

◆ The Sidwell Flyer ◆



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Hello, Sidwell...

As we begin publication of this newsletter, the editorial staff of *The Sidwell Flyer* would like to express gratitude for the input received from our fellow Sidwell employees. We appreciate you sharing your preferences and ideas with us and will strive to meet your expectations in selecting and preparing items to appear in this quarterly effort. A particular thanks to all who submitted the collection of creative name suggestions for us to choose from!

The articles in this issue reflect the choices made in response to our recent poll. You, the reader, showed a strong consensus of opinion regarding the items you would most like to see. News of sales and marketing activities and of GIS projects were identified as your top choices, and are specifically addressed in this issue. Future issues will address topics such as pertinent new technologies, as well as other items that were rated as being of interest.

Again, we ask that you give us your input on a continuing basis, so that we may bring to you a package that is both interesting and relevant. Thanks, and enjoy!

Editor-Barbara Dutton
Managing Editor-Carol Miller
Layout/Design Editor-Karen Fouts

GIS Project Update:

Iowa's "Crown Jewel"

It is difficult to turn a corner at Sidwell these days without hearing someone discussing Polk County, Iowa. Why is Polk the talk of the company and what makes it different from a typical Iowa project? Polk has been a challenge for us from the beginning, due primarily to the size and technical scope of the project.

"Just as a mapping project Polk is a big stretch for us. But it is technically a huge leap compared to anything else we have ever done. It's the crown jewel of Iowa," comments Neal Carpenter, vice president of operations. "Working in partnership with another firm (M.J. Harden Associates) has also been a big leap for us. This [partnership] probably would not have happened under prior administrations."

Polk County, home of the state capitol, covers 582 square miles, and has an estimated parcel count of 155,000 parcels. An average Iowa project has between 15,000 to 25,000 parcels. Within just one area of Polk, there are more than 30,000 parcels. Madison County, Iowa, another Sidwell mapping project, in its entirety contains 18,000 parcels. "The difference between projects is intensity," notes Mark Dupree. "In less than one year's time, we have mapped more parcels in Polk than in a typical three-year Iowa project." In his capacity as senior customer engineer, Mark serves as the direct liaison between the county and Sidwell.

Besides the enormity of the project, the standards it demands have reached a new level. "This is the highest degree of accuracy we've ever had to map in a cadastral project," says Mike Tesch, senior GIS supervisor. "I think the Polk project has been great for The Sidwell Company because it has stretched us in directions we haven't gone in the past," adds Mark. "It has given us a chance to grow."

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- M. Dupree

Services provided to Polk County by Sidwell include: conversion of cadastral data and the generation of topology; taxing and election district data conversion; and differentially rectified aerial photography with ground control. "This project is very different than those we are used to doing, where the map is almost a byproduct of the project rather than the focal point," says Software Product Development Supervisor Brent Mainzinger. Along with M.J. Harden Associates, Brent is responsible for

Milestones

Several Sidwell employees celebrate significant service anniversaries in the first quarter of 1995.

5 Year

Linda Coulombe
Joe Price
Ray Willis

10 Year

Rosie McClurg

Congratulations to each of you as well as those employees celebrating anniversaries in other increments of time!

writing parcel application software that will fully integrate several existing computer systems currently residing in the offices of the county auditor and assessor. Brent is also "bringing our maps into the GIS world" by converting them into the MGE (Modular GIS Environment) and MGA (Modular GIS Analysis) software environment in which Polk works. However, none of this is relevant without topology—a closed polygon—and a unique centroid within that polygon. A centroid is a dot associated with a 12-digit parcel number, within the cadastral map, that is tied to a database. MGA software recognizes "space" while MGE knows dots and lines. This intelligence allows a technician to request information about parcels within, for example, certain valuation levels (i.e. parcels valued between \$30,000 to \$40,000). The system will then highlight

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- B. Mainzinger

such assessments. "If you have a map that knows topology, then you have a smart map in that it knows the area of the parcel; it knows how big it is and it knows who its neighbors are," explains Brent. "If you put a soils map on top of it, it knows what soils types are in that parcel and what acreage is in the soils type."

Training of the Polk County staff to maintain their maps is now in progress. Upon completion of this training, Polk will begin maintaining the data in their new GIS system. "Maintaining and putting into place what we have delivered along with conducting their normal, daily duties is very ambitious," states Neal. "They are going to perform new tasks in a very complex environment."

Polk is the talk of the company for a great many reasons, and due to our work in meeting its technical demands, other projects will reap the benefits of our enhanced skills. "We are going to come out of this a more competent mapping firm than we were going in," summarizes Neal. "When [Polk] gets done, it will easily be the premier GIS installation in the midwest," adds Brent. "It will be one of the very best out there!"

Sales and Marketing Activities Heat Up for Spring

While still making their way through the first quarter of the calendar year, Sidwell sales and marketing staffs are hard at work preparing for a busy Spring.

To kick off what is traditionally our busiest trade show season, the company will have a strong presence at the Wisconsin Land Information Association Annual Conference. The company will be represented at this event by Tim Torres, who recently assumed responsibilities for GIS sales activities in Wisconsin, and Brent Mainzinger. Tim and Brent will staff the Sidwell booth and present a system demonstration as part of the conference program. In late March, the company will exhibit at the Iowa State Association of Counties' Spring Conference in Des Moines. During the month of April, we will participate in the Illinois Association of County Engineers Conference in Mt. Vernon, Illinois; an annual trade show sponsored by the The National Association of County Engineers, to be held this year in Davenport, Iowa; and the Illinois Association of County Officials' Spring Conference in Springfield.

In recent months, new booth graphics have been introduced to upgrade the appearance of our exhibit and sharpen our marketing message. Among these changes are the addition of large four-color images taken from slides of GIS screens showing aerial photography, and parcel and planimetric mapping. Additional booth upgrades are planned for the near future.

Other significant marketing activities include the development of new literature to support sales efforts. An updated, four-page, two-color brochure is being created to promote Tax Map Atlases, and a two-color mailer describing recently photographed aerial maps was produced for prospective customers. Additionally, Marketing Director Barbara Dutton continues to seek opportunities to get news about our company published in industry trade magazines and other key publications.

Sales Manager Ron Richmond reports that his department is actively pursuing more than 20 GIS projects, and nearly 40 aerial photographic and/or photogrammetric jobs. "I am extremely optimistic when it comes to assessing our potential success in closing in on these prospects," he stated.

13th Annual Sidwell Users Conferences Complete

The annual conferences for users of Sidwell systems were held recently in Bloomington, Il., and Des Moines, Iowa. The conferences included a selection of technical workshops presented by various Sidwell staff members. Representatives of Intergraph Corp. also participated this year, presenting a workshop on the latest in digital mapping technology. The conferences are coordinated by Mark Dupree and Operations Assistant Cindy Bohr.

New Additions

January 21

Karlynn Nicole, daughter of Betsy & Rich Romine

January 21

Ben Christopher, son of Matt and Anne-Marie Eggleston

February 6

Paul Turner, son of Brent and Elaine Mainzinger



Each year, attendees are given an opportunity to rate the workshop(s) they attend as well as the overall conference itself. These responses are used as a tool for evaluating the success of each conference and for planning future conferences. According to Mark and Cindy, ratings this year indicated that the 1995 conferences were among the most successful to date. Plans for future conferences are currently being discussed.



Nonflushables: Still a No-No

The editors have been asked to remind everyone that our sewage treatment system cannot accommodate paper towels, letters or similar foreign materials, recently reported to have been found flushed. Please be mindful of the cost and inconvenience incurred due to careless disposal of such items.