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Spring 2012

Excellence achieved through people, products, and service. TM



Special points of interest:

- *Something Strange in Your Table Grid..Who Ya Gonna Call?*
- *Backups*
- *Get Your TLA Correct*
- *CAMAvision & ArcGIS Go together like Peanut Butter & Jelly*
- *User Group Meeting Dates & Locations*

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News for friends of
Vanguard

It's That Time—Year End 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 your values for future reference please see the article on Archiving in this newsletter page 10.

If you have any questions on the year end routine please contact your area CAMA Specialist or 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]
- Update Website With New Values

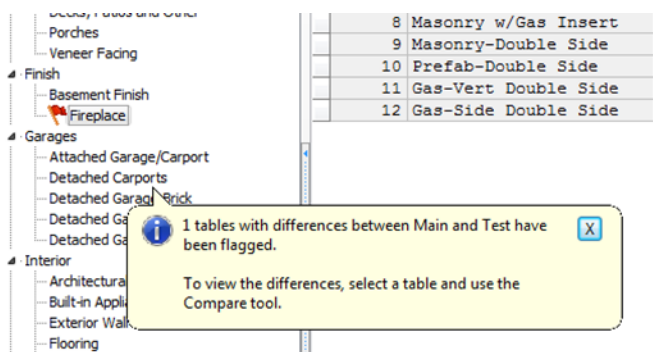
If There Is Something Strange in Your Table Grid... Who Ya Gonna Call?

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By: Patrick Alexander

Have you ever made changes to test tables, but forgotten to copy them to main and now it has been so long you don't even know what the changes were? Well have no fear, CAMAvision is here! In fact, there are multiple ways to find and identify changes between test and main tables.

If you want to find out what tables are different within a table group, simply click on the  **Diff** button on the toolbar. This will cause CAMAvision to compare all main tables in the group against their test versions. If any tables are found to be different, they will be flagged with a red flag to the left of their name. A tool tip will also display once the comparison is complete, informing you of the results.



Now that we know which table or tables have changed, let's find out exactly what is different between the main and test version of the table by selecting the table and


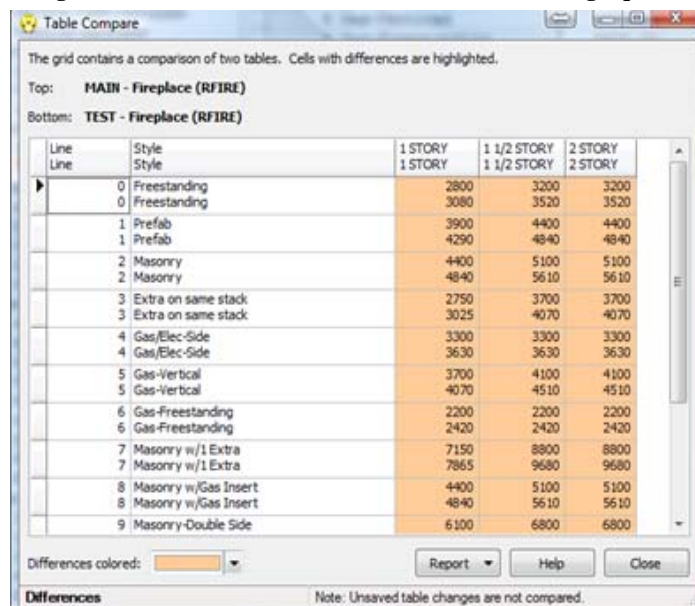
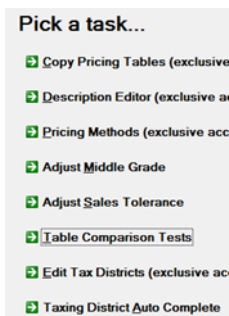
clicking on the  **Compare** button. This will bring up the

Table Compare dialog which will highlight each cell that is different.



Both of the methods above are located within the Table Maintenance toolbar for the selected table group. But what if I told you there is an even more powerful way to compare your tables under the Table Utilities menu option? When you want to compare all of your pricing tables at once, consider using the Table Comparison Tests task.



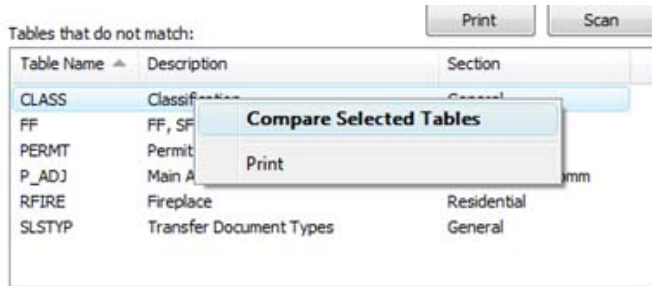
The Table Comparison Tests task will launch the Pricing Table Compare Utilities dialog, where you can compare all pricing tables. However, there's even more, as it also gives us the ability to compare pricing tables between two databases (for instance, the main pricing tables on the working database can be compared against the main pricing tables on the certified database).

To compare the main and test tables on the current database, select the top comparison option and click on the Scan button. All differences will be reported under the Tables that do not match section below the Scan button. Knowing which tables don't match is great, but we still want to know just what is different. No problem, select the table you want specifics on and right-click. Now select the Compare Selected Tables option. It launches the same Table Compare dialog as found within the Table Maintenance groups, making it a snap to find all of the value(s) causing the mismatch.



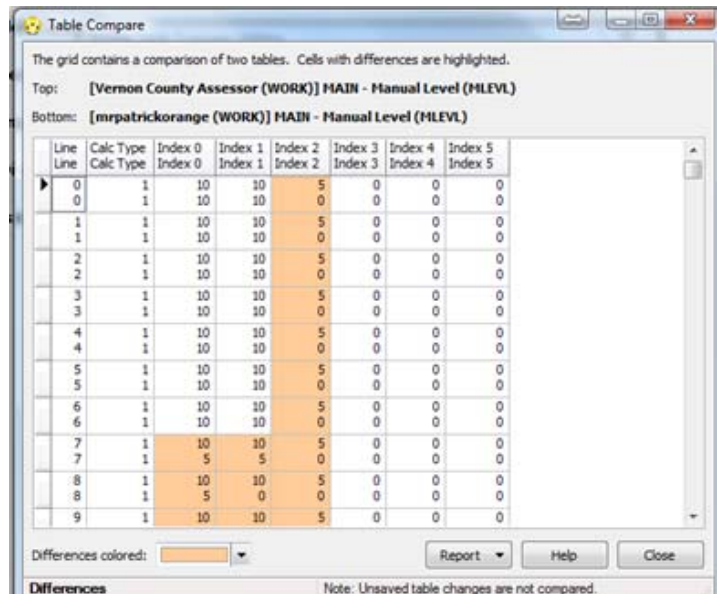
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If There Is Something Strange in Your Table Grid... Who Ya Gonna Call? Continued



The final table compare is between two separate databases (i.e. working and certified). To do such a table compare, select the second option. Notice some additional choices present themselves: a drop-down list containing other databases found on your license server, and a set of which table sets to compare. The table sets refer to which pricing tables to compare. The first in the list is for the database you are in. The second is for the selected database to compare against. After both the database to compare against and the tables sets to compare are selected, click on the Scan button.

The results generated are going to look like the previous comparison within the same table. The only difference is when a table is selected and the differences shown. The table key at the top of the dialog is going to include the database name along with the table name and pricing set.



Website Facelift Needs Beta Testers

By: Sherry Surrett

The CAMAvision and Personal Property websites hosted by Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. are receiving a much needed facelift. This overhaul will provide for easier maintenance for us while giving your websites a fresh, more modern look. The updated websites still offer all of the features previously available as well as some new ones, additional client options and further client customization. We are currently seeking out website clients who would like to be a beta site for testing this new look before our roll out to the general public. If you are interested in becoming a beta site for testing the updated version of your website, please contact Jenny at jenny@camavision.com or Sherry at sherry@camavision.com. You will be able to review your beta website before it goes live to the public.



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Backups: An Insurance Policy Against Disaster

By: Nick Klein

By now everyone has heard of, or had the misfortune to experience, a computer glitch of some sort and the work on a document disappears. Perhaps an entire day's work is lost. Even worse, an entire week, or – perish the thought – an entire year of work is gone. Thank goodness we've also heard the mantra to: backup, backup, backup! Or have we? About every year we have a backup reminder in the newsletter but too many cries of "wolf!" and we start to tune it out. *(But please don't stop reading!)*

Computer backups are an insurance policy against bad things happening to our data. Lost, stolen, or natural disaster, it doesn't matter; the data is gone and so are hours and hours of hard work. So we get the insurance and hope we never have to use it. It's an essential part of doing our jobs. Then we forget about it. After all, now someone else is watching out for our data, right?

Sadly, even for engaged IT departments, backups can become almost an afterthought. Sure, the tapes are getting rotated, but are the backup logs getting reviewed? Do you know if periodic, practice restores are performed to know the backup media is still good? Tapes don't last forever and neither do burnable CD-ROMs or USB thumb drives. Not to be paranoid, but perhaps more than one backup is necessary, and always – *always* – make sure a backup is getting taken off-site.

Sometimes we get that small jolt of the single lost document for us to rethink the integrity of our backups – if we're lucky. The Cedar Rapids flood of 2008 was a big event that had us implement several steps even though as a company we didn't lose data at that time. More recently I helped a client recover lost data due to both natural and human error and it inspired me to write this article.

It's easy to become complacent when life goes by without incident. Don't sit idly thinking the "big one" won't strike our office. Evaluate your needs before disaster strikes. Would losing one day of work be OK when you just have a tape backup, or do you need to make special backups throughout the day? Time of year may play a factor in your backup frequency. The Internet is an excellent source of information and can give you an idea on best practices for your backup strategy. Search for "data backup solutions" and you'll see what I mean.

If IT is in charge of *your data* backups, I think it's perfectly reasonable for you to make sure they have periodic reviews of backup policies and practices. Be proactive with your IT departments. Make sure to discuss it with them on a yearly basis, at least. They are the insurance agent and you are the policy holder. To paraphrase an insurance company's slogan, make sure your backups are giving you peace of mind.



Illinois Workshop
Rudy Piskule of Dwight Twp
Livingston County

Illinois Property Assessment
Institute Conference
Daysa Miller of Macon County

Prize Winners



Advanced Search Options

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By: Mike Weeks

We are all accustomed to the normal Parcel Number, Name or Address search. Did you know that Vanguard has enhanced your search capabilities under the **Find** Button? Simply Click on the “Down Arrow” to the right of Find and you’ll see the available options.

As shown here you can quickly search by the following criteria:

Section, Township, Range, Lot or Block

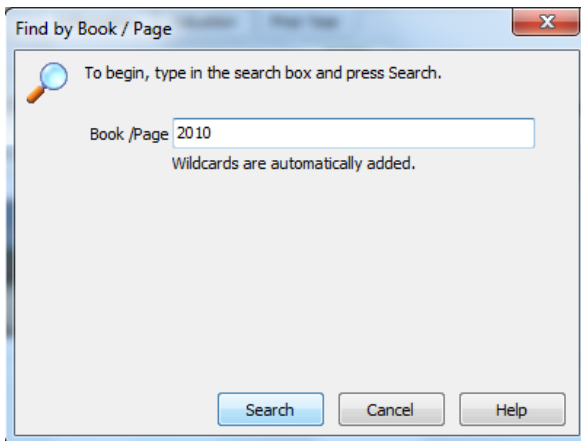
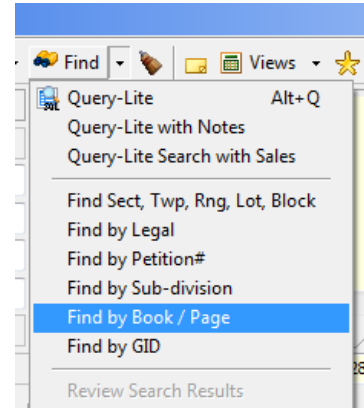
Legal Description

Petition Number ~ if you use CAMAvision Board of Review Manager

Sub-division

Book and Page

GID



To search by Book and Page simply click on the down arrow then select the Book and Page option.

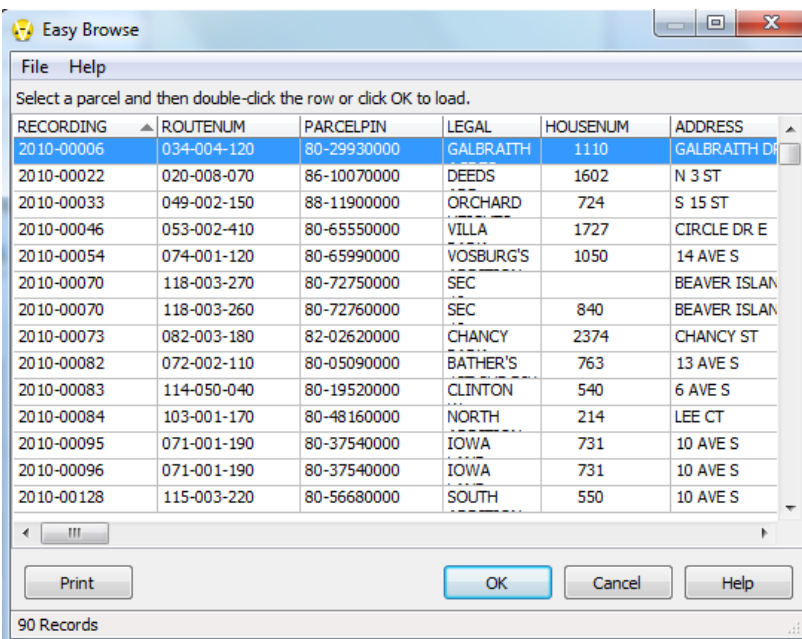
Then type your Book / Page and click Search.

In this example I typed only the Book resulting in a list of all 2010 recordings entered in the recording field on the sales screen.

As you see I have a list of parcels by the Recording information.

I can sort each column by clicking on the header.

I can even take this a step further and use the **Favorites** Button. You know that little red **Heart** on the Search Screen to click next through my list of parcels.



This feature works great for the list of sales you receive from the Department of Revenue.

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Get Your TLA Correct

By: Bob Ehler

CAMAvision is designed to be flexible. This flexibility allows each jurisdiction to customize the system to fit their wants and needs. Along with this customization comes the ability to manipulate how the system calculates the total living area (TLA). A portion of these enhancements are relatively new to the system and some of you may not be aware that you can actually change how the system calculates your TLA.

Now that many of you have your property data online it is more important than ever that your information be correct and accurate. This need for accuracy is what has driven some of the enhancements that have been added throughout the years. Remember, many fee appraisers and realtors rely on your calculation of TLA.

Under table utilities there are two settings that allow you to adjust how the system calculates the TLA. The first setting is "calculate attic space into res TLA". It is my recommendation that this setting should be set to yes. The second setting is "calculate basement finish into res TLA". Basement finish is below grade and by definition should NOT be included in the TLA. To access these settings you need to click on "Table Utilities", then "Pricing Methods" and you will find the settings under "Residential TLA includes".

Getting an accurate square footage of attic space in the system can be problematic. Page 7-44 of the cost manual states that the upper level should be a certain ratio to the main floor when determining the correct attic classification. The chart is as follows:

Percent of Finish	Listing Designation
Floor & stairs only	Unfinished Attic
20% to 30%	1/4 attic
30% to 40%	1/2 attic
40% to 50%	3/4 attic
50% to 60%	Full attic
60% to 80%	1/2 Story

When listing attic finish in the manner described above CAMAvision calculates the living area by using the average for each designation. 1/4 attic is calculated at 25% of the main floor while 1/2 attic equals 35%, 3/4 attic equals 45% and a full attic equals 55%. For those of you wanting a more accurate calculation of TLA an alternative method has been added to CAMAvision. Under "attic style" on the structure screen there is an option to list the attic as "observed". When the attic style is set to observed the system will allow you to type in the actual square footage of attic space right down to the square foot. The system will do the appropriate math for you and price the dwelling with the appropriate amount for attic finish.

Pages 7-65 and 7-66 of the manual have prices for attics above additions. It is important to note that the manual does not differentiate on the amount of attic above the addition. Rather it simply has one price for a finished attic above the addition regardless of size. When adding the attic finish into CAMAvision you should type in the actual square foot of finished area above the addition into "attic SF". The system will pull the price for the attic using the main floor square footage. For example, a 400 SF addition with 100 SF of attic will add \$3,590 for the attic finish which comes from the 400 SF line in the table. A 400 SF addition with 150 SF of attic space will also add \$3,590 for the attic finish. In short, it does not matter what square footage you type into the attic SF, the system will simply add the amount for attic finish. The ability to type in the actual attic SF for an addition is so the system can calculate the TLA correctly. Whatever amount you type in for the attic area will be included in the TLA calculation.

Did you know that finished areas on upper floors should not be counted as living space unless it has a height of 5' or greater? ANSI (American National Standard Institute) has a document that was assembled for calculating SF of residential structures. This Document called the "American National Standard for Single-Family Residential Buildings" states ".....no portion of the finished area that has a height of less than 5 feet may be included in finished square footage". While there is no requirement to adhere to the directive from this document I recommend following this rule. This document is the best guide on how to calculate SF of any guidelines I have come across in my career.

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Is Your Help Working?

By: Mike Weeks

Many times when we get new computers our help files disappear. There is an easy fix for this issue. Follow this link <http://www.camavision.com/downloads.php> and click on the HHReg HTML Help Registration Utility. If you're not sure that the Help is working click on your F1 key. Do you see content on the right of the Help window? If not you need to download this patch.


The process is really very easy. Click on that HTML Patch link. You will then be directed to ec-software website. Scroll down until you find the link shown below.

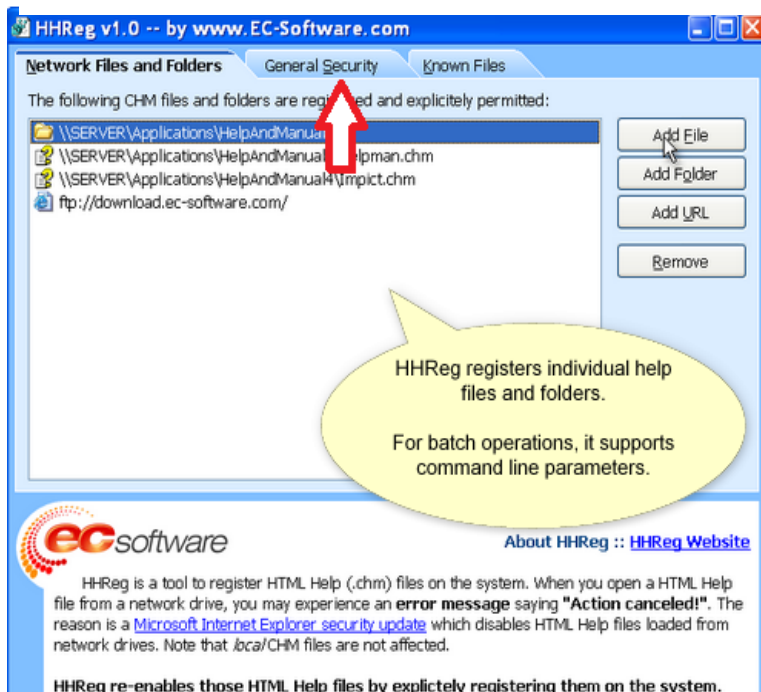
Download HHReg:

HHReg is a small and self-contained tool, just one EXE file in a zip archive. It runs right out of the box and does not require installation. E.g. you can run it from a CD Rom or from a server location to perform automated batch registrations of help files on multiple client PCs.

HHReg is **free for private and commercial use**.

This utility is provided by EC Software GmbH, the makers of [Help+Manual](#).

 [HHReg v1.3 - HTML Help registration utility](#) 
(hreg.zip, 345 kb, updated June 2011 - English & German version in the same file)



After clicking on that, the program should open as shown.

Next click on the tab labeled General Security and choose Option 1 which should be Local Intranet. You can then close the window by clicking the Red X. Close down VCS and start it again. This should resolve the issue.

If this doesn't resolve your help file issue you may be using Windows 7. Microsoft changed something which does not allow this patch to work with some Windows 7 users. Vanguard is aware of the issue. If this patch doesn't fix your problem call Tech Support. They can make the help files run locally on your computer thus fixing it that way.

The Gray Area

By: Dan Gray



Hot off the press! If you're in the market for a new computer, you might want to hold off.

My sources, who claim his sources, say that Microsoft will start their upgrade promotion for Windows 8 on June 2nd. Windows 8 isn't scheduled to be out until October or September 2012, but this promotion will allow you an upgrade to Windows 8 Pro for \$14.99. Now you need to figure out which ultra book or tablet to get!

CAMAvision and ArcGIS: Go together like Peanut Butter & Jelly

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By: Marty Barrett

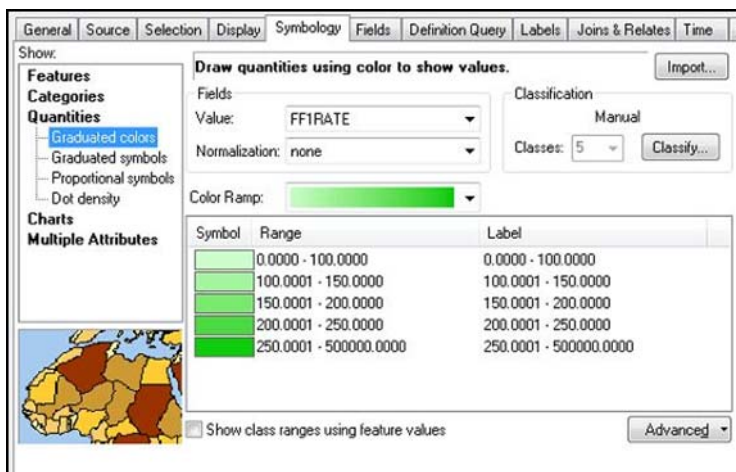
Although it takes a bit of setup there are many reasons to connect CAMAvision data to ArcGIS, the end results are definitely worth the effort. Have you ever looked at your GIS map and wished you could color code classes on the map? Maybe you would like to show all the parcels that don't have any photos attached in CAMAvision, or wanted to show all the parcels that had entry status of refused. All of this and much more is possible if you connect your CAMAvision data to ArcGIS. I will cover some examples in more detail later in the article. This is accomplished with something called an ODBC driver, as was discussed in the Winter 2010 newsletter article. If you want further information or need help setting up the ODBC driver please contact Vanguard to set up an appointment.



Entry Status

Once ArcGIS has been set up to see your CAMAvision database you can join a layer to the general table; you are likely familiar with the general table from the Query Wizard. Any of the fields within the general table can be added to your map. You can also connect a layer to one of the very useful views called gisview and gisviewres. These views contain quite a bit of information that you might want to display on a map.

In this first example, I am in ArcGIS and will be joining the gisviewres to the map. Typically, the layer that contains a matching PIN field will be called Parcel or Parcel Poly or something similar. It will help to have both familiarity with the GIS data and CAMA system for this step. To create the connection right click on the appropriate layer in ArcGIS and in the context menu select *Joins and Relates* and then *Join*. Within the resulting dialog select the matching PIN fields. It is possible that the PIN field within ArcGIS is really the Parcel Number, GIS number, or even Computer ID within CAMAvision. If the PIN in your map data doesn't have any masking i.e. it looks like 00552213 instead of 00-55-22-13 make sure and use the GIS number from CAMAvision.

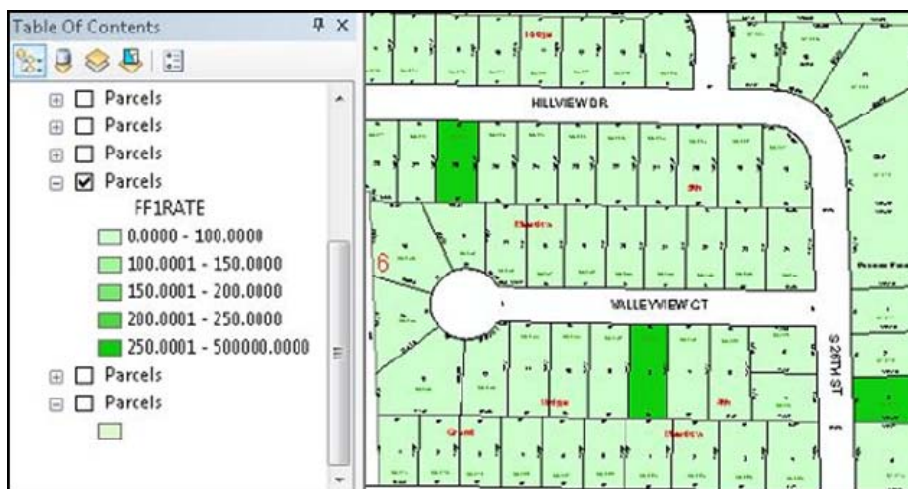


Now we can select the specific field we want to draw on the map data. In this example I will use the Front Foot Rate field, but you can use any field within the View. Once again right click on the appropriate layer in ArcGIS, and click properties. This will open the *Layer Properties* dialog box. The *Symbology* Tab contains options to let you colorize with the data imported from CAMAvision. On the left side of the screen there are several labels under *Show*: picking *Quantities* lets you set ranges to show as different colors. The *Value*: dropdown has all the fields in the layer including those that we joined in from the

CAMAvision and ArcGIS: Go together like Peanut Butter & Jelly continued

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CAMAvision view. Selecting FF1Rate will display the Front Foot rate. This can be useful to easily see land values that are out of sync with their neighboring parcels. Under classification you can select how many ranges to break your numbers into. I have left it at the default of 5 but in different situations broader ranges will be more appropriate. As you can see there are a few parcels that have a higher FF Rate than their neighbors.



You can easily see parcels that you might want to tag to go double check their land values. There are much more possibilities as well. You can plot sale values, current values, year built and many more just from this view. You can also join in other tables like general and have it color code by class. It allows you to easily view CAMA data in map form.

For someone new to ArcGIS this may have been an overload of information. However, hopefully you have gotten an idea of what

combining your CAMAvision data can do for you. ArcGIS is a complex program but with practice many of its features become easily and the next thing you know you might just be finding all sorts of new ways to use ArcGIS.

Other Examples



Sales Amount



Res Style

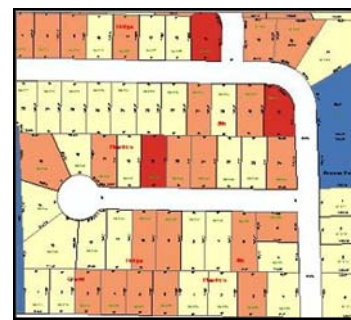


Photo Count



Class



TLA



Year Built



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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.



Have You Archived Yet?

By: Terri Scheuermann

Archiving is typically processed after the Board of Review adjourns but before you start making changes for the next year. Since this is not an equalization year NOW is the time to call your sales rep to see what kind of deal you can get for archiving.

As Marty explained in the 2011 Winter Newsletter, the Archive Module Reports have a New Look and new features including Zoom Report, Recently Viewed and the QuickArc.

User Group Meeting Dates/Locations

South Dakota June 28th & 29th at the Best Western Ramkota Pierre, SD

Missouri August 9th & 10th at the Holiday Inn Executive Center Columbia, MO

North Dakota August 28th & 29th at the Comfort Inn Bismarck, ND

Minnesota August 30th & 31st at the Ramada Inn MOA Bloomington, MN

Iowa Illinois October 23rd & 24th at the Cedar Rapids Marriott Cedar Rapids, IA

2012 User Group Contest

This is your chance to win \$500 off the module license of your choice. Just take the VCS bumper sticker, that you received at last year's user group meeting, and have your photo taken in front something unique. Examples: In front of the Grand Canyon or Mt. Rushmore while on vacation, Wrigley Field, Trump Plaza, at the Indianapolis 500, at the Kentucky Derby, any unique house or building in your jurisdiction, or just a picture of you having fun at something you like to do. The possibilities are endless.

Submit your digital images via email to Brad @ camavision.com OR mail on a CD to the Cedar Rapids Office by August 1, 2012. For complete official rules and to get your bumper sticker contact your sales representative or call Teresa Ellerby at the corporate office. HAVE FUN!

