

PUBLIC SECTOR CASE STUDY

Office of the Valuer-General

“WITH THE CUSTOMISATION OF MAPINFO PROFESSIONAL, THE TASK OF CHECKING AND PROCESSING VALUATIONS CAN BE AS SIMPLE AS A FEW CLICKS OF THE MOUSE.”

Warrick Coverdale, Valuer-General of Tasmania

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS
FOR VALUATION AND
LAND MANAGEMENT.



Challenge

To reduce the amount of manual data manipulation and to streamline processes, increase accuracy and provide new ways to visualise land attribute data.

Solution

Using spatial and textual databases to accurately capture relevant data, it enables computer-assisted valuation processes in the field as well as in the office. With solutions from Pitney Bowes Software (including MapInfo Professional/MapBasic) and GPS Tracker ECW Viewer, the Office of the Valuer-General created a custom solution referred to as VGMaps.

SUMMARY

Office of the Valuer-General (OVG) is the government agency that provides statutory valuations for all properties in Tasmania, as well as client valuations for government assets and taxation purposes. OVG is staffed with approximately 35 valuers and support staff located in Hobart, Launceston and Ulverstone servicing the entire state of Tasmania.

Valuers at OVG are using innovative GIS and database software that enables editing and validation of valuation data in the field as well as in the office. OVG selected the MapInfo solution from Pitney Bowes Software for its ease of use and the ability to tailor the product to create an innovative solution in property valuation best practice.

Prior to VGMaps, valuers manually collated data from various sources and formats, matching, comparing and interpreting data. Much of the data was maintained in hardcopy format and maps in differing scales, together with data from external sources.

VGMaps has been developed by the Office of the Valuer-General as a collaboration of Geographic Information System (GIS) and traditional forms-based textual database applications. The concept of creating a specialised, valuer-centric system began in October 2008. The system is a fully interactive mapping and database system providing tools that can be operated 'in-house' and 'in the field'. Map-based and traditional database forms for selecting, viewing, editing and validating data are critical to the power and success of VGMaps.

According to Warrick Coverdale, the Valuer-General of Tasmania, “VGMaps has enormous benefits for OVG, and vast potential for other valuation and government agencies.”

The technology and supporting architecture of VGMaps complies with a wide range of industry standards within geospatial, database and IT standard operating system (SOE) platforms.

The fact that the system is developed in-house using MapInfo Professional and Microsoft Access, and is fully compliant with corporate SOE constraints means the use of VGMaps is spreading to other business units within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment.

Coverdale said, “Mapping and GIS has traditionally been the domain of spatial information specialists who have comprehensive training in the use of GIS. VGMaps allows our valuers to remain fully operational without the need for specialised GIS professionals.”

This is achieved by using customised tools and screens that use ‘valuer methods and terminology’, not the traditional GIS or cartographic terms. VGMaps is designed for valuers with simple-to-use GIS and database user interfaces. As a result, the system has been designed to be used from either a MapInfo Professional or Microsoft Access database user interface. Some valuers prefer to use a mapping interface while other valuers prefer to use a textual database interface.

"I BELIEVE WE ARE LEADING THE REVOLUTION IN TECHNOLOGY CHANGE FOR STATUTORY VALUATION SYSTEMS WITH OUR VGMAPS SUITE.."

Warrick Coverdale, Valuer-General of Tasmania

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That's what is unique about VGMaps - it provides both options, with direct links from map-to-database and database-to-map.

The system comprises MapInfo Professional; specialist mapping application programs developed using MapInfo MapBasic and a comprehensive Microsoft Access database. As well as using and linking MapInfo Professional and Microsoft Access forms, VGMaps also provides a data interface with the Valuation Information System of Tasmania, the corporate web-based Oracle database system.

"VGMaps has proven to be invaluable to valuers and property people in our organisation. With the customisation of MapInfo Professional, the task of checking and processing valuations can be as simple as a few clicks of the mouse" adds Coverdale.

This is one of the key success factors of VGMaps; it is designed for valuers and non-technical people, not GIS professionals. Another key factor is that VGMaps is designed as a mobile, portable system allowing people to take GIS and databases out into the field.

Once in the field, data and observations are updated in VGMaps. When used in conjunction with a GPS unit, location-based information is verified at the point of truth. When the valuers return to the office, data is uploaded into the mainframe valuation roll.



The above shows a screenshot of the VGMaps solution with customised menu and button pads.

Warrick Coverdale believes VGMaps has revolutionised the way we work. "Prior to VGMaps, we were predominantly paper-based in our analysis and visualisation of valuation data. With the use of thematic displays, standard queries and analytical tools we are better able to visualise and analyse the evidence of the property market."

"Our GIS specialist has worked closely with staff in developing tools that ideally suit the work we undertake. Whether it's an entire municipal area, a client or supplemental valuation, we are now equipped with 'best practice' tools and techniques providing unprecedented opportunity. We are increasing our capabilities, our data quality and improving the work environment."

Mr Coverdale says, "I believe we are leading the revolution in technology change for statutory valuation systems with our VGMaps suite. We have regular dialog with all other Australian statutory valuation jurisdictions, and their interest in VGMaps confirms we are building and using best practice solutions for valuations."

THE PITNEY BOWES SOFTWARE ADVANTAGE

Tasmania's Office of the Valuer-General prides itself on building and using innovative systems for valuation and land management. Pitney Bowes Software solutions have assisted OVG to move from a manual based process to a leading edge interactive mapping and database system available in-house and in-the-field.

Every connection is a new opportunity™