*V*ANGUARD *A*PPRAISALS, *I*NC.

1500 Second Avenue S.E. Suite 300 Cedar Rapids, IA 52403
(319) 365-8625 Fax (319) 365-0142 www.camavision.com

Excellence achieved through people, products and service.™

Winter 2005

Inside this issue:

**News
for friends of
Vanguard**

Ringing in the New Year with CAMA-X
By Nick Klein

The smoke has cleared from the User Group Meetings (literally!), the holidays are done; now it's 2005 and we'll be rolling out CAMA-X shortly. This release is the culmination of years of work and you will not be disappointed (famous last words, right?).

As the attendees of the VCS User Groups and ISAC, you saw first hand, CAMA-X is packed with exciting new functionality. The connectivity between CAMA-X and the License Server/database is perhaps my favorite new feature. This is the part that allows you to deploy CAMA-X wherever you need it to be. Of course, the cool hooks into CAMA-X from mapping software and websites is worth mentioning too. I think you'll be seeing more of this kind of integration in the future. Oh Yes, there is already a wish list growing for the *next* release!

If I tried to list everyone, inside Vanguard and elsewhere, that has contributed to this project, it would fill up the remainder of the newsletter. I've only got a tiny space for my article. So I would simply like to thank everyone that has worked to make this huge undertaking a reality.

Greetings From Colorado

Let me say "Thank You" to all those who attended my roast at the recent Iowa/Illinois VCS User Group meeting. It was really nice to see everyone and strike up old friendships. We had a pretty good night at the hospitality room, eh? Several people asked me, "Just what are you doing with yourself in Colorado now?" Well I would be lying if I said I wasn't enjoying myself. I didn't realize it was so much fun to meet new people and see new country. While I have been finishing the new VCS Income module, I have also been traveling around the state. But don't feel sorry for me. The scenery I have viewed is spectacular. The people I have met at their offices and CAA conferences are just like mid-west assessors. They are friendly and have similar assessment problems to yours. I will be working with several counties this next year to provide annual service maintenance for them. It should be fun. I will also be teaching a one-day seminar at the Colorado Association of Tax Appraisers in Breckenridge. It is such a shame to have to go to Breckenridge for classes! Dodie and I are building a new home in the Lowry area of Denver. Everyone is invited to Colorado to stay with us. We'll find plenty of sites to see and things to do. As always!

Dave Siefkas

We had a very busy Fall/Winter 2004 with conferences in North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Missouri, Iowa and of course Dave in Colorado. We would like to say **Thank You** to those who took the time to stop by our ever popular Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. booth.

We look forward to seeing you in 2005!

Winner of Vanguard Appraisals, Inc. door prize at 2004 I.S.A.A. Annual Fall School

Carman Putzier, Iowa Department of Revenue

CAMA-X AND FIREBIRD VS. MSSQL

By: Andy Colson

First off let me just say, you do not need Microsoft SQL Server for CAMA-X. In fact, unless you had to use it, I'd recommend against it. We have received many phone calls asking about hardware specifications for MSSQL. We ask them, "Why don't you use Firebird?" They say, "What are you talking about?" Everyone seems to think they are required to get MSSQL server. To get the most updated hardware requirements go to :www.camavison.com and view the Hardware Specs.

Let me put it this way. Firebird is a small, easy to maintain database server, whereas MSSQL is a huge program that almost requires a Database Administrator to maintain. Also, and an important point here, CAMA-X runs Faster on Firebird.

Don't think that Firebird is a newcomer either. It was derived from Borland Interbase, which has a 20 year history. It is very popular overseas, and in the United States. There are many huge companies using it including the United States Army, Boeing, MCI, NASA, now Vanguard Appraisals and possibly you.

Let's talk money...

MSSQL requires that you purchase licenses. I am not 100% sure how it works, but I think it's like this:

1) You must own Windows 2000 or 2003 Server. There are two different products: One is Windows 2000 and the other is Windows 2000 Server.

2) You purchase "MSSQL Server Standard Edition" and license it as $ per CPU or $ per user.
   Source: http://www.microsoft.com/sql/howtobuy/default.asp

Firebird is much easier. It's free. It runs on Windows 2000, 2003, XP, Windows 200x Server, Linux, FreeBSD, Solaris, Mac OSX and maybe some others.

To test the speed, I ran a convert from paradox to each database. Each test was run on the same computer, using the same paradox tables and the server ran locally.

   * On MSSQL, the convert took 21 minutes. (The server process allocated about 123 MB).

   * On Firebird, the convert took 18 minutes. (The server process allocated about 2 MB).

That is not too bad, pretty close actually. But, of course, that is only inserting data. What would happen if we did a revaluation, which has to load data then turn around a save it back out?

I also did a revaluation, on the same data (both databases have the exact same data), on the same computer. CAMA-X and the server were both local on my workstation.

MSSQL Revaluation Statistics:	Firebird Revaluation Statistics:
Start time: 12/10/2004 9:55:53 AM	Start time: 12/10/2004 12:21:55 PM
End time: 12/10/2004 11:29:28 AM	End time: 12/10/2004 12:27:14 PM
Process time: 1 hour 33 minutes	Process time: 5 minutes
Parcels per second:	Parcels per second:
(7,424 pcls/5,615 seconds) = 1.3222	(7,424 pcls/318 seconds) = 23.3459

This is 5 minutes vs. one and a half hours of process time. Now, I am not going to put the blame entirely on MSSQL. Everyone knows it is not that bad. There must be some hoops that CAMA-X has to jump through to get MSSQL server to run faster. But I don't know what sort of voodoo to do, nor do I have a lot of time to study the problem. CAMA-X doesn't do anything advanced or special, and Firebird handles things just fine, so why doesn't MSSQL?

The last point I would like to make is, if you use MSSQL, we would not be able to help you administer the database. It is way too complex, and no one here has had any training. Firebird on the other hand is an install and forget server. It requires next to no administration, and if problems do arise we should be able to help you.

Record Breaking Attendance at User Group Meetings

By: Terri Scheuermann

The 2nd Annual Missouri CAMAvision User Group Meeting held October 13-14, 2004 in Columbia, Missouri was a HUGE success. Day one attendance of 70 and day two attendance of 72 users represented 18 jurisdictions plus the Missouri State Tax Commission staff. User evaluations included: Great, enjoyed the "electrifying" entrance ~ Very good as usual ~ Very good, good team effort ~ Staff was more than gracious and not stuffy, computer programmers were friendly ~ It was fun, you did a great job and the money was nice too!

The 2nd Annual Minnesota/North Dakota User Group Meeting held October 20-21, 2004 in St.Cloud, Minnesota was also a HUGE success. Day one and day two attendance of 42 users represented 12 jurisdictions. User evaluation included: Very informative, very entertaining, I find the user meetings well worth the trip, enjoyed finally meeting more of the staff, Thanks ~ Very informative, exciting to see what is coming, well thought out and planned and executed, sort of feel different without Bob K., send life size cut out for next year ~ Vanguard has a super bunch of people, Thanks for the service training and hospitality.

The Iowa/Illinois Annual User Group Meeting held in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, was an even BIGGER success. We never dreamed we could beat last years' number of attendees, but we did! Day one attendance of 200 users and day two attendance of 193 users represented 74 jurisdictions plus the Iowa Department of Revenue. User evaluations included: Very nice facility and well planned conference, screens for viewing presentations were excellent ~ Coming to the Vanguard User meeting each year is my reward for dealing with the stresses of the year, Thanks for the hospitality ~ First conference attended and I'm getting a lot of good information and will attend again ~ make conference at a central Iowa location, too far of a drive ~ The best part of the conference is the ability to meet and talk with the Vanguard personnel ~ Great job, can't wait for CamaX! And a huge THANKS to Dave for providing the hospitality room entertainment. EDITORS NOTE: don't quit your day job...hee hee

Give-aways and "Outstanding User" awards ranging from authentic Vanguard employee signed mouse pads - sure to be on ebay by now- to archive cd's and ServicePlus hours were given away. THANKS to all who attended these Annual User Group Meetings and PLEASE forward to the Cedar Rapids office any topics that you would like to see covered at YOUR 2005 User Group Meeting. See you then!

2004 Outstanding User Awards

Pettis County Missouri
Rice County Minnesota
Calhoun County Iowa
Muscatine County Iowa

2004 Crossword Puzzle

Winners of One Archive Process

Ray County Missouri
Polk County Minnesota
Warren County Iowa

Responses have been tallied from the 2004 Conference Evaluation Forms.

The majority of users selected Fall for the time of year to hold the User Group Meetings.

Possible 2005 Locations:

Missouri		Minnesota/North Dakota		Illinois/Iowa	
*Columbia	63%	*St. Cloud, MN	81%	*Cedar Rapids, IA	63%
Chillicothe	13%	Mankato, MN	13%	Des Moines, IA	21%
Springfield	10%	Dilworth, MN	5%	Amana, IA	6%
Other	14%	North Dakota	5%	Other	10%

Anticipated location for 2005 User Group Meeting

From the Tech Support Desk

Upgrade Advisor CD – When Can I Use It?
By: Jenny Shanahan

At the Annual User Group Meeting each jurisdiction should have received a CD in one conference packet. This is the "CAMAvision Upgrade Advisor CD." At the meeting, we told the clients that you SHOULD be on CAMAvision version 8.0 when you run it. Actually you can run it on your computer now BUT be aware you MUST run it again after you install the update for version 8.0. The problem that it will help with is checking the content of your data tables or the structure of them. Not only are there calculation changes in version 8.0 but there are also table structure changes. So yes, you may run the CD on your current system but you will HAVE to run it on your computer system again after installing the update to CAMAvision version 8.0. If you have any questions on this or need assistance with this please contact me at **jenny@camavision.com** or 319-286-6451 (technical support line.)

Vanguard Appraisals

2004 Technology Partner of the Year

Your Company name here

"Partnerships are essential to Vanguard's vision of delivering high performance GIS and CAMA solutions.

We are proud to be associated with this technology partner."

**The Sidwell Company
was presented the
2004
Technology Partnership Award
at the
Annual IA/IL User Group
Meeting.
Congratulations Sidwell!**

Swiss Cheese or Cheddar
By: Chris Crum and Terri Scheuermann

Personal preferences tend to be what we have become accustomed to, what we have learned to like. The internet browser you use is probably one that is a personal preference because it is all you have ever known and feel no need to change. Well we are here to make you aware that there are other options out there.

When you buy a computer, it comes internet ready with Internet Explorer and you know of no other options for browsing the internet. There is a growing trend to use other browsers such as Mozilla and Opera and there are more.

As a matter of fact, some institutions have "recommended" switching to other browsers. In a recent C-NetNews.com article, the Pennsylvania University technology department sent notices to their students recommending them to change internet browsers to reduce attacks to vulnerabilities in the Microsoft software.

According to an article at E-commercetimes.com security advisories and reports typically include preventive measures that computer users can take to avoid malicious internet attacks, but one piece of advice is on the rise: Use a web browser other than Microsoft's.
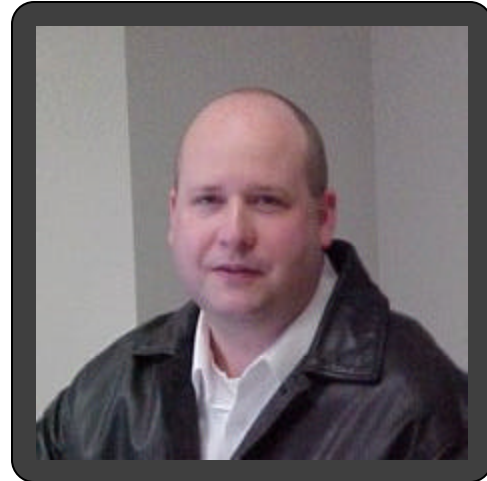
An article at Globetechnology.com offers a 'bug free surfing zone' utilizing the Firefox software.

The United States Computer emergency Readiness Team states "There are a number of significant vulnerabilities in technologies relating to the IE domain/zone security model." and as a solution 'suggests' to utilize other browsers as stated in this article .

Please check with your Information Technology/ Data Processing Department before installing any new software. Then go out and explore the many options available for internet exploring. You may realize that "cheddar is better".

New Employee Profile

Vanguard Appraisals welcomes Michael Weeks to their team as a CAMA Specialist. He has worked in the assessment field in Iowa since 1996. First in Black Hawk County then as Deputy Assessor in Buchanan County and lastly in Poweshiek County. Mike possesses a great working knowledge of CAMAvision as well as the many other services Vanguard Appraisals has to offer. He will spend most of his time in Illinois and eastern Iowa where he'll concentrate on new clients and continue to offer our support to current users.

Mike has two nephews, which he loves to spoil and in his free time enjoys golf, water skiing, snow skiing and being with friends and family.

What Is Your Opinion?

We have previously had the Iowa/ Illinois workshops in the Spring. Would June or July work better for you? How about August?

Workshops will be on CamaX! What topics would you like to see at the workshops?

As always, your opinion does matter...Please email _teresa@camavision.com_ to make your input count!

Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, and South Dakota Workshop Topics?

Please email _teresa@camavision.com_