Public Postcodes
ComReg Symposium

Derek Kickham
Commercial Director, An Post

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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)