

11. CONCLUSION

New technologies are constantly being developed that will improve or replace the tools and methods described in this guide. Panorama makers have always taken advantage of new technologies to try to push the envelope and create new vistas, showing things that could not otherwise be seen. It is not wise to ignore the constant march of technology, but it is also not wise to let technology take precedence over artistic and scholarly priorities. Exciting new tools will enhance, not replace, analytical thought, creative effort, and professional standards.

There are several new tools and research projects right now that offer new paths and possibilities to digital panoramas. Microsoft recently released videos showing its research on Photosynth, which uses collections of digital photos to automatically generate 3D models of buildings and even entire cities. The software is still immature and the quality and usefulness of the models it creates will depend on the quality of the photos used and metadata provided, but it may be an intriguing opportunity.

REALVIZ's VTour creates a 3D environment from a single panorama or sets of panoramas. REALVIZ also sells ImageModeler, which creates 3D models from several photos taken around an object. Both tools can export data into file formats appropriate for Maya and Google Earth.

Google SketchUp is a 3D modeling tool. As its name suggests, it is intended to use for conceptual design. It could be a useful addition to a panorama, perhaps for adding recreations of destroyed or lost buildings or for analysing design and architectural history.

Revit, currently being developed by Autodesk, is another exciting design tool. It is based on a BIM CAD paradigm that allows study of a building's structure via cut-away views and hiding layers (such as the roof or walls).

WEB REFERENCES

Google SketchUp. <http://sketchup.google.com>

REALVIZ. <http://www.realviz.com>

Revit. <http://www.revit.com>