How to Cast an External Program

In this how-to, we will create a caster that allows us to open the 3D modeling program, SketchUp, from within the Plex interface.   While not something you'd consider a media-centric application, we're just using it to illustrate the creation of a caster for your favorite application.   If you don't have SketchUp installed, just replace our references with an alternate program (like Internet Explorer, or Notepad)

We're assuming that both Plex Media Server and Plex Media Center are running on the same computer system.   If your media server IS NOT running on the same computer system, Caster will only launch programs on the server, not on the machine running Plex Media Center.

NOTE: This channel essentially creates alternate channels that allow you to launch external applications.   So, while this how-to uses the language "caster" to describe what you're creating; please know that it's still referred to as a Plex channel.

1. First, create the necessary graphic and textual assets for our caster; you'll need an image that's 512 x 512 pixels for the icon, another that's at least 1280 x 720 pixels for the background artwork, and a text file (.*txt*) containing a description of the application.   You will need to create these elements yourself somewhere on your *C:* drive (if you're creating a caster for SketchUp, you can also copy the *Caster Assets* folder included in the ZIP file you downloaded).   If you're creating the elements yourself, create a new folder under *C:* (or wherever you're storing the assets for your caster), and create the files there.   For the purpose of this how-to, please name your files:

- **sketchup_art** (the background artwork)
- **sketchup_description** (the description of the application)
- **sketchup_icon** (the icon)

NOTE: If creating a caster for an alternate program, just switch-out "sketchup" with the name of the program.

When you're done, you should have a folder under your **C:** drive, containing the assets we need to create the caster:
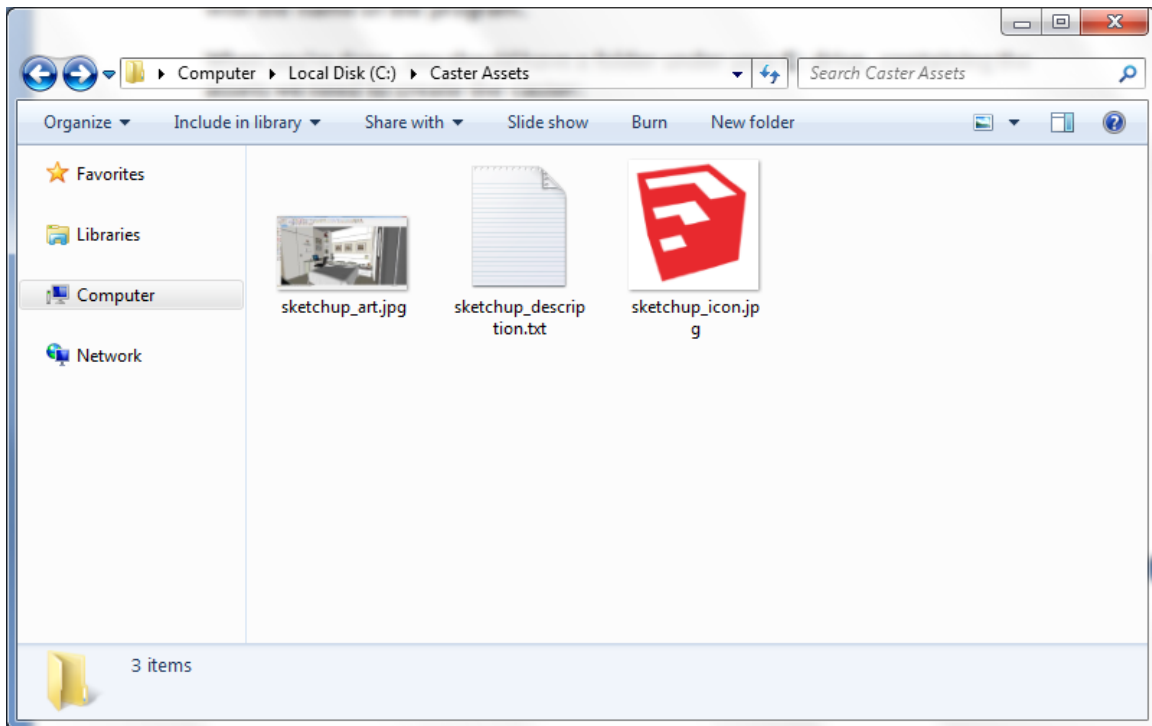
NOTE: the folder doesn't need to be called "Caster Assets" - that's just my labeling; feel free to call it whatever you like.

2.   For the purposes of this how-to, we will create the caster using the Plex Media Center interface (the following steps should still work inside the media manager, the screens will look different).   If you haven't yet, start Plex Media Center, then open the **Caster** application:
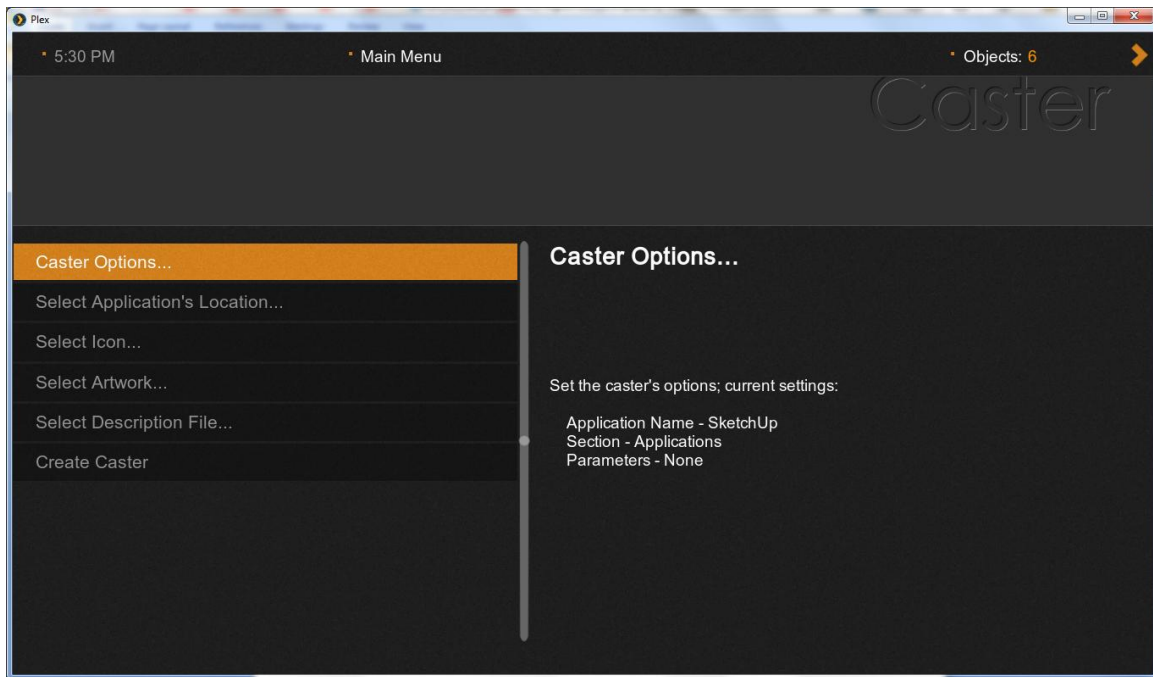
*TIP: Highlight each of the options in the main menu, to view a description.*

3. Select **Caster Options...** and enter the following values into the settings panel:

| Application Name The full name of the application	SketchUp
Command Line Parameters Additional parameters to pass to the program's executable	*[leave empty]*
Home Screen Section The home screen section to place the caster under	Applications
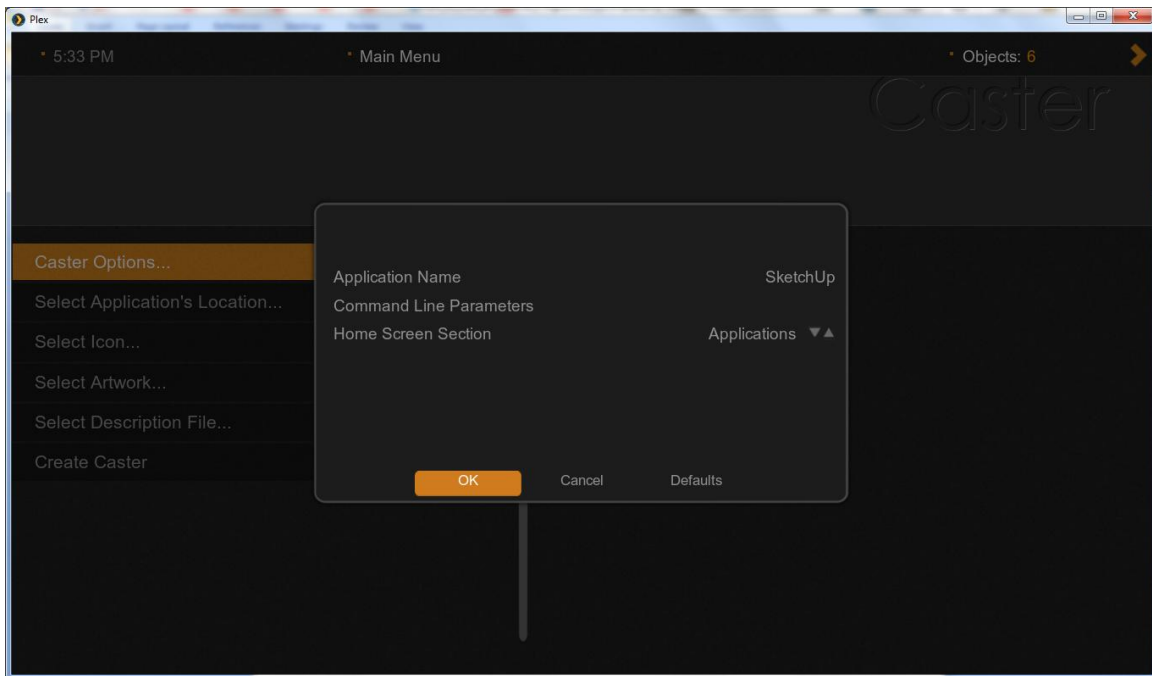
Select **OK** once you've completed your changes.

4. Next, select **Select Application's Location…** and navigate to the location of SketchUp executable (or whatever executable you're linking to):
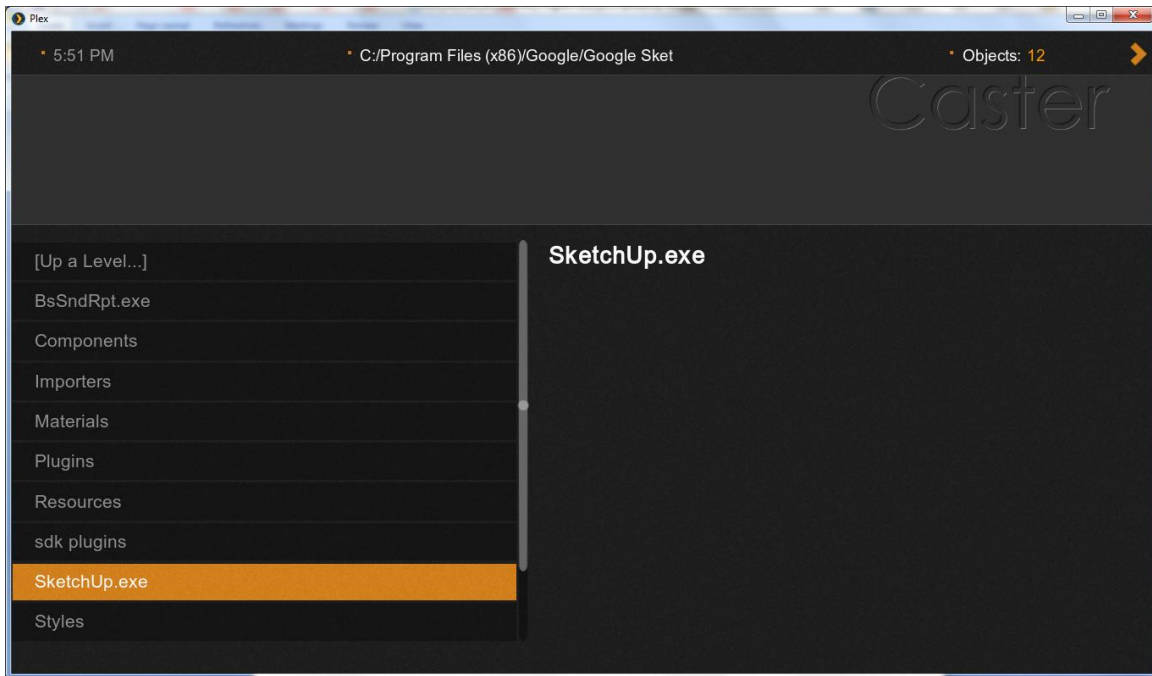

5. To assign an icon to your caster, select **Select Icon…** and navigate to the location of the SketchUp icon image (or wherever you placed the icon image for the caster you're creating):
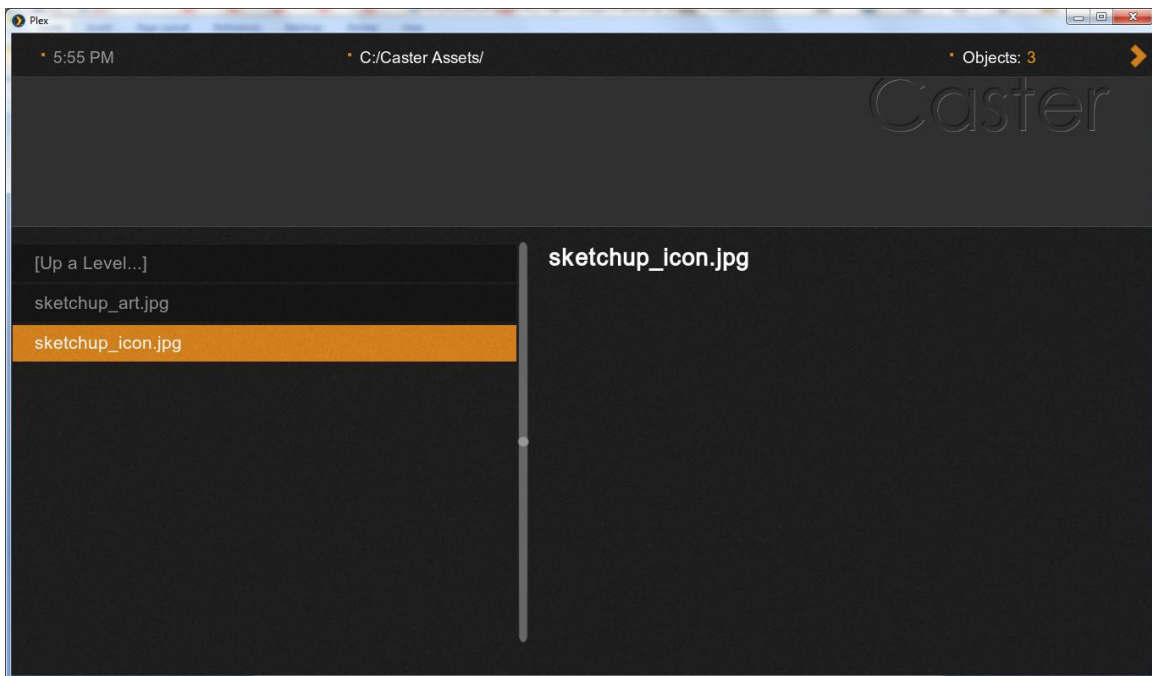
6. While not required, it's nice to have a background to display in our caster; select **Select Artwork...** and navigate to the location of the SketchUp background image (or wherever you placed the background image for the caster you're creating):
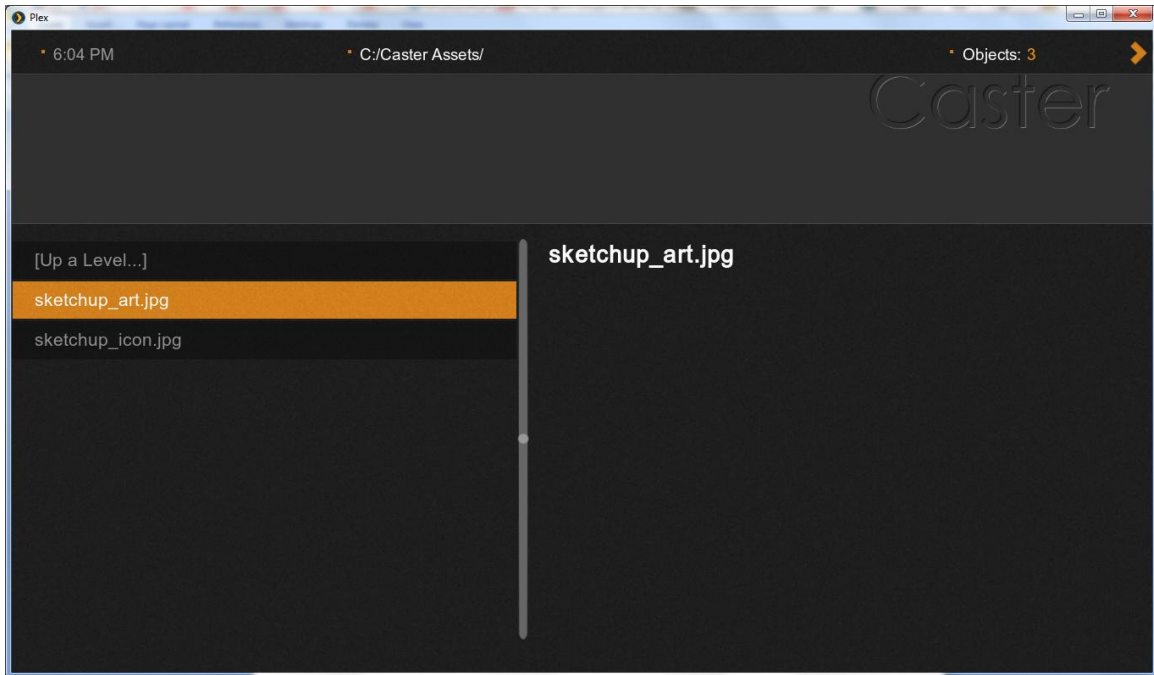
7. And finally, we should include some descriptive text about our application; select **Select Description File...** and navigate to the location of the SketchUp description text file (or wherever you placed the description text file for the caster you're creating):
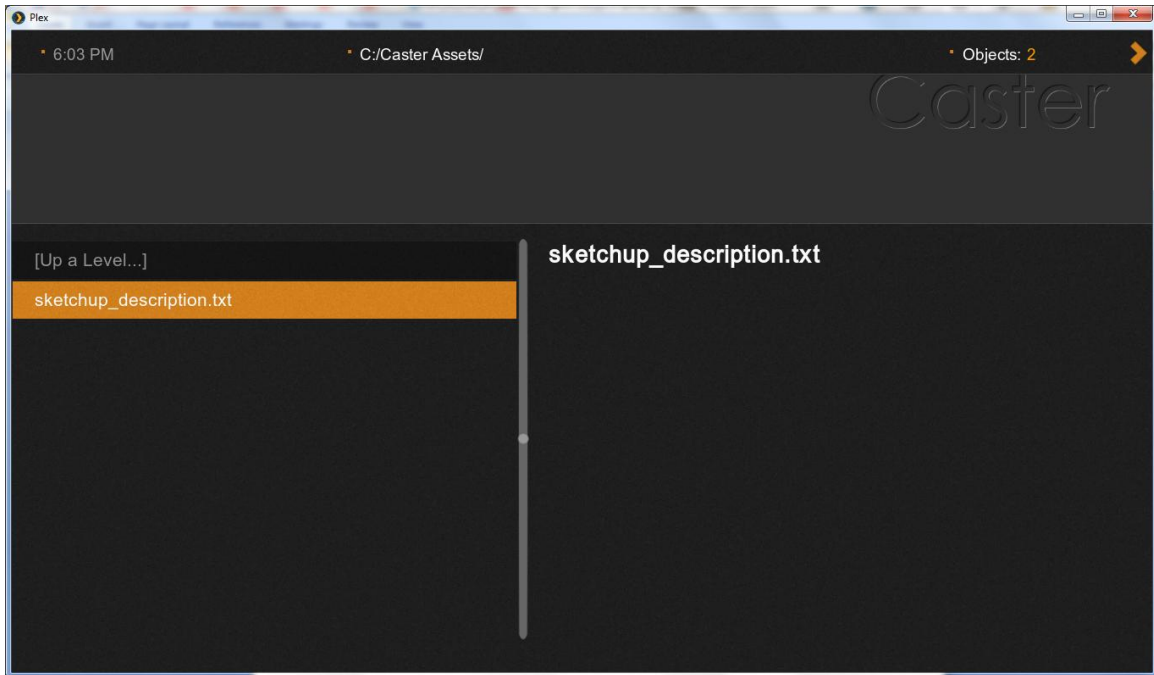
8. Once you're happy with the settings and options you've entered, select **Create Caster** to create your new caster; you should receive a prompt indicating whether or not your caster was successfully created:
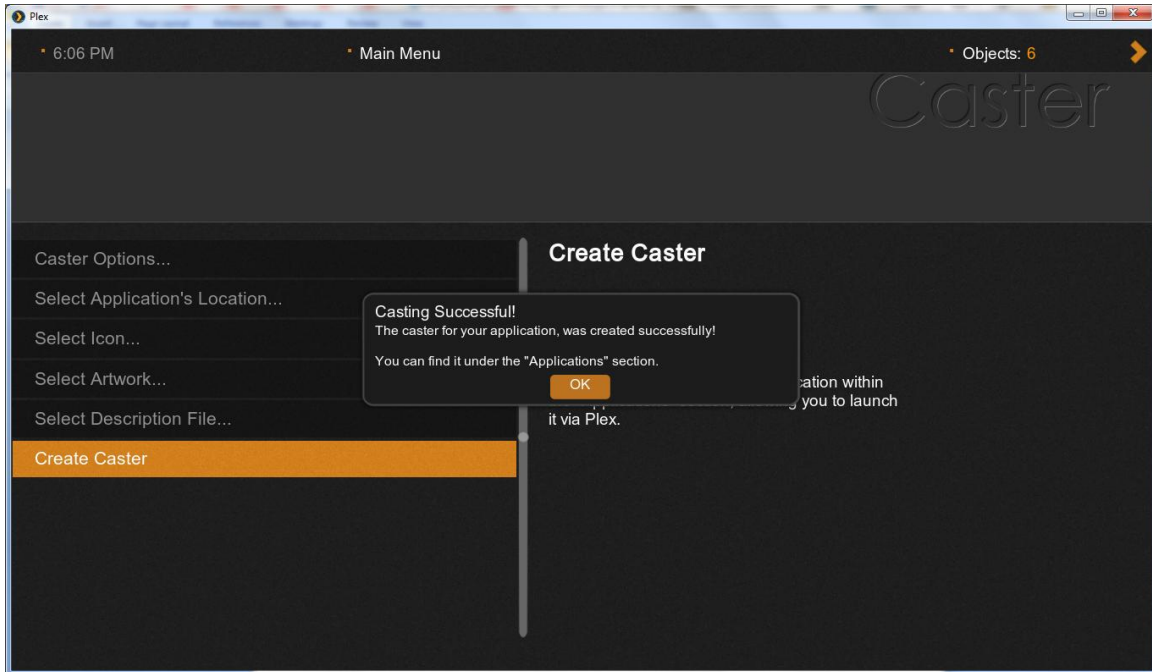
9. Go back to the home screen, and navigate back in to the "Applications" menu (or whichever menu you placed your caster in).   You may need to give Plex a few seconds to acquire your new caster:
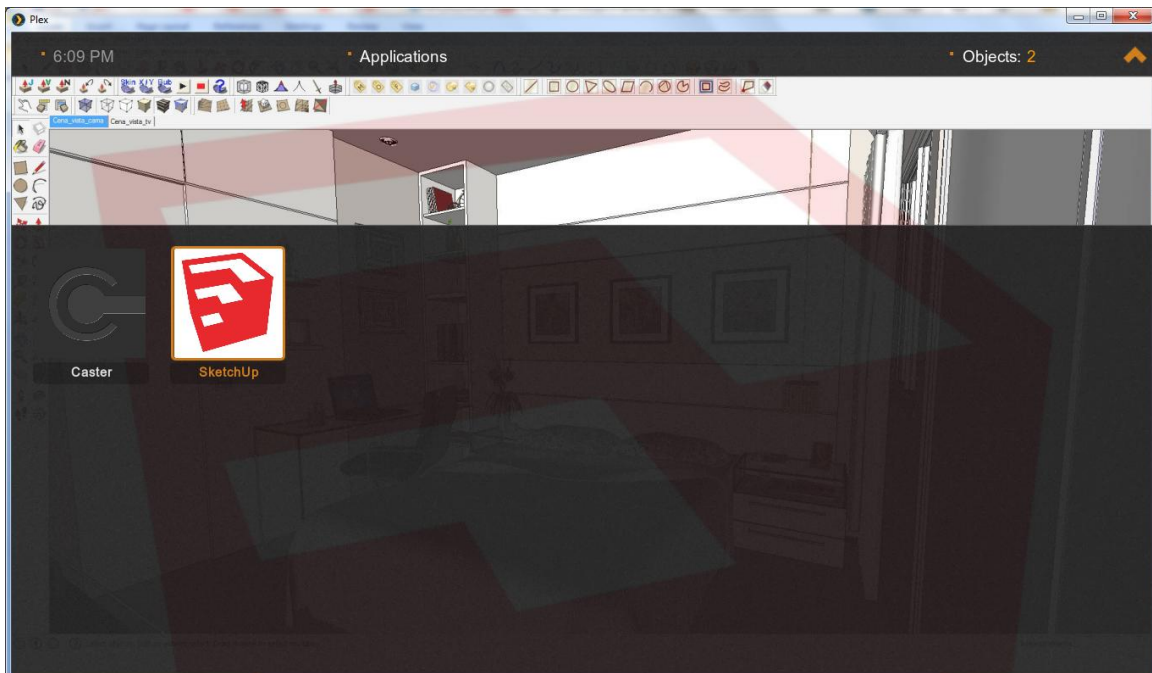
10. Once you've selected your new caster, you can either cast the application you've attached it to:
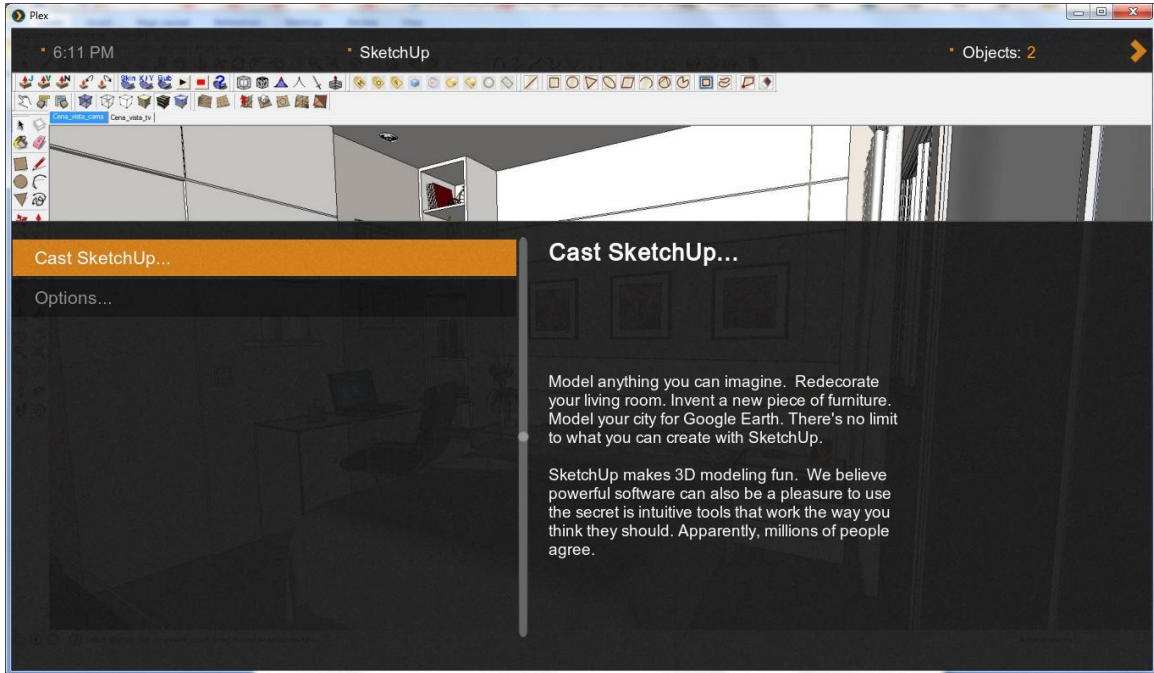
Or, you can change the location of its executable and adjust its command line parameters: