Public Postcodes

ComReg Symposium

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24th November 2003

Perspectives

- GeoLocation ?
- Unique Addressing ?
- Mail Sortation and Delivery ?

Some Background

- Public postcodes largely introduced during 1960s
  - Benefits of automation
  - 1st generation of mail sortation technology
  - Differing levels of granularity
- Public postcode not introduced to Ireland
  - Periodic examinations
  - Huge resistance to change evidenced by the 1985 introduction of Dublin 6W
  - Very significant implementation costs
  - Not cost-effective to implement postcode

Postcodes and Mail Processing

- Facilitate 1st generation automation technology
  - Single line OCR read
- Compliance and accuracy levels are crucial
  - Inverse relationship between granularity and accuracy
- Even with a postcode all address lines must be read to gain automation benefits
- Postcodes are an insufficient basis upon which to build a modern automation programme that must
  - Deliver benefits, cost savings and quality
  - Enable future sophisticated postal services

An Post and Automation

- An Post was a late entrant to automation
  - Skipped the early generation of technology
- Current Automation Programme began in 2000
  - Latest generation of technology
  - Reads and correlates up to 6 lines of an address
  - Matches lines against 1.6m record address database
  - Automatically sorts to town and delivery route
- €110m Investment Programme
  - 4 Centres – Dublin, Cork, Portlaoise, Athlone

How An Post's System Works

- 4 Hub Network
  - Dublin, Cork, Athlone and Portlaoise
  - Total of 20 automated mails processing lines
- OCR filters read addresses through An Post database of 1.6 million addresses
- State-of-the-art OCR technology based on reading multiple address lines.
  - With Modern Technology a Postcode is neither necessary nor particularly useful for purpose of mails processing
- PostCodes are the application of 1960's technology to a 21st Century Problem

Automation Status

- Current Status:
  - Plant and equipment – installed and operational
  - 85% of letters sorted without manual sorting intervention to main delivery offices
  - Sorting to delivery route has commenced in Dublin
- When will it finish?
  - Full concentration / sortation to town / delivery office by April 2004
  - Sortation to delivery route / firm / PO Box by June 2005

GeoLocation

- An Post recognise that GeoLocation has value
  - Statistical Analysis & Socio-Demographic Mapping
  - Utilities, Ambulance, Fire Services, Gardai
- GeoDirectory includes:
  - Standardised postal address
  - Boundary details (townlands, wards, DED's)
  - Usage (residential or commercial)
  - Unique building id.
  - Business names
- The full GeoDirectory is used by:
  - Utilities, Local authorities, CSO, Gardai, emergency services, Commercial organisations

GeoLocation Code Implementation

Key Issues that must be addressed

- What problem are we trying to solve?
- What level of granularity – area, group or specific location?
- Will it solve the non-unique address issue?
- What level of public support will it get?
- How long will it take to establish?
- Who will pay for its development and ongoing costs?
- Who will own / maintain database?
- How will it be allocated?

In Conclusion

- An Post's Automation programme facilitates effective sortation / routing of mail without need for public postcode
  - Public postcode of marginal additional value in sortation of mail with today's systems

- May be national economic infrastructure requirement for a GeoLocation code
  - Absolute clarity required on what problem we are trying to solve
  - Examine the value of existing products
  - GeoDirectory, Pinpoint (Map Flow)