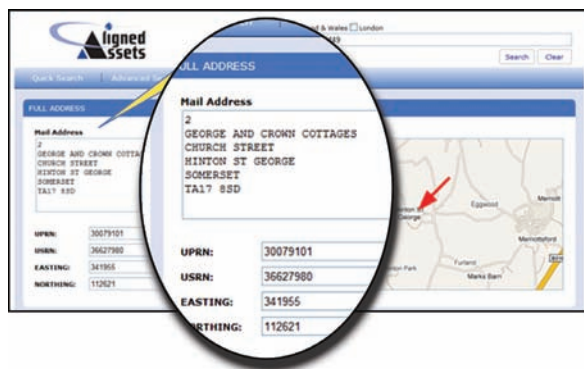


A single contact point

With accurate address data essential to the workings of police forces across the UK, Carl Hancock of Aligned Assets considers the numerous datasets available and how it can often be difficult to know which one to chose. Is there a way round this common situation?

SinglePoint's search facility works with a wide variety of databases. Address searches can be combined with searching a names database, intelligence database, and force-specific gazetteers.



The NLPG

With the introduction of the FiReControl project the Fire and Rescue Services across England are moving toward a full scale adoption of the NLPG at brigade level and increasingly Police forces are looking at the NLPG and its uses.

There remains, however, some unease as to the completeness of the available address datasets, and though the NLPG has standardisation and methods for constant updating, in a profession where good data can mean the difference between life and death, it is understandable why there may be some hesitation. In the case of PAF and AddressPoint, some might say that years of assured usage offer a level of reassurance that the NLPG is not yet able to.

There is also a lot of discussion about a National Emergency Services Gazetteer which would not only contain the address data that would be found in the NLPG, but additional information that is essential to the emergency services. It has been observed that many crimes occur in locations such as a street corner, ATM or bus stop, most of which will not be held by existing datasets. The creation of this gazetteer would undoubtedly give the police even more essential data, which would be as easily accessible through SinglePoint as is any of the existing datasets.

Flexibility

Designed with flexibility in mind, SinglePoint will work regardless of which gazetteer management system is used, and is compatible with any 3rd party GIS. This latter point allows for the visualisation of the address in MapInfo, ESRI or even Google Maps, offering not only a far greater tangibility to the data but assistance in incident recording and crime mapping.

SinglePoint is a key tool for adding value to existing data, value that is expandable through the use of adaptor technology. This takes SinglePoint far beyond any address look up tool that is currently on the market since the adaptors allow its search facility to work with a wide variety of databases. Address searches can for example be combined with searching a names database, intelligence databases and force specific gazetteers.

Spencer Chainey observed; "The problems with address-based data are consistent across all data products and not one in particular. This is often why many police forces have to turn to several address based data sources rather than being confident in relying on one that meets all their needs."

SinglePoint might not solve the problems within the data, but accessing and searching through a single portal will remove many of the problems and inefficiencies currently associated with multiple data sources.

Traditionally the address data of choice has been that provided by the Ordnance Survey – AddressPoint, which is now slowly being replaced with OS Address Layer 2. In addition to this there is PAF from the Royal Mail and new to the mix is the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) – address data direct from the local authorities of England and Wales.

Each has merits, but when dealing with such vast quantities of information it is impossible to draw direct comparisons when it comes to questions of accuracy or usefulness. To date this has left a dilemma of which to choose and in many cases the emergency services have opted to hold multiple gazetteers in order to make sure that every address was covered.

In his report of Feb 2008 entitled *Examining the use of address-based data products in policing in GB*, Spencer Chainey found that police forces were using on average almost five different sources of address data, his reasoning – "because not one single product meets all their needs."

This naturally creates inefficiencies, as accessing each dataset can be time consuming, yet is the only method by which assurance can be gained that the information used is accurate and up to date. If all the data was alternatively combined to produce a "super gazetteer" all that would be created are large scale duplications and the ability to update individual sets would be greatly reduced.

The SinglePoint Solution

Whilst the argument rages on about which is the best dataset to use, gazetteer specialists Aligned Assets have circumnavigated the issue by developing a multi-gazetteer search engine called SinglePoint.

Designed to combine multi-gazetteer functionality with sub-second response times, SinglePoint offers the emergency services a single portal through which all their address gazetteers can be searched simultaneously with the same ease as if searching just the one. By doing it this way, time is saved though only the one search, whilst updating is easy as each gazetteer is maintained in isolation to the next.

"Designed with flexibility in mind, SinglePoint works regardless of which gazetteer management system is used, and is compatible with any 3rd party GIS."

➤ Carl Hancock,
Aligned Assets.

