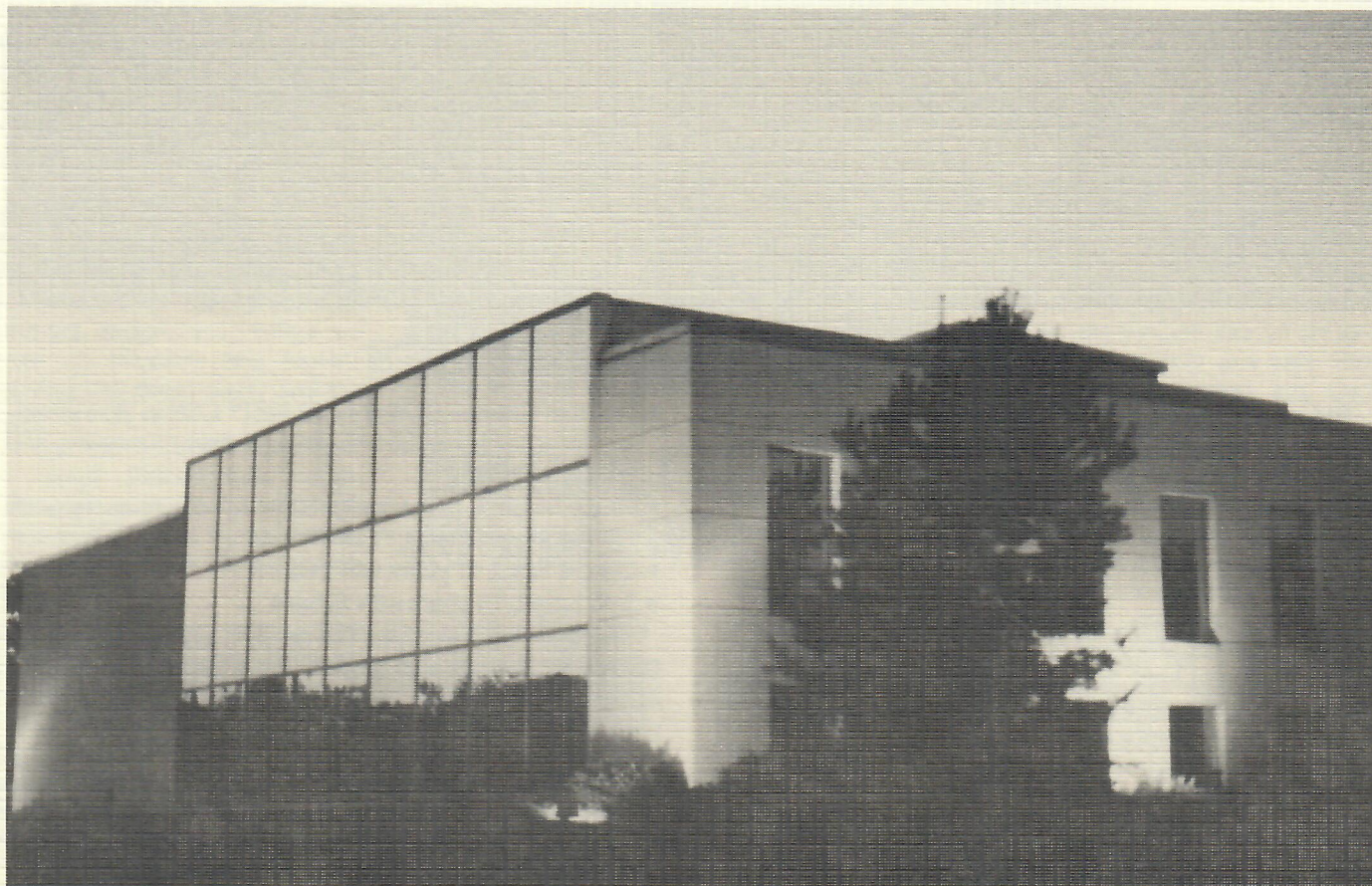




THE SIDWELL COMPANY

# G.I.S. News



## Once Again, Sidwell Leads The Way

The same company that pioneered the use of computer graphics technology in the preparation of maps is now pioneering the use of a new term for that process. The company is Sidwell. The term is "Geographic Information Systems", or "GIS".

For Sidwell, the term "Geographic Information Systems" refers to a Sidwell product that stores land information on a computer, manages land records using geographically oriented permanent parcel identification numbers, and draws maps using computer graphics programs.

For the general public, and even for persons and institutions active in land record management, the term "geographic information system" is frequently used without a clear definition. When Sidwell refers to "Geographic Information Systems", the meaning is very clear, because Sidwell's GIS is the natural evolution of two Sidwell products—tax maps and SIGNET®.

The Company has produced tax maps since the late 1950s. At first, they were drawn manually with pen and pencil. They were drawn on mylar and map prints were delivered on a sheet-by-sheet basis.

In the early 1980s, Sidwell introduced its SIGNET® product, which adapted existing computer graphics technology to the drawing of tax maps. With SIGNET®, the tax maps were drawn electronically using computer graphics hardware and software. While individual map prints on paper could still be produced, the product was now delivered as one contiguous database across the entire mapped area.

By the late 1980s, Sidwell had implemented the computer graphics technology associated with SIGNET® throughout their entire production environment. The blending of product knowledge and technology has united these two previously distinct product lines into one unified product solution called Sidwell's Geographic Information System.

Sidwell's GIS projects are sold with a wide range of features depending on the needs and financial resources of each county. Each system is designed around the client's unique needs. For more information, contact our Client Services Department.



## Sidwell's Master Builders

The most beautiful home in your town probably didn't get there by accident. If it looks good and functions well, chances are it is the product of a coordinated effort by a team of professionals. An architect designed it. Builders assembled it. And a moving crew helped a family occupy it. When counties need a new home for their land management records, the professional team is Sidwell's master builders.

"Basically, our job is solving problems," says Dave Squires, Sidwell's Manager of Client Services. Dave's team includes seven Client Service Representatives and other professionals who have a combined total of nearly 100 years of experience in mapping and information management.

"When we begin working with a jurisdiction, we do surveys and studies and talk with officials to determine in detail what they have in land management records and how they're doing their work," Dave explains. "Then we evaluate the needs of the various elements of that jurisdiction's government and design the 'house' or comprehensive Geographic Information System to serve the needs of everyone involved.

"Or, if the jurisdiction isn't building an entire 'house', but is just planning to do a bit of remodeling, we can develop a street map for a small municipal jurisdiction or tailor a data processing system to meet its requirements.

"Whatever that jurisdiction's needs, we work with them at all levels of complexity to solve their land record management problems in the most efficient, cost-effective way possible."

Like an architect, Sidwell creates a unique design for each client. The design has to allow for that client's particular way of handling land records, and it must respond to the client's organizational needs.

Sidwell's master builders have a broad background in tax mapping and land record management. Dave Squires has been with Sidwell for 23 years. His team includes the following Client Service Representatives:

- Bruce Harris, Sidwell's Senior CSR. 16 years with Sidwell.
- Sam LaRocca, Sidwell's CSR in Des Moines. 14 years with Sidwell.
- Ray Willis, Sidwell's newest CSR, joining Des Moines' office this January.

- Herman Cramer, Sidwell's CID NET® CSR in Springfield IL. 1 year at Sidwell and 15 years in data processing and property taxes.
- Bruce Mitchell, 3 years with Sidwell, former county auditor and city assessor in Iowa.
- Denise Boyd, 11 years with Sidwell.
- Tom Lester, 15 years with Sidwell.

The team also includes Research Liaison Associate Art Schroeder, 6 years with Sidwell and a former Supervisor of Assessments in Illinois . . . and Sales and Marketing Coordinator Anita Yndestad, who has 5 years with Sidwell.

"Besides experience, we look for two main qualities in our people," Dave Squires explains. "First, they must be sensitive to people's needs. Second, they must be impartial when dealing with the data. Being able to analyze the information without any bias is the best way to help the client."

Once the team has built the house, they help the client move in. For instance, when a county receives a GIS system, Sidwell Customer Engineers arrive to teach the client how to use the system effectively.

Sidwell CSRs are constantly on the move. They attend numerous regional, national, and international meetings to be in contact with clients and prospective clients. They also stay on top of the latest technology in the industry. So it's no surprise that they are frequently called upon to teach classes and seminars for government personnel and other professionals.

"We can show clients how to make their work easier and more accurate," Squires declares. "But our biggest challenge is working within the limits of available funding to meet the needs of the many specific interests in the jurisdiction, and to bring them together so they all benefit by moving in the same direction."

Sidwell's master builders are professionals. As Dave Squires says, "We've worked with local government for many years and we understand it. We understand our clients, their systems, and their situations." That's a strong foundation upon which to build.

Bill Barg pauses for a moment next to a map labeled "Chain of Lakes". It hangs neatly framed on the wall outside his office—the President's office—at The Sidwell Company on North Avenue in West Chicago.

Bill looks at that map and sees the same lakes, rivers, roads, and towns that you or I would see. But he also sees the mark of his own hand in the streets he drew and labeled on that map 34 years ago, as he celebrates 40 years in the mapping business.

"We sold that map to bait shops, banks, and realtors in the Chain-of-Lakes area," Barg recalls. "We'd print the bait shop's name on the map, mark its location with a red dot, and point to it with a red arrow so travelers and tourists needing bait could easily find the shop."

It was the first map Barg drew for Joseph Sidwell, who began his mapping studio in Lombard, Illinois in 1927. But it was not the beginning of their long-standing relationship.

"In the 1940s when I was growing up in Lombard, Joe and my father were friends," Barg says. "So by age 14, I was already working part-time for Sidwell, printing blueprints using the old wet process with ultraviolet light. On a good day, I could make 50 copies."

During three years of drafting classes at Glenbard High School and numerous college courses in geography and natural sciences, Barg continued his part-time work with Sidwell on weekends and school breaks.

"The map making skills I learned in those years were not taught in schools," Barg says. "They were passed to me from the experts at Sidwell, from master to apprentice. And that's still the way they are taught."

After serving with the Marine Corps in Korea, completing his Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree from Bradley University, marrying, and starting a family, Barg was ready for full-time work. He found it as a general sciences teacher at Jackson Junior High School in Villa Park.

Meanwhile, The Sidwell Company was gearing up for a major project—the mapping of 1,300,000 parcels of real estate in rapidly-developing Cook County. Nearly 8000 maps would be produced. Sidwell's staff would grow from 10 to 40. Joe Sidwell called on Bill Barg.

"I know education is important," Sidwell said to Barg. "And I don't want to interfere with your career plans. But I need someone full-time. How about it?"

Barg thought. He thought about the two years he'd taught at Jackson, about having to drive a school bus to help pay his family's bills, and about the mapping work he was still doing for Sidwell on weekends and breaks. So with the two-word answer, "Why not?", he joined The Sidwell Company full-time as a draftsman in June, 1956.



## Bill Barg Celebrates 40 Years With Sidwell

Mapping Cook County took nearly three years. It was Sidwell's first tax map project using a parcel numbering system to link a parcel's map location to its legal description and assessment records. This linkage accelerated tax billing procedures by supplying data that could be submitted to the electronic data processing equipment of the day.

As the Cook County project neared completion, Joe Sidwell saw he would need to sell his mapping system to other counties. He asked Barg to try his hand at selling. With another "Why not?", Barg began to focus on sales in November, 1958.

There were disappointments; during one 6-month period in Florida, he made only one sale. But there were successes, too, and soon he was training new salesmen. Or, more accurately, he was cross-training map makers into sales, "because our sales people need map making skills, and people with those skills are hard to find."

Barg's sales force introduced Sidwell's mapping systems to Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Michigan, and Indiana. Barg, himself, focused on marketing activities—identifying client needs, attending conferences, developing advertising. He discussed ways to improve county record keeping at meetings set up by the Department of Revenue throughout Illinois.

Soon he was managing activities at Sidwell, first as Marketing Director, then as Vice-President, Executive Vice-President, and, in 1983, President. It was 35 years from the blue-print shop to the President's desk.

Now forty years into his career, Bill Barg still deals every day with the ideas that have challenged him all his life—mapping, teaching, and information management.

He witnessed the growing use of computers to draw maps and store the information displayed on the map. As soon as computer graphics technology became cost effective for Sidwell in the early 1980s, the company quickly applied it to the making of tax maps.

But computers can't help with the basic creative act of mapping, according to Barg. "It's the skill of reading a long legal description and transforming those words into an accurate parcel diagram. That's a human skill, and it has to be taught one-to-one, from master to apprentice."

Bill Barg turns and moves on down the hall, past the Chain-of-Lakes map. Like every map, it's more than geography. It's history. In this case, it traces a man's route from drafting board to Board Room. And it tells the history of one company's interest in mapping, training, and information management.

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# Michigan Assessors Salute Denise Boyd

Client Services Representative Denise Boyd recently received the Subscribing Member Award from the Michigan Assessors Association recognizing her "years of dedication and contribution to the field of assessment administration."

That contribution includes both publications and presentations. Her article entitled "A Land Records Management System" appeared in a recent issue of the MAA magazine. Her short course called "Property Descriptions" was presented in 1989 at training sessions sponsored jointly by the MAA and the University of Michigan.

In "Property Descriptions", Denise explained how to locate property, identify it, and describe it so it can be found again. She explained how to read deeds, plats, and surveys, and taught techniques for calculating acreage and drawing curves and angles.

"I teach basic bread-and-butter techniques for getting the daily work done," she says. "For instance, there are as many ways to write descriptions as there are assessors. I show assessors the basic parameters within which to work, how to develop their own style, and, above all, how to keep it simple."

Denise joined Sidwell in 1979 as a draftsman. She has experience in mechanical and architectural drawing and in computer-aided design. As a Client Services Representative, her responsibilities include extensive consulting on



mapping projects and computerized land records management systems.

Denise recently spoke on the topic "New Mapping Approaches" at the Midwest States Association of Taxing Administrators.

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## New Projects:

The Sidwell Company is pleased to announce it has entered into contracts for cadastral mapping projects with Shelby County, Ohio, and Dubuque County, Iowa. Both projects will involve the use of PC-based computer graphics systems and are expected to take three years to complete.

**Shelby County, Ohio** occupies an area of 410 square miles and involves 25,500 parcels.

**Dubuque County, Iowa** occupies an area of 612 square miles and involves 44,720 parcels.

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## Coming Up:

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

### February 18-20

Michigan Association of Counties. Lansing, Michigan.

### March 3-7

Illinois Property Assessment Institute. Springfield, Illinois.

### March 14-16

Iowa State Association of Counties. Des Moines, Iowa.

### April 23-26

AM/FM International. Baltimore, Maryland.



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