

Oakland County Selects ESRI As Its GIS Software Platform

By Scott Oppmann

On May 9, 1997, Oakland County culminated six months of information gathering and evaluation with the unanimous selection of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) as the Geographic Information System (GIS) software platform. GIS is a computerized method of displaying, comparing, managing, storing and analyzing spatial data within a specific geographic area. The ability to map the occurrences of crime and the most direct route for an emergency vehicle are common GIS applications. To arrive at a decision for this software platform, this comprehensive selection process completed the following detailed exercises:

Needs Assessment Study: In December of 1996, representatives from PlanGraphics and Fairview Industries embarked on a GIS Needs Assessment. The assessment documented existing conditions, data requirements, applications and functional requirements in thirteen County Departments. The Needs Assessment was used to evaluate functional requirements and provided the framework for the Oakland County GIS Request for Proposal (RFP).

Request for Proposal: In February of 1997, Oakland County released the RFP to twelve GIS vendors. The RFP focused on software functionality identified in the GIS Needs Assessment and outlined specific Scenario's that would parallel GIS development in Oakland County.

Review Committee: After the release of the GIS RFP, a Review Committee was formed. The Committee was comprised of representation from: Drain Commission, Road Commission, Community and Economic Development, Equalization, Health Division and Information Technology.

Evaluation Criteria: GIS Evaluation Criteria were summarized in the GIS Evaluation Criteria Document developed by Information Technology and Fairview Industries. This document was used by the Review Committee to guide their evaluations and was finalized prior to the receipt of the RFP Responses.

Receipt of Responses: Written responses to the RFP were received on April 20, 1997. Two vendors responded: ESRI and Intergraph. Each of these vendors were equally evaluated for compliance with the following items:

Commercial Viability: Financial Stability, Graphic Data Support, Commitment to Research & Development, Open Standards, Installed User Base, System Support, Land Record/Enterprise Implementation Experience, Internet Support, Product Support, Future Growth, Oracle Support, and Cost Effective.

Technical Responsiveness: Over a three week time period, Review Committee members spent many hours reviewing the written responses and evaluated each vendor for compliance with the RFP. Additional

questions for each vendor were developed and would be answered at the demonstrations. On April 24 and 25 of 1997, ESRI and Intergraph conducted GIS functional demonstrations. The single-day events provided each vendor an opportunity to demonstrate how their software might best meet the needs of Oakland County's developing GIS.

The GIS RFP Review Committee met on May 7, 1997 to identify the results of the written responses, functional demonstrations and arrive at a software selection. At the end of a 3 ½ hour meeting, ESRI was identified as the chosen vendor for the following reasons:

1. They provide adequate system security for use in the enterprise solution.
2. They provide a functional data maintenance and coordinate geometry tool set.
3. They allow for the transference of data and are an active participant in the Open GIS Consortium.
4. With the use of ArcInfo's Spatial Data Engine (SDE) and ArcStorm, they provide a seamless connection to Oracle databases and allow for the transactional management of spatial data requests and maintenance.
5. They have a large installed base and business partner group in southeastern Michigan.
6. They are a financially sound organization that is committed to research and development in GIS and land records implementation.
7. They provide a superior query and analysis tool with ArcView. Cartographic output is exceptionally good.

With the selection of ESRI, GIS implementation has begun and is expected to take place in Equalization, Register of Deeds, Planning & Economic Development, Drain Commission, Information Technology and the Health Division initially. Efforts will be concentrated on existing mapping projects occurring in those departments and the development of a corporate spatial data set.

The participation and dedication of those involved in this process should be commended. The active involvement of the six county departments promoted a comprehensive review process and county-wide consensus. A special thanks goes out to Clerk/Register of Deeds for all of their efforts undertaken.

If you have any further questions about the Oakland County GIS program or the selection of the ESRI software, please feel free to contact Scott Oppmann at 452-9198.

Information Technology's Training Program Update

The third quarter, 1997 training schedule is now available on the Publish drive "O", specifically "o:\infotech\training\schedule.doc". As you review the schedule you will notice that the number of classes offered have been reduced during the third quarter. During this time, two of Information Technology's training rooms will also be used for Human Resource and Financial Information System (HRFIS) training. If you cannot find a class listed on the schedule which you need to take, or the dates and times are not convenient for you, please contact the receptionist at Information Technology. Your name can be placed on a waiting list. When any class has a waiting list of six or more individuals, Information Technology will attempt to open an additional class.

A new class has been added to the third quarter schedule; Introduction to Netscape Navigator. This is a one-half day class which will cover the basics of using Netscape Navigator. It will focus on using the various search engines available to you on Oakland County's Start Page, as well as using Internet E-Mail. Information Technology has offered a limited number of dates and times for this class. Should the demand be higher than expected more, classes will be offered.

Netscape News - Upgrade to Netscape Gold 3.0

On the latest home page for Oakland County users, there are now instructions for downloading Netscape Gold 3.0*. Upgrading to this version allows you to stay current with County software standards and also gives you the latest browsing technology provided by Netscape.

As part of the upgrade, your current bookmarks will be deleted. Therefore, before you upgrade to Netscape Gold 3.0, you will want to backup these bookmarks.

Backing Up The Bookmark File:

1. Open **Main...File Manager**.
2. In the **c:\netscape** directory, select the file name "**bookmark.htm**".
3. **Copy** the file into the **c:\data** directory.

After the upgrade has taken place, you can restore your bookmarks.

Restoring The Bookmark File:

1. Open **Main...File Manager**.
2. In the **c:\data** directory, select the file name "**bookmark.htm**".
3. **Copy** the file back into the **c:\netscape** directory.
4. A "**File Already Exists**" Error will be displayed...Select **Overwrite**.

If you experience any problems with upgrading to Netscape Gold 3.0 or with backing up your Bookmarks, please contact the Software Help Desk at 858-8812.

**NOTE: If you have Windows NT, Windows 95, or if you are a Reachout user, your upgrade will have to be installed by an Information Technology technician. Please request this upgrade through your Information Technology liaison.*

New Help Desk System under Way

In the Fourth Quarter, 1996 newsletter Information Technology mentioned that a new Help Desk system would be implemented. The Q-Support Help Desk System was implemented May 5, 1997. Over 1,200 calls were logged from May 5th through May 30th. It is Information Technology's belief that this new integrated Help Desk Management System will enable us to better capture, act on, and track help requested from our customers. We now have a mechanism in place which will allow us to improve customer support and response time, as well as improve communications and customer expectations.

Prior to the implementation of the new Help Desk system, Information Technology operated two different Help Desks (Hardware and Software) with no way to share or pass data from one system to another. One system was spreadsheet and paper driven, while the other system was database driven. To pass information between the two systems it was necessary to pass paper back and forth between the two help desks. Information Technology still maintains two Help Desks (Hardware and Software); however, we now have Q-Support which allows all users to share information while using one system.

Following is an example of the smooth transition of a help desk call. "Joe Smith calls the Software Help Desk to report that his mouse is not working. The Software Help Desk will walk through several processes with Joe to determine if it's a Hardware problem (the mouse) or just maintenance that is needed (cleaning the mouse). If it is determined that the mouse needs to be replaced the call will be allocated to a Technician Group for an on-site visit. Joe will be given a call number which he can refer to if the problem persists after the site visit or if he needs to check on the progress of the site visit."

Because this is a new system and process, Information Technology asks that you be patient during the next several months while the staff become accustomed to using the system. Staff will be verifying your name, department/division, location, and PC tag number for each new call to the Help Desk(s). It is imperative that this information be kept up-to-date in case a site visit is needed. If there is any change in the above mentioned information please be sure to mention this when you call in. You will also be given a Call Number for each call you make to the Help Desk(s). If you do not receive a call number during your conversation please ask for one prior to the end of the call. If you need to call back for the same problem it is much easier to search for the call number.

Novell GroupWise Fix - Disappearing Personal Groups

A glitch with storing Personal Group names has been discovered. Some Personal Group names with 31 characters or more are disappearing from mail boxes. We are not sure what the cause of the problem is; however, it can be fixed simply by renaming the group name with twenty characters or less.

To Rename a Personal Group:

1. Select **Send...Address Book**.
2. Select **Create/Edit Group**.
3. Select **Personal Groups**.
4. Select **Retrieve/Edit Group**.
5. Select **Save Group**.
6. In the **Group Name Text Box**, type in a new name (20 characters or less).
7. Select **OK**. (*You will now have two copies of the personal group.*)
8. To delete the original group, select the original Personal Group and press your **[Delete]** key on your keyboard.
9. Select **OK** to close out of your **Personal Group Create/Edit** dialog box.