Curso LDraw - Part 10

Installing LDraw

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Strange as it may seem, after 9 previous articles I still haven't explained how to install the necessary tools to be able to use LDraw. It might seem evident, but it is not that simple. The LDraw set of tools uses LDraw.org as its hub, but you cannot download all the necessary tools from that website. Although there is an all-in-one installer [1] available on the LDraw.org website, it was prepared many years ago and does not include up-to-date versions of parts library (it only includes parts released up to 2005) nor of the necessary software, some of which has gone through substantial changes since then. Also, this installer only works if you use Windows and there appear to be some problems when you try to install on a 64-bit operative system

Below you will find detailed steps that will help you to install up-to date versions of all the most important elements of the LDraw set of tools, for different operative systems.

Downloading and installing the Parts Library

The core of LDraw is made up of the files that define the parts. To get the most up to date set of these parts, you need to go to LDraw.org. In the navigation bar on the left of that front page you'll find a group called 'Software' which contains a link marked 'Download'. On the page that opens you need to enter into the category 'Core Files and Libraries' and from that page download the LDraw Parts Library, either in zip format or as a Windows executable.

· Windows:

Download and run "LDraw Parts Library (Windows)"
By default the installer will propose to create an LDraw folder under C:\ and will run mklist to generate a file to describe the available parts in your library for any editing program you install afterwards.

· Mac:

Download the file LDraw Parts Libary (zip)
After completing the download you need to decompress the file in a convenient location, e.g. "/Library/ldraw" or "/Users/yourname/Library/ldraw". Remember this location as you may have to inform the editing program you are going to use of where the parts library is.

· Linux:

Although it is possible to use only 'native' Linux tools, you can also use Wine to be able to use programs that do not have a Linux port. If you wish to follow this method, install Wine and follow the instructions for Windows. If not,, download the file LDraw Parts Library (zip) and decompress it in a convenient location (e.g. you home folder)

If you also want to have access to unofficial parts you again have two options. In the side bar to the left at LDraw.org, under the heading "Parts Library", you will find a link named "Unofficial Files". After downloading the zip file (this collection of parts is only available in zip format – also don't worry about the date that is indicated on this page as the file is updates regularly) you will have to decompress it and place the contents in a convenient location. Independent of your OS you can choose between the following options:

1. Mix oficial and unofficial parts.
2. Keep the two sets separate

If you decide to keep them separate, I recommend you create a folder named "Unofficial" inside the LDraw folder you installed/extracted the official parts.

Choosing an editor

There are a number of editors available, some more well known tan others.

· MLCad (Windows)

Available at http://mlcad. lm-software.com/ which you can read in German or in English. You can also install MLCad in

Linux, under Wine.. También se puede instalar en Linux bajo Wine.
The all-in-one installer used to put most programs in a folder named "Apps" inside the LDraw folder that contains the parts library. You do not have to do the same, but it can be convenient to keep all LDraw related tools in the same place.

MLCad does not require any installation; just decompress the zip file and you are ready to go. If you want a shortcut for the program you will have to make one yourself.

After decompressing MLCad it/s a good idea to get the latest version of MLCad.ini. You need this file to tell MLCad where to look for the Parts Library and the Unofficial Parts, to get LSynth to work in MLCad and for the minifig generator.

You can download MLCad.ini from http://www.holly-wood.it/mlcad/ini-en.html.

There is also an 'unofficial' version which includes unofficial elements for the minifig generator. This version is available from http://jc-tchang.philohome.com/manuel/mlcad_ini.htm.

You can find more information about MLCad.ini in HBM 004 (about unofficial parts) and HBM 005 (about LSynth 3.x)

· **LeoCAD (Windows, Linux)**

LeoCAD is available in specific versions for Windows and Linux (no need to use Wine). On its official webpage (http://www.leocad.org/) there are step by step installation instructions, including a compilation guide for Linux.

· **Ldglite (Windows, Mac, Linux)**

Available at http://ldglite.sourceforge.net/
A fast and light-weight editor, although you will need to learn a number of shortcuts to be able to use it effectively.

· **Bricksmith (Mac)**

The most complete editor for Mac, available at http://bricksmith.sourceforge.net/. On that same webpage there are tutorials on using this editor.

Installing a viewer for ldr files

Although all editors mentioned above allow you to see the model you are building, you may want to install a specific viewer for LDraw files to allow you to create high quality images of your creations.

The most well-known and complete viewer is LDview, and is available for Windows, Mac and Linux at http://ldview.sourceforge.net/Downloads.html.
You can find more information on installing and configuring LDview in HBM 005.

[1] http://www.ldraw.org/Article126.html