

Vanguard Appraisals, Inc.

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Excellence achieved through people, products and service.™

Spring 2006



Special points of interest:

- What's in my Service Contract
- Website update information
- May I use the hotel wireless internet
- Illinois and North Dakota workshops
- Searching utilizing wildcards
- It's the end of the year, now what

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News

For friends of
Vanguard

VCS Service Contracts By: Brad Miller

With the release of the new CAMAvision coming to a close many users have been wondering if Vanguard plans on raising service contract fees or if are we going to be cutting back on our service? Everyone at Vanguard realizes that county budgets are tight. Therefore, Vanguard is committed to keeping service contract costs at an affordable price while maintaining the same great customer service.

In order to keep service contract costs down, we would like to ask everyone who is not currently on a consolidated service

contract, to please switch to one. Paying one easy payment for all your software modules, instead of one payment for each module, keeps our bookkeeping overhead low and allows us to spend more time making software enhancements and providing service.

Furthermore, for anyone who is on a consolidated service contract or wants to get on one, I would like to extend this limited time offer. Instead of signing a one year consolidated service contract, you can get a two year consolidate service agreement that locks you into the current rate for the next two

years. That's right; you would be guaranteed not to see any service increase for two more years. This can be combined with any VCS current service contract you have. The best part is you do not have to pay anything up front, just your current service contract fees when they are normally due.

If you are not on a consolidated service contract or would like to take advantage of the limited time offer, please contact Kara Leyse at our home office (319) 365-8625 or Kara@camavision.com to learn more information.

Tech Support Corner By: Jenny Burkart

For our website clients it is that time of year again. Most of you will be sending full updates to copy your 2006 values to the website in time for your Board of Review hearings.

Please keep in mind that if your 2006 values are your working database then you will need to send that (the working database) to update the website. Once you do this you will need to maintain your sales information on the working

database & send all sales updates & full individual parcel updates from the working database.

Once you have completed your Board of Review hearings & have completed your maintain certified parcel batch processes you will need to send a full update from the certified database in order to keep those values static on your site. Once you complete the full update from the certified database you will

then go back to maintaining your sales on both working & certified databases & sending your sales updates from the certified database.

Please feel free to contact me if you need any assistance with updating your website or have any questions on your batch processes. I can be reached at the home office (319) 365-8625 or email me at jenny@camavision.com

Wireless Internet Security...or Lack of ? By: Dan Gray

Wireless Internet Security...or lack of!

High speed internet is great when you're traveling and the hotel offers free wired or wireless access. We've all used it. We've checked our email, did a couple Google searches and played some online poker.

But how safe is it? Simply put, it's not!

Geez. I just rained on your parade, didn't I? Does that mean I wouldn't use it? Not at all! Let's just be smart about how we use it.

First of all, Windows (wireless) is very promiscuous. It loves to connect to

Wireless networks. By default, it will connect to "Any available network" and "Automatically connect to non-preferred networks". This makes it brain-dead easy, but also very risky. Simply put, XP will try and indiscriminately connect to the

strongest wireless signal. For that to happen, there probably won't be any encryption enabled. Why? Most hotels don't want to be tech support. You'll connect easily and they don't get a phone call.

Ah, but that's where the hacker comes in. No encryption? Sweet. All I'd (rather, he/she) have to do is have a packet sniffer running that captures all that data just floating around in plain text.

But I said I would still use it? Sure! I just don't log into any of my personal accounts that contain sensitive information like my bank and eBay accounts. Here are a few rules to follow.

- * Uncheck "printer and file sharing" on your wireless card. (or Ethernet card if using wired internet)

- * Enable Windows firewall (XP users with Service Pack 2 installed).

- * Make sure and install the critical Windows Updates.

- * Turn off or disable the wireless card when not in use.

- * Don't surf anywhere where you have to log in. (This includes email too)

- * Don't open email attachments you weren't expecting. (okay, that last one has nothing to do with wireless but I was on a roll)

If the hotel has password protected internet, ask if it's WPA encryption. To date, this is the best wireless encryption available and you can safely use the internet. GEEK ALERT. If you happen to have an IT person who can setup a VPN (virtual private network) for you, that's the absolute best way to use the hotels wireless. That's because each packet of data is wrapped with encryption and virtually hack proof. When you're using a VPN, you're actually surfing using the VPN's network internet access, not the hotels.

If you would like to contact me I can be reached at the home office (319) 365-8625 or email me at dan@camavision.com

*Beware of
"Free Wireless Internet"*

Successful North Dakota Workshop By: Lori Knox

We are excited to announce our 2006 North Dakota Hands-On Winter Workshop was a huge success!

The workshop was a full day event held January 5th, 2006, on the beautiful Bismarck State College campus. The facility boasts a training room with 25 computers, in which every participant was sure to expand their knowledge and confidence in our patented CAMAvision software.

The topics covered and instructors respectively included: Reports & Queries by Nick Lee and Sales Ratio Analysis and Batch Processing by Lori Knox. Robert Kocer, representing Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. was present to assist with the appraisal needs of our clients.

A total of 23 participants attended, including 9 North Dakota jurisdictions, as well as the North Dakota Tax Commissioners Office.

Nick, Bob and I would like to extend a sincere thank you to all who attended. We appreciate everyone's enthusiasm and participation during the workshop! It was a great day of fun and learning!

Terr's CAMA-X Tips and Tricks

Who would you call if you had an idea for a CAMA Enhancement or change?

A link to a list of the Iowa User Group committee members is NOW included on the CAMA Homepage Hot Links section.

Hint: you must have the preference shortcut enabled to "connect to the internet on startup to refresh main page (PC Dependent)".

Service Contract Coverage

By: Brad Miller

Often we get questions on what is included in the VCS Service Contract. Below, I have made a list of everything that is currently included in your service contract. Please take a few moments to review what goes into our service contract.

User Group Meetings: Currently, three User Group Meetings are held once a year in three states (Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri). As we continue to enlarge our client base across the Midwest area, it is very possible that we will soon have User Group Meetings in Illinois and North Dakota. These meetings are very popular, showcasing the new software enhancements and allow clients to meet directly with the software developers to present their own new ideas. Furthermore, there is no limit to the number of assessment staff that can attend.

Workshops: Workshops are designed to present more specific information on particular topics. For example, this year we are adding a commercial workshop to the first day of the User Group Meeting. Other examples range from state specific enhancements to how to use the pricing manual. Typically, workshops only last one day and are smaller than User Group Meetings. Seating can sometimes be limited, providing clients with the opportunity to ask more questions.

Enhancements: Some companies charge for every enhancement to the software. Not Vanguard Appraisals. At Vanguard, we take every client suggestion very seriously. Whether a suggestion is emailed, phoned in, asked at a User Meeting or Workshop, they are all written down and entered into our changes list. Before the start of every release, we look over the list and see what can be done to provide everyone with the most benefit while still adhering to standard Mass Appraisal methodologies. Chances are, if you have had CAMAvision long enough you have seen some of your suggestions made in the software.

Software Rewrites: Sometimes, due to technological advances, it is necessary to re-write the entire CAMAvision system. Example, when we rewrote the software to migrate from DOS to Windows. More recently, we just released CAMAvision 10 (also know as CAMA-X). This was a major overhaul of the entire system. Processes were streamline, screens were redesigned and the database was replaced, providing clients and their data processing staff not one, but two options for storing data. Unlike many companies, Vanguard Appraisals does not charge extra for software rewrites. I have been with Vanguard Appraisals for 16 years and we have rewritten the entire CAMAvision System four times, each time free of charge to clients that have a service agreement.

State Law Changes: Often times state laws can change, which then forces a change in the software. The latest example of this is in Iowa where a new privacy law has been passed, which prevents assessors from distributing specific property names. Some companies might say that they would need to charge for changes such as these. Not Vanguard. We are implementing this change, like many others because we know users need to perform their daily work easily and efficiently.

Pricing Manual Changes: When the pricing manual changes so does our software. Most companies charge additional fees for pricing manual updates. Once again, there are no additional charges with Vanguard software. The new manual upgrade version was provided free of charge to all VCS Clients that had a current service contract.

Research and Development: At Vanguard we are constantly researching changes in the operating systems, hardware advances, and making new alliances with companies all in an effort to make things work smoother and easier for you. Here is a list of the companies Vanguard currently works with: Sidwell, ProMap, Incode, Solutions, EJ Rice Company, GovernMENTOR, Anita Ridenhour Systems, Travis Software Systems, Manatron, ACS, Devnet, and Sam Ulrich Systems.

Free Software Technical Support: At Vanguard Appraisals we offer free telephone and Internet support to answer any questions concerning the operation of the CAMAvision software. We have full time technical support staff waiting to answer all your questions and help you when you need it most from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday - Friday.

Field Support Staff: Not only do we provide the standard telephone and Internet support, but we also employ seven full time field staff that can answer questions and provide hands on training at your local jurisdiction.

Search Screen Tips-Using Wildcards By: Nick Klein

How often do you find yourself looking for the owner of a property by using the Name fields? While seemingly straight forward, often times this is problematic because of the variable nature of data entry (last name, first name? punctuation characters? husband and wife?). Simply typing in the last name and doing a search usually yields a large list of accounts to wade through. Most people end up resorting to address. But when taking a call, what's the first thing a homeowner usually gives you – their name.

A powerful feature of the search fields within CAMAvision and MO Personal Property is the ability to use wildcards at any time. The percent (%) character, for those familiar with the Query Wizard, is very useful to narrow down

"With a few well placed wildcards you can find the name on the first try"

searches. But did you know it can also be used on the search screens? You don't even have to resort to using the Query-Lite to use it. All the search fields on the Search Screen support the wildcard.

In its simplest use, a wildcard is used at the front or end of some piece of text. It tells the database to search for pieces of words or phrases instead of exact matches. But we don't have to stop there. It can also be used between words.

For example, say a homeowner wants you to lookup her property. But your system has the Deed holder entered as "SMITH, NICHOLAS AND MARY." Not knowing exactly how the system

as the names entered, you might have to guess a few times: "is it Smith-COMMA-Nicholas-AND Mary...?" you get the idea. With a few well placed wildcards you can

find the name on the first try. If we enter "%SMITH%MARY%" (do not include the quotes) in the deed holder field of the search screen, the system will find what you are looking for. How? Because the wildcard (%) between the last and first names tells the search to ignore any text between these two words. The only caveat is that wildcard searches are case-sensitive.

I'll admit the above example could find several Mary Smiths. I'd probably try to use a piece of the husband's name: "%SMITH%NIC% MARY%" to narrow it down even more. But don't stop with just the name fields. Only know part of the PIN? No problem; use wildcards in the rest of the spaces to find what your looking for. Give it a try. You might be surprised what you find.

If you have any questions on this contact tech support at (319) 286-6451 or support@camavision.com.

I.P.A.I. March Workshops By: Mike Weeks

The Illinois Property Assessment Institute held their annual "March Workshops" at the Hilton Hotel and Convention center in downtown Springfield, Illinois. Over 425 Assessors and staff attended the week long event starting March 19 and ending on Friday the 24th. Sixteen different classes were offered including Sales Ratio Analysis, Legal Descriptions, Income Approach, Residential construction and an IAAO course Fundamentals of Mass Appraisal.

Lee County Chief County Assessment Officer, Wendy Ryerson was honored at the 48th Annual Recognition Luncheon. She received the Marshall Theroux award, given to outstanding members to recognize the achievements of Illinois assessing officials. Wendy has worked in the Assessor's office for over 20 years. She is the past president of the

Illinois County Assessment Officers, a member of the Executive Board for the Illinois Association of County Officials, a past president of NCRAAO, a member of the IPAI Board of Directors and has been an instructor for the Property Assessment Institute since 1996.

Attendees were then invited to the new Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum for a reception on Monday night. Visitors learned about President Lincoln and the obstacles he overcame on his journey through life. This powerful experience started in a replica of Lincoln's boyhood home, a one room cabin that he, his father, step-mother and 3 step-siblings shared in Indiana, ending with his death from a fatal gun shot wound to the head at the Ford Theatre in Washington D.C. Many original artifacts from the lives of the Lincoln family are also showcased in



the Museum as well as life size recreations of significant events in Lincoln's life and career.

Classes and exhibits continued on Tuesday while four inches of snow fell on this first day of spring. Arcola Township Assessor, Fred Neiman won the Vanguard door prize given away at the Certified Illinois Assessing Officers Luncheon and business meeting, a 512 MB flash drive. Fred has been a CAMAvision user for several years. Congratulations Fred!

Mark Your Calendars for Upcoming User Group Meetings

Missouri

August 1st thru August 3rd

Holiday Inn Select

Columbia, MO

*This year we will be offering more personal property instruction concurrent with CAMAvision sessions.

We will be offering a commercial school instructed by Bob Ehler on the first day. Limited seating so get your registration in EARLY!



Iowa/Illinois

August 16th thru August 18th

Cedar Rapids Marriott

Cedar Rapids, IA

Minnesota/North Dakota

August 9th thru August 11th

Holiday Inn

St. Cloud, MN

Prizes will be given for early registration. Watch for registration flyers to be mailed soon.

End of Year Routine

By: Terri Scheuermann

The following serves as a guideline for offices to prepare for the next fiscal year. These tasks may be completed in any order. We hope this routine assists to review prior and current appraised values with the expectation of next year's value changes. Dependent upon the state, most jurisdictions perform these tasks after the Board changes values, after State Equalization Orders are applied and before the end of the fiscal year.

Some or all of the processes MUST be completed before changing values, changing tables or adding new construction for the upcoming year.

If you would like to preserve the previous year's values with parcel details, please call Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. for information on purchasing the Archive module.

If you have any questions on year end routine contact tech support at (319) 286-6451 or support@camavision.com.

Backup First

Add a year to the Prior Year History (see Batch, Main Menu option)

Clear New Construction [IL, MO, MN only]

Clear Board Values (see Board of Review, Main Menu option)

Delete Board Petitions (see Board of Review, Main Menu option)

Clear Parcel Flags (see Batch, Main Menu option)

Clear Excluded Values (every year) and Clear Sale CRV records (every 5 years) [MN only]

Run Duplicate Parcel Check (see Parcel Maintenance, Main Menu option)

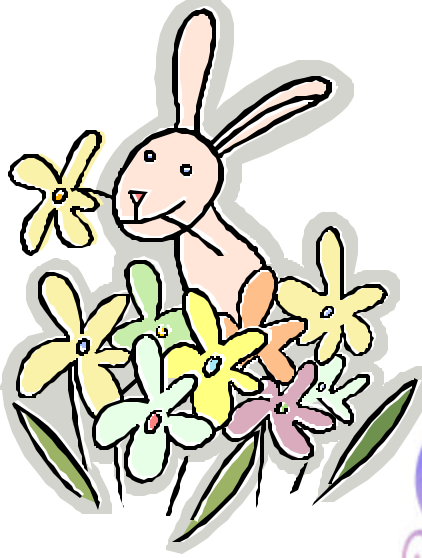
Create Certified Database (see Maintain Certified, Batch, Main Menu option)

Activate (see VCS Admin) or Reset Reconciliation (see Batch, Main Menu option)

For expired exemptions - Clear Exempt Values (see Batch, Main Menu option) [IA only]

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We're on the web...
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Since 1968, Vanguard Appraisals has been at the forefront of the mass appraisal industry. Our trained staff includes specialists in field data collection, appraisal review, pricing, mass appraisal project management, court preparation and testimony, data entry, software engineering, technical support and training,

Our Flagship CAMAvision product has been developed specifically to operate in the assessor's environment. Vanguard is a full service company. We provide a wide range of appraisal products and services for assessors, we also see all the projects through completion. Customer satisfaction is our main goal.

Spring is Sprung

Upcoming Events

MCCC Conference

June 5 - 8, 2006
Alexandria, MN

MAAO Conference

September 24 - 27, 2006
Brainerd, MN

NCRAAO Conference

June 17 - 20, 2006
Grand Forks, ND

MAA Conference

October 1 - 4, 2006
Lake of Ozarks, MO

Annual VCS User Group Meetings

See Page 5 for Details

IAAO Conference

October 8 - 12, 2006
Milwaukee, WI

CAMA-X Illinois Workshop

April 19, 2006
Bloomington, IL

MAAO Summer Seminars

May 24 - 25, 2006
St. Cloud, MN

IACO Spring Conference

April 30 - May 3, 2006
Springfield, IL

SDAAO Conference

May 30 - June 2, 2006
Brookings, SD

NDAAO Conference

August 6 - 8, 2006
Bismarck, ND

