


editorial

# Engineering data and the Pentagon

The MicroStation V8 media day launch event was well attended, and nobody left early. They all wanted to hear from the lunch speaker, William Skinner, Document Control Manager for the Pentagon Renovation Program's Information Resource Center (IRC). His enthusiastic first-person account of the importance of engineering information made for a memorable day.

"Life safety is very serious business down at the Pentagon," said Skinner, who is also president of A/E Data Integration, Inc. Skinner told about the Pentagon's need for accurate building data—which becomes even more essential in crisis situations—and how MicroStation has delivered.

Prior to the start of the renovation, such information simply didn't exist. The only existing master plans were the original cotton linen plans dating back to 1943. Since then, deliverables were not consistently channeled to a central data repository. So the Pentagon Renovation Program initiated the first comprehensive, consolidated effort to standardize and organize all electronic data in the Pentagon's 58-year history.

That consolidation paid huge dividends after September 11, 2001. "In emergencies, the value of data goes up," he said. "Since this incident, because the IRC had that critical mass of data catalogued and indexed, this is what they were able to do," he continued. "They plotted 2,726 drawings, created 14 new data sets, scanned 18 drawings, created 65 new drawings, E-mailed 218 CAD files, created 236 CDs. We were able to provide information that the decision-makers high and low needed to make the best decisions: 'How close can I pull that crane in and still maintain stability?' Because we had that critical mass of data, we could get them the information they needed.

"Did we save lives?" Skinner asked rhetorically. "Indirectly, yes. We were able to provide the rescue crews with the drawings of that immediate area. They knew where to go to get that data and get it quickly, which they would not have been able to do three to four years ago."

Skinner and the Pentagon Renovation Program look forward to creating a master drawing for the Pentagon proper and surrounding compound so that such information can be accessed around the clock and be available in future phases of construction and, later, operations and maintenance.

Skinner's summary described his goals for the Pentagon project, but it should become the mission of every firm and every owner relying on engineering data. "We need to be proactive," said Skinner. "We need to think about what's going to happen to data in the next phases, who's going to need it and what they're going to need to do with it. With Bentley, we're looking not just for software, but for

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someone to solve long-term graphic information challenges— and we're looking forward to meeting many of our long-term goals."

MSM contributor Michelle Poggi contributed to this month's editorial.

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