

The Cutting Edge of Geospatial DataBlades

BY ERIN TRIBBLE

Within the geospatial arena, Informix is keeping some very good company. “We’ve had DataBlade modules made by some of the most influential players in spatial,” says Ed Katibah, director of DataBlade Partner Engineering at Informix. Foremost among those partners are Environmental Systems Research Institute Inc. (ESRI), in Redlands, California, and MapInfo, in Troy, New York.

ESRI’s DataBlade module for the Informix platform is called Spatial Database Engine (SDE) for Informix. “We’ve built a product—using Informix’s DataBlade technology—that manages spatial data within the Informix database rather than in a separate GIS,” says Kevin Daugherty, manager of strategic accounts at ESRI. With SDE for Informix, users can define spatial data types and functions and integrate them with nonspatial data.

While ESRI has cast a wide net in the GIS market by developing products for various segments, MapInfo has focused its efforts on the business segment. “Our products are not geared toward GIS specialists but to people who need to use spatial technology to understand and serve their customers better in their day-to-day business,” says Chebel Mina, director of strategic alliances at MapInfo.

ESRI Italia of Rome, Italy, the leading supplier of geographic information systems and a member of the ESRI corporate family, developed its GeoCare call center support application to provide real-time answers to customers’ questions related to geographic locations. GeoCare is powered by the Informix Dynamic Server and ESRI SDE DataBlade module. GeoCare gives call center operators the ability to answer questions ranging from “How far away is the nearest service center?” to “Where can I get reception on my cell phone?”

When someone calls in with a question, the call center operator enters the query into a customized system interface. The DataBlade-enabled system then gathers and displays the requested information within seconds.

“Both GeoCare and Informix’s database management systems are specifically designed to manage large quantities of complex data being accessed by a high volume of users,” says Gianluca Attura, chief of ESRI Italia’s GisTel division.

ALS Technologies in Carlsbad, California, has been doing spatial analysis for large financial institutions for quite some time. For several years ALS, an Informix integrator, did all the map building for its clients. Then something changed: “Our clients wanted to learn how to use this technology and make maps themselves,” says David

Hornbeck, ALS chairman and CEO.

As Hornbeck and his colleagues began setting up systems at client sites, they discovered that several departments within one company each had its own unique mapping system. “They had sprung up in four different divisions within one company,” recalls Hornbeck. What had emerged, he says, was a four-headed monster—“four different systems and four different ways of seeing the customer.”

ALS’s solution was to build a system everyone in the company could access. “We collected all the client’s geographic information, stripped out the redundancy from the different divisions, and put it into a spatial data mart powered by Informix Internet Foundation.2000 and MapInfo’s SpatialWare DataBlade module,” Hornbeck says. “Then we built a Web front end that allows people to query the system and generate maps and reports on the fly.”

Integration Technologies, a provider of business mapping solutions based in Newport Beach, California, has just launched a new geospatial application for the Informix platform. Called AnySite Enterprise, the product helps companies in the real estate, retail, restaurant, telecommunications, and insurance industries select optional sites for business expansion, and analyze the success of existing sites.

Mary Toepperwein, vice president of operations, says the product represents a major shift for the company. “A lot of our solutions have been desktop or networked solutions that integrate third-party, location-centric data, such as demographic data and street addresses, with client-specific data,” she explains. “This year, we migrated to a whole new world by merging location-centric data with enterprise data, such as financial and transaction-level data from point-of-sale systems.”



With ESRI’s Spatial Database Engine, users can define spatial data types and functions, and integrate them with nonspatial data.

DST Innovis Builds CRM System on Red Brick

Suppose you're providing cable services (video, voice, data, and interactive) in Tampa, Tijuana, and Tokyo. You'd need a customer relationship management system that's flexible and open, and a data warehouse that's big, fast, flexible, and smart. When DST Innovis, Inc. went looking for the best data warehouse to integrate with its customer relationship management (CRM) and billing tools, it chose Informix Red Brick Decision Server.

DST Innovis (formerly CableData, Inc.) services the video/broadband, telephony, and utilities industries worldwide. The company picked Informix Red Brick Decision Server as the data warehouse platform on which it developed StarGate, a relational online analytical processing (ROLAP) decision support tool.

In turn, StarGate provides analysis and reporting of client information, by business, across multiple service groups for DST Innovis's two premier products in the video/broadband market—Intelecable, which is focused on international markets, and DPP/SQL, which is tailored for North American customers.

Informix's Red Brick tools have enabled DST Innovis to offer its customers a generalized data warehouse that lets them unlock and leverage the data in their subscriber management systems. This allows customers to feed the data into

other systems such as CRM, decision support, reporting, or campaign management tools.

"For us, using Red Brick Decision Server means that our customers don't have to worry about getting data quickly and accurately from their source systems into StarGate," says Ruth Lecheler-Moore, manager

of business intelligence solutions at DST Innovis. "Once it's there, it's ready to be accessed by our StarGate ROLAP/query tools to meet our customers' data management objectives."

An Imaging System That Saves Lives

Informix has found itself at the forefront of the battle against breast cancer. Computerized Thermal Imaging, Inc. (CTI), based in Layton, Utah, will use Informix Internet Foundation.2000 to support its revolutionary breast cancer imaging and data distribution system.

In a multiyear partnership with Informix, CTI will install stand-alone data storage units in hospitals and establish a secure Internet-based warehouse of thermal images, all of which will rely on Foundation.2000.

The CTI system is one that lends itself to an object-relational, Web-ready database such as Foundation.2000. "The data the CTI system manages isn't entered like traditional business data, using a keyboard. Rather, it is recorded using electronic devices like digital cameras or microphones," says Steve Weick, Informix senior vice president.

The data goes through a complex series of algorithms before anything is shown to a radiologist or a patient. "We don't just draw pictures on a screen," says Lynn Satterwaite, vice president of engineering for CTI. "Doing this kind of processing with the volumes of data we deal with requires a fast and scalable data management foundation."

CTI is currently seeking FDA approval for the use of its imaging system as a diagnostic test that would be used in conjunction with mammograms and physical examinations for the detection of breast cancer. The test is simple, painless, and could significantly reduce the number of biopsies that turn out to be benign.