* button (near the upper-right corner of your ARRIS menu next to the *Load Plug-in* button) and then select the *Right Mouse Command* menu (the mouse icon with the right button colored in red). Now drag your special *right-click* cursor down and select the *Chamfer* button under the *Place* label from the *Line* menu. This will bring up the *Right Click Setup* menu.

(Note: Some menu buttons will generate a message which says: *RCCOMMAND: UNCUSTOMIZABLE* which means that you can't perform this operation)

2. Under the *USER DEFINED* half of the menu, select the empty blue box to the right of the *DESCRIPTION* label and type in a description such as: *Chamfer with zero radius* or *Join Lines*.
3. Now select the empty blue box to the right of the *COMMAND* label and type: `<:mn_chamfer;0;0`

(Note: The '<' is a special character which instructs ARRIS to first clear any pop-up menus that may be displayed in the drawing area. The `:mn_chamfer;0;0` tells ARRIS to type the *chamfer* command and enter a *zero* in response to the two prompts which ask for the two chamfer distances)

4. Now select *Accept* from the pop-up menu, and then select *Exit*.

Now, anytime you want to automatically join two line endpoints to form a corner, simply right-click on this box and avoid having to enter the chamfer values. Notice that the description you entered in step 2 above is displayed on the message line when this *right-click* command is initiated. A normal *left-click* on the box will still prompt you for the chamfer values as usual. If you want to return to the original behavior, repeat steps 1-3 above and when prompted to enter the command, select the "USE DEFAULT" option which will reset the originally assigned operation.

□ *Using ARRIS' Built-In Calculator Mode*

Simple mathematical calculations can be performed at the ARRIS prompt line by typing in an exclamation point (!) followed by a numerical entry and +, -, *, or /. Here are some sample types of calculations:

!35+25.75+15.34	!165/5
!1829-1329	!(54+123)*4
!56*134	

The answer to the calculation will be displayed on the prompt line.

□ *Archiving Repeated Item Libraries*

Did you ever wish there was an easy way to archive just the repeated items used in a particular drawing so you didn't have to archive the whole RI library? ARRIS has a great command for taking a 'snapshot' of all the repeated items that were placed in a drawing and creating a new RI library which contains just those RI's.

The command is: *riarch* (repeated item archive) and here are the prompts:

1. Perform pre-scan? (before answering *yes*, be sure to turn all your layers *on* for edit!)
2. Archive APPL. RI's? (answer *yes* if you want a copy of all the ARRIS RI's you used)
3. Perform archive now? (answer *yes* if there are no missing RI libraries – see note at bottom of discussion.)
4. Directory for archive RI lib? (select *DB:* to store the new library in current database) select *USR:* to store the new library in your *home* directory.)
5. Name for RI archive? (select the *Enter* key to name the new library the same name as the database, or enter a new RI library name.)

(Note: If ARRIS detects any RI's whose libraries are not currently loaded, you will be notified between the 2nd and 3rd prompts. You may wish to load the missing libraries before answering *yes* to the 3rd prompt. In ARRIS 2001, this archive ability was included as part of the new *Briefcase Take Out* feature and accessible from the *Save*, *Save As* and *Drawing/Sheet Select* menus. The *Briefcase Take Out* feature has a lot more options, be sure and check it out if you've never seen it before.

Cool Sigmacs

After digging through some old archive directories, I selected three pretty cool Sigmacs that I think some of you might find useful. Below is a brief description of their functions:

csw – (change smart wall). This command is useful if you want to replace a bunch of smart walls of a certain type with a different type (i.e. replace all W1's with W5's). Since ARRIS does not include a *Search Method* in the Edit menu that searches for specific wall types, this command may be the fastest way to do it. Thanks to Russell Houlden for contributing this one many years ago.

dlys – (display layers). This command is great for quickly displaying the contents of individual layers. By simply pressing the *Enter* key, each layer in the current drawing (or viewport) is viewed in sequence and it's not necessary to know the layer's name or number. They are simply displayed in numeric order. Thanks to Ronny Hart (and others?) for the original code which I have modified slightly to suit my personal preferences.

rish – (repeated item show). This command is handy for printing out the contents of a repeated item library so that it can be plotted for documentation or exported to AutoCAD to create a new block library. The RI's are arranged on a single layer within a user-specified grid pattern with the name of each RI printed below. In order for the names to appear below, there are a few setups that involve the use of the *riar* executable (outside of ARRIS) to create an ASCII text file which is read by the program. Although it was originally written for Unix users, Windows users can also use it! Thanks to Chris Carter for the original code which I have modified slightly to be compatible with ARRIS 7.x.

All of the above Sigmacs can be downloaded from my web site at www.sigmaserv.com. Select the *Technical Support* button and then scroll to the bottom of the page where the Sigmacs are listed in both in source and object code formats.

For users not familiar with compiling Sigmacs or archiving them into existing Sigmac libraries, I have also included a Sigmac library named *new.sm* that contains all three compiled Sigmacs. Documentation for these Sigmacs is available in the README.txt file. If any users would like me to add some of these Sigmacs to their existing libraries, simply email me the libraries and I'll gladly oblige.

User Quote of the Month

In our office we definitely believe in CAD standards.... In fact we believe in them so much that each operator has a complete set of his own!!!

Jeff Rath, MAS Associates, Inc.

Software Buzz

On November 5th, Sigma Design announced the release of **eZmeeting** version 2.1, which contains the following new features:

- Support for new file types: PDF (.pdf) documents and 3DS (.3ds) models (3D Studio)
- Improved support for MS Office applications: Users can now open Word, Excel and PowerPoint files either for *View Only* or *Markup & Viewing*.
- Improved connectivity: Both **eZmeeting** and **eZproxy** have been fine-tuned for exceptional conference stability.
- Automatic 90-day free trial: **eZmeeting** 2.1 will automatically self-authorize for 90 days without end users having to call in or e-mail any information to Sigma.

By the way, here's a list of **eZmeeting** features that I use nearly every day at Sigma Services:

- Reviewing and redlining architectural drawings real-time with my clients over the Internet.

- Opening and printing AutoCAD DWG files without^{1st} translating them into ARRIS.
- Dynamically rotating and sectioning 3D models real-time at client presentations.
- Fast and easy printing of most raster and vector file types to my desktop printer.

If you can't think of a reason why you would ever use **eZmeeting**, check out <http://ezmeeting.com/Features.html>. For \$199, it's some mighty impressive software.

On November 1st, Expert InfoCAD announced the release of **CADminer** version 5.7. For those of you not familiar with **CADminer**, here's a brief overview of what it can do for you:

CADminer is a *data-mining* CAD solution that extracts and reports on any or all of your CAD data. This technology adds value by turning your drawings into an end product by extracting clean, precise and actionable information. **CADminer** can be used in any industry, and for a variety of business activities such as:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| ▫ Specifications | ▫ Construction Management |
| ▫ Estimates | ▫ Procurement |
| ▫ Quantity Takeoffs | ▫ Trade Contract Work |
| ▫ Space Planning | |
| ▫ Facilities Management | |

CADminer Version 5.7 conveys a more user-friendly interface and comes with a tutorial with more than 50 step-by-step lessons and unconditional technical support. It can be evaluated at no cost for two months by visiting www.cadinfo.com. **CADminer** supports ARRIS, AutoCAD and MicroStation layer formats.

New **ARRIS++** application scheduled for December release!

Several software developers within the ARRIS community have pooled their resources and ARRIS programming expertise to enhance the functionality of ARRIS. The result is a suite of add-on tools and plug-ins known collectively as **ARRIS++** (pronounced ARRIS-Plus-Plus).

The initial release of **ARRIS++** supports ARRIS 2001 (v 7.1.A3) and should be available before the end of the year. The initial offering will include the following components:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| ▫ Spell Checking of ARRIS Text | ▫ Visual Editing of RI Libraries. |
| ▫ Zone and Cross Hatch Editing | ▫ Enhanced Menu Package |
| ▫ Annotation Of Drawings From External Databases | |

This new ARRIS plug-in module also provides a revised and enhanced menu interface for the Draw, Architect, Details, 3D and Site plug-ins including the following features:

- | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ▫ Enhanced appearance | ▫ Improved User-Customization |
| ▫ Standardized interface | ▫ Dozens Of New Features |
| ▫ Numerous bug fixes | |
| ▫ Comprehensive On-Line Help | |

Expert Translator Update to Version 7.2 scheduled for December release! This update will include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ▫ Support for AutoCAD R2002 | ▫ Continuous Bug Fixing |
| ▫ More support for AutoCAD Desk Top 2 and 3 Applications. | ▫ Unconditional Developer Technical Support. |
| ▫ Dozens of New Enhancements | |

Well fellow users, I hope you have found this newsletter to be informative. If you have any questions about any information contained in this first issue of **ARRIS_USERS**, please don't hesitate to call...operators are standing by!