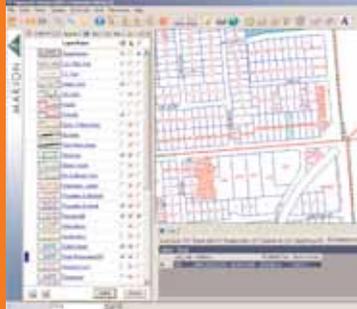## Case Study

For local councils to progress and continue to service the changing needs of residents, Councils need to be alert to progressive opportunities, open to suggestions of how to improve existing processes and willing to approach problem solving in new ways.

Marion Council

"We have seen a major improvement in the performance of the system. Previously it took 10-20 seconds to refresh a map, with MapInfo Exponare it now takes less than one. The performance of the system has improved immensely and this means, staff productivity has accelerated"

"The migration from the previous GIS solution on Oracle to MapInfo TAB files format went smoothly. The added benefit of this solution is that owing to the accessibility of MapInfo's file formats we have the flexibility to choose and change the format of our data to suit a wide range of uses. We are also thinking of eventually moving onto SpatialWare to enable better integration with our other systems"

Brenton Mitchell, Spatial and Graphic System Officer, Marion Council

The City of Marion lies approximately 12 kilometres south west of the Adelaide central business district (CBD) in South Australia. The city covers an area of 55.445 sq kms and has a total population of approximately 75,000. While predominantly suburban in character, the area maintains several of its natural features such as abundant ground water supplies, significant geological sites and freely accessible coastal beaches.

Committed to providing quality services to the Marion community, the local council aims to ensure that residents have access to over 100 services including arts programs, building and planning services, environmental management, health services, library services, recreational facilities and rubbish collection.

Council also offers a range of services to the business community. Some of these encourage economic and business development; promote sustainable business practices, and others are of a regulatory nature.

The Situation

Prior to mid 2004, the services offered by the Geographical Information System (GIS) team at Marion Council were very limited and restricted to the engineering, development services and rates departments.

The GIS team's primary role has been to update and distribute GIS corporate data across the Council and provide reports on infrastructure assets. Such spatial data comprises lot and plan, house numbers, road names and centrelines, council and suburb boundaries, zonings as well as wide range of infrastructure assets including footpath, drainage and traffic device data.

Realising the potential for spatial corporate data to become more of an integral part of the Council's strategic planning and day-to-day services, the GIS team, comprising two spatial information specialists, were charged with simplifying the use of spatial corporate data across the Council and extending its use beyond traditional departments.

To do this, Marion Council required a fast, cost effective, easy to use solution that could be

implemented into the company's existing IT infrastructure and would encourage use across the Council.

According to Brenton Mitchell, Spatial and Graphic System Officer, Marion Council, "Previously we were using a competitor GIS system that was very complicated and difficult to edit. This meant that various departments could not fully utilise existing spatial information and the GIS team were forced to make the edits to all data, reducing the productivity of the team."

Marion Council required a GIS solution that could be easily deployed across the Council, was scaleable and supported in a way that would allow council employees in various departments to take ownership and amend the GIS data.

The Solution

In July 2004, the GIS team began to assess solutions that could improve processes, efficiency and productivity for the GIS team and the Council's 280 employees. By September 2004 the Council decided to implement MapInfo® Exponare ™ and MapInfo Professional®.

With the help of MapInfo's South Australian Strategic Partner, Tonkin Consulting, the Council chose MapInfo Exponare and MapInfo Professional because they are reliable, easy to configure and saved the GIS team a significant amount of time due to the reduced amount of editing. To improve on the Council's previous GIS solution, the GIS team, in conjunction with Tonkin Consulting, developed tailored solutions so that each department could view and edit relevant assets, without having to revert back to the GIS team.

MapInfo Exponare is used to integrate and present the Council's data in a way that is intelligible to the non-GIS literate public. For example, a business location could be queried to retrieve information about that business or the location of a particular house block.

Another valuable part of the solution Tonkin Consulting and MapInfo implemented for the City of Marion was a two-way application link between

Exponare and Council's property and rating system, Civica Authority. This bi-directional link allows selections to be passed from one application to the other and allows the selection to be utilised by the receiving application.

According to David McDonald, Tonkin Consulting's Spatial Information Manger, "Exponare is a scaleable, easily customised and implemented solution that is fully supported by MapInfo. The added benefit of Exponare is its flexibility with data formats. Exponare can display maps, directly from MapInfo TAB files, Oracle Spatial or SpatialWare for SQL Server files."

"The migration from the previous GIS solution on Oracle to MapInfo TAB files format went smoothly. The added benefit of this solution is that owing to the accessibility of MapInfo's file formats we have the flexibility to choose and change the format of our data to suit a wide range of uses. We are also thinking of eventually moving onto SpatialWare to enable better integration with our other systems." said Mr Mitchell.

The Benefits

"We have seen a major improvement in the performance of the system. Previously it took 10-20 seconds to refresh a map, with MapInfo Exponare it now takes less than one. The performance of the system has improved immensely and this means, staff productivity has accelerated.

"We have also seen an improvement in our customer service levels. Staff can now access and analyse

spatial information more easily. Daily customer service requests such as the Council's bin day service can be easily found on the system in an uncomplicated manner. If any assets need to be updated then the department and not the GIS team can amend the GIS corporate data.

"This solution simplifies the maintenance and management of spatial data and ensures the accuracy and integrity of data. The solution has encouraged the use of GIS corporate data across the Council and a once very limited and complicated system is now showing improvements to almost all departments across the Council," he said.

For example the opportunity now exists for the community services department to use MapInfo's technology to develop community bus routes for aged care and a variety of other services.

"To date, the feedback from staff is very positive and the ease of use means that staff are always finding new ways to benefit from this solution. We recognise the value of this solution and are currently looking into opportunities to make relevant GIS corporate data available to residents and businesses of Marion," he concluded.

For more information about MapInfo's technology and solutions, please visit www.mapinfo.com.au or in Australia, call 1800 351 576.

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