

FALL 1988

T.M.S. Offers Speed, Cost Savings

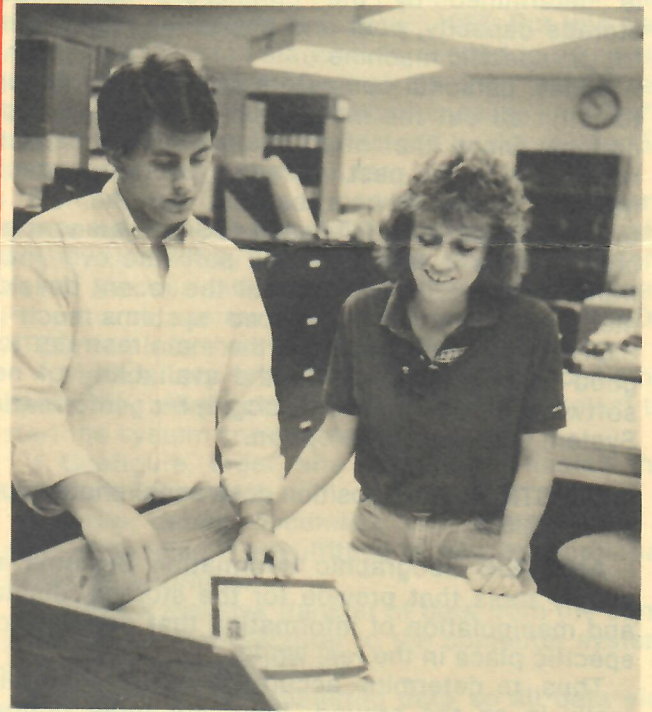
Approximately half of Sidwell's clients choose to contract with Sidwell for Tax map Maintenance Services after completion of the initial project. Recent developments are making T.M.S. even more effective and economical.

Under T.M.S., counties send Sidwell copies of all their recorded documents pertaining to land records. These documents concern such transactions as divisions, consolidations, or transfers of ownership. Upon receipt of the documents, Sidwell performs the following services:

- Completing Change Record Forms
- Verifying accuracy of land descriptions
- Ensuring the integrity of the parcel numbering system
- Making mapping changes
- Annually updating master maps

Completing Change Record Forms requires a substantial amount of work. For instance, when notified that a farm has been divided into smaller lots, Sidwell's T.M.S. personnel must retire the old parcel, assign new parcel numbers, write tax descriptions for each of the new parcels, and see that all the documents are updated.

The many clients who take advantage of Sidwell's tax maintenance services have found that Sidwell has a unique ability to maintain and update land records accurately and promptly. Its staff has the depth of experience to handle each situation properly. Since Sidwell has created these systems, it makes sense that Sidwell is the most qualified to update the information.



Zane Burgeson and Karen Fouts analyze the information in a deed.

Until recently, all tax maintenance work was done manually. Functions such as changing record forms and tracking parcel numbers were time-consuming. Recently, Sidwell has integrated the record process into an in-house PC-network. This means several major advantages for T.M.S. clients:

- Significant cost savings
- Faster turnaround time
- The possibility of sending clients information in digital form, which will reduce or eliminate the time and effort required or necessary to key this data into their systems.
- Reduced possibility for error

Sidwell has recently moved its T.M.S. Department into its main headquarters building in West Chicago. This has consolidated operations, which has improved response time to the client.

Another plus is the addition of a FAX machine which allows immediate service to clients in special situations.

Increasingly, Sidwell clients are finding it a sound investment to protect the integrity of their mapping systems by retaining Sidwell to keep the system up-to-date.



Resident troubleshooter Barb Girsch double-checks data that's been prepared by Sidwell staff.

OUR CLIENTS ASK...

Certain questions are often asked of Sidwell representatives at conferences and meetings. Here are some of those most frequently asked, with answers.

QUESTION: What are the capabilities of P.C.s for Geographic Information Systems?

ANSWER: The usefulness of any computer in GIS is determined by the processing capabilities, storage capacity, cost and availability of software for the specific machine.

Today, personal computers are powerful enough to fulfill all but the most sophisticated GIS applications. Since the introduction of large capacity hard disks in the past few years, storage capacity has also ceased to be a restraint. Yet, the most attractive aspect of a PC-based GIS is the enormous cost savings in hardware and software over mainframe systems. However, until the recent development of technically advanced systems such as SIGNET, software has been the main restraint to a good PC-based GIS. With the availability of new software, a PC-based Geographic Information System is an attractive option.

QUESTION: What position does aerial photography play in GIS?

ANSWER: Geographic Information Systems are simply tools that provide for the storage, display, and manipulation of information that pertains to a specific place in the real world.

Thus, to determine accurately where something really is on the ground, there are three options. First, you can travel to the point in question and see for yourself. This is expensive.

Second, you can accept a written description from another source which may or may not be correct.

Third, you can determine a point's exact location by looking at an aerial photo. This is cost efficient,

reliable, and recoverable. In addition, aerial photography provides a physical feature base upon which all other information can be referenced.

QUESTION: How accurate does our control have to be?

ANSWER: The accuracy of a GIS data base is directly dependent upon the accuracy of the related ground control. Ground control accuracy is determined by the proposed uses of the GIS data base. Generally, the accuracy required by a planning or assessment office is less than for a public works or engineering agency. Consequently, a multi-use system may require a greater accuracy standard than a single use system would.

It is important to remember that the degree of accuracy and cost of a mapping project are directly related. At Sidwell, a user needs assessment is performed to establish a common ground between required accuracies and cost.

QUESTION: How can my graphics interrelate with my record management system?

ANSWER: The ability to relate non-graphic information to graphic elements within a GIS data base is the most powerful aspect of GIS. In SIGNET, graphics elements are tied to records within relational data base files. Here are just a few practical applications.

- Point to a parcel on a cadastral map and immediately review the property record card for that parcel.
- Ask SIGNET to display all soil polygons of a certain soil type in a different code color.
- Point to selected roads on the map and instantly create a report that shows the maintenance history on each selected road.

In short, your graphics and record management systems should be able to act together as a single GIS system.

SIDWELL ON THE GO

"We have to keep abreast of what's happening out there," declares David Squires, Sidwell's Director of Client Services, "and to see what others are doing so that we are sure we always have the better mousetrap."

To do just that, Sidwell representatives recently attended the National Association of Counties Conference in Anaheim, California and the International Association of Assessing Officers Conference in Nashville.

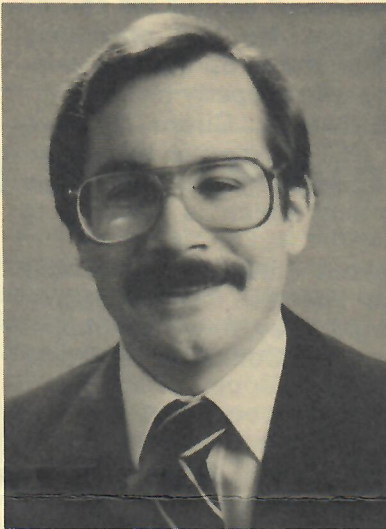
"These meetings give us a fine opportunity to get acquainted with past and current clients," Dave says, "and keep them abreast of what's going on in the field." Squires reports there was a

lot of interest in geographic information systems and in record management systems at both events.

Sidwell also provides information through educational exhibits. Denise Boyd, Sidwell Client Services Representative, gave an address on land record management systems at the International Association of Assessing Officers Conference.

"We know it's essential to understand our clients' problems," Dave Squires asserts. "In order to do this we have to be involved in the things they're doing — meetings, discussions, and educational pursuits that indicate where their concerns are. This way, we can design the solutions to those problems."

Harris Completes 15 Years



Bruce Harris joined The Sidwell Company 15 years ago, and he has grown as the Company has grown.

When he joined the Company in August, 1973, Bruce's first job was running the diazo (map print) machine. He advanced to commercial sales of maps and atlases, and then into the sales of tax map

projects.

Through years of hard work, Bruce has become Sidwell's Senior Client Services Representative and leading authority on local government and land record management systems.

Sidwell's Director of Client Services, David Squires, says, "Bruce's sensitivity to our prospective clients needs and his ability to formulate cost effective solutions for these needs has made him a key member of our organization and a highly valued employee."

FAST FAX

The Sidwell Company has installed a FAX machine to speed service to its customers. When you need answers fast just FAX!

(312) 231-8206

Conference Countdown

Here are some of the dates and places where Sidwell representatives will be on hand to answer your questions. Come see us!

Nov. 16-18 Iowa State Association of Counties, Des Moines, Iowa

Nov. 20-23 Illinois County Officials Meeting, Chicago, Illinois

Dec. 6-8 Nebraska Association of Counties, Omaha, Nebraska

"Why Not?"

Start a county tax cycle system in the Treasurer's Department? Why ... that's never been done in the State of Iowa! But while others stand on the sidelines and say, "Why?", The Sidwell Company says, "Why Not?"

Last Spring, Cerro Gordo County, Iowa, presented a problem scenario to The Sidwell Company. It needed to change from its existing tax cycle computer system to a better method. That, in itself, does not sound like a monumental task, and it wouldn't have been in October, 1987. But this was April, 1988! The tax statements needed to be calculated, printed, and in the mail by July 1st. All the tax cycle data for the Assessor's values, Auditor's levies, and Treasurer's Collector's books resided in the county's current computer.

Cerro Gordo County Supervisors and department heads asked Sidwell's advice on how they could begin immediately to move their tax cycle system out of the currently-used computer into a Sidwell PC network system. The key word was 'IMMEDIATELY.' In less than 90 days, Sidwell had to:

- Make a very fast, astute, and critical decision concerning what point in the Tax Cycle to select to start the system conversion.
- Configure, order, site prepare and install the hardware network.
- Write, debug, document, and operator-train a staff of people on a multitude of new applicational software programs.
- Make a massive transfer of data from the computer of one manufacturer to the computer system of a different manufacturer.
- Reformat the transferred data so all data elements wound up in the right buckets to maintain the system's integrity.

In the normal systems implementation cycle, each of these steps would take several days to several months, a total time of 240 days or more. Sidwell was asked to accomplish this in less than 90 days.

Sidwell personnel advised Cerro Gordo County officials that it could enter into, and transfer their tax cycle system from their computer to Sidwell's PC network at the Treasurer's collection point. Then in the fall of 1988 and spring of 1989, the Assessor's and Auditor's data, respectively, could be transferred.

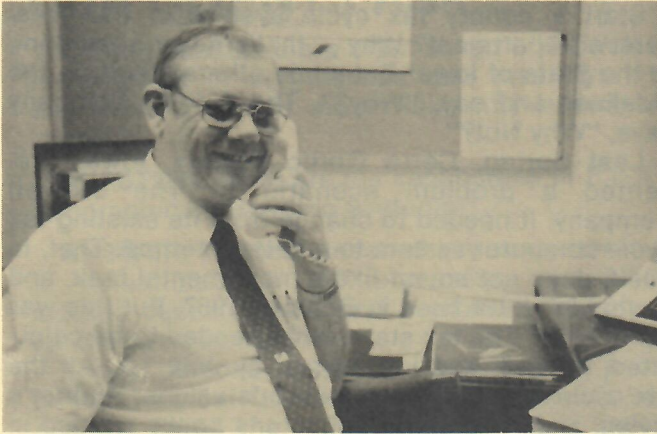
The county supervisors asked if Sidwell felt comfortable in making a commitment to performing all of the above systems steps in less than 90 days. If so, they would sign a contract.

We did, and they did!

For the best account of the entire process, talk to Michael Grandon, Cerro Gordo County Treasurer. Last July, after the system had been in place for a couple of weeks, he told Sidwell, "This has been the smoothest, most trouble and trauma-free computer conversion I, or any of my staff, have ever been involved in!"

Others say, "Why?" Sidwell says, "Why Not?"

CRAMER JOINS CLIENT SERVICES STAFF



Herman Cramer joined Sidwell on July 5th as CID NET Service Representative. He had previously been with firms in Chicago and in Springfield gaining experience in working with property taxes.

Herman will be Sidwell's Client Service Representative for CID NET (Computer Integrated Data Network) in Illinois. He will be located in the new Sidwell support office, which is opening in Springfield, Illinois.

"I've always known about Sidwell's quality and Sidwell's service," says Herman. "When people hear the name Sidwell, right away, they think maps. I want them to start saying Computer Services, too."

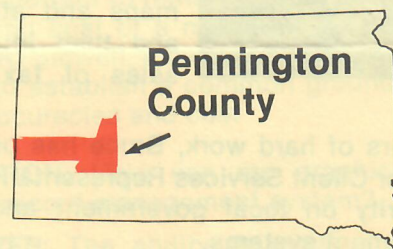
SIDWELL WELCOMES SOUTH DAKOTA COUNTY

Pennington County, South Dakota offers some of the nation's most spectacular scenery. It will also offer some interesting challenges as Sidwell undertakes a new tax mapping project for that area.

Mount Rushmore is located in Pennington County, as is part of the Black Hills National Forest. Some of the Badlands are located in the eastern part of the county. There are numerous old mining towns in Pennington County, including historic Deadwood. Highest elevation in the county is 7800 feet.

In addition to its scenic beauty, Pennington County is unique in size. It contains 96 townships compared to the usual 16 to 30. The county measures almost 100 miles from east to west.

Partially because of its tourist attractions, Pennington County is financially very stable. It is seeking a good centralized mapping program, primarily for assessment purposes. During this very dry sum-



mer, the area experienced a number of fires, and officials had difficulty locating them on existing maps. This underscored the county's need for a complete mapping system.

When Pennington acquires Sidwell's standard tax mapping services, it will also have the flexibility to incorporate computer graphics into its system in the future.

Pennington is the first South Dakota county to contract for Sidwell's services. Bruce Mitchell, Sidwell's Client Services Representative, says, "Ron Richmond is the Director of Equalization in Pennington County. He was formerly the Assessor in Lee County, Iowa which is a client of ours. It was there Ron became familiar with Sidwell's services and quality. "We're looking forward to working with him again."

Sidwell expects to secure aerial photography this fall, after the leaves are off the trees and before the snow covers the ground. The project will be completed 24 months after photography is acquired.

Neal Carpenter will serve as Customer Engineer. He concurs with Bruce Mitchell who says, "The people of Pennington County have been so cooperative and so enthusiastic, and the area is so beautiful — we're really looking forward to working on this project."

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SIGNET is a registered Trademark of The Sidwell Company



THE SIDWELL COMPANY

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY SIDWELL SERVICES ...

Write to The Sidwell Company, 28W240 North Avenue, West Chicago, IL 60185 or phone (312) 231-0206

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