



Partner News

Celebrating More Than 10 Years of Excellence

August 2011

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Partner Introduces iPad Viewer

by Paul Reavis

We're usually boundlessly confident here and happy to talk about anything we're working on, but in the case of the iPad viewer we intentionally kept it quiet. We weren't sure we could pull it off, and we knew people would get very excited if they knew we were trying.

Well, we pulled it off. A crash course in Objective C and iOS and some late-night coding produced a very credible prototype, and we've evolved it from there into something that works almost exactly like our desktop viewer. We're already issuing beta tests. We're excited. It's fast. It's cool.

One thing became evident early in the process: we have an amazing design for building portable map viewers. While the map publishing process is time-consuming and sometimes aggravating, it produces highly compressed map data that displays quickly on almost any device. We've spent far more time wrestling with the iPad and iPhone® interface tools than with the actual map rendering.

Another thing that became evident

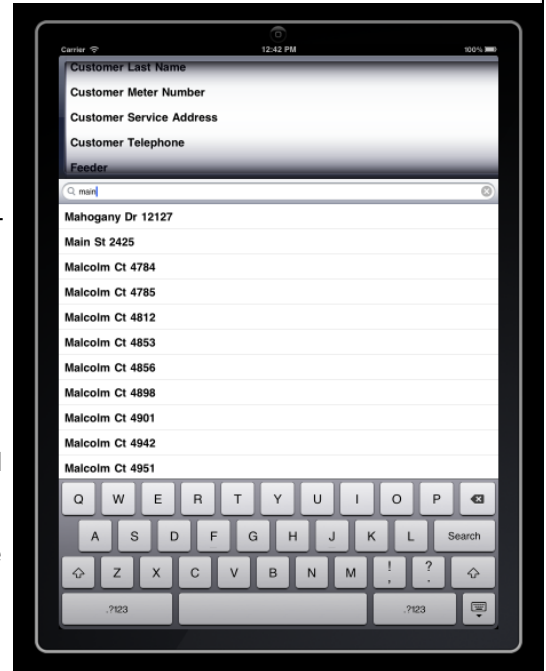
was how good our design for Haversack is. The schema-driven design and simplified map model make it very easy to port Haversack modules to these devices. It looks like we should be able to support even customer-built Haversack modules on iPads and similar devices.

I've tried just about every portable computer, tablet, handheld, and truck computer available. Until the iPad, I had never seen one I really liked or thought met the needs for the task. The iPad, with its powerful processor, accelerated graphics, integrated networking, touch-screen interface and long battery life is almost perfect. As we saw with the iPhone and competing Android devices, I suspect the market will follow Apple's lead with similar devices that give us even more options.

The viewer came together quickly, but we now have to build stable products that we can maintain and support, so I'm being somewhat conservative about features and milestones.

We hope to have a first release by about the user conference. This will focus on map viewing and include viewing, selection, find items, and GPS.

The second release will focus on Haversack integration. We'll start with Mobile Outage and Damage Assessment then try to get all of our Haversack product modules

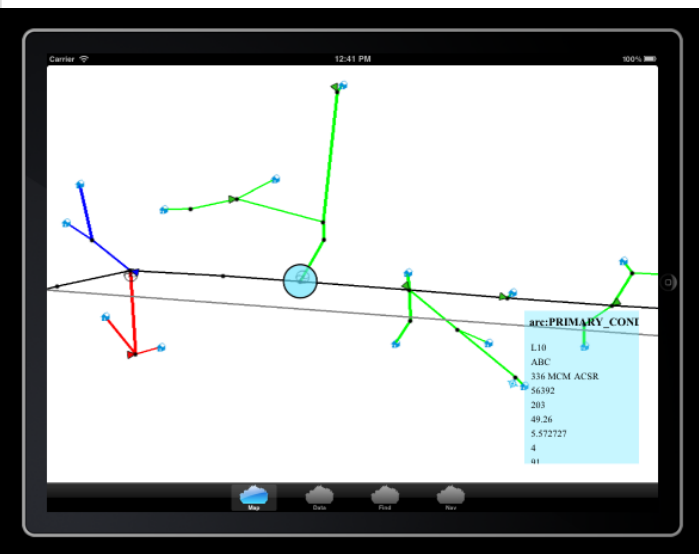


working.

Note that the same software that runs on the iPad also runs on iPhones and iPod touches—generically called Apple iOS devices. Once we have all the functionality working on the iOS platform, we will start looking at also supporting Android and Windows® Mobile platforms. ❖

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New Platforms, New Ideas, New Products

by Paul Reavis

At Partner, we talk a lot about the concept of platform - a hardware or software foundation for building useful tools and products.

Most software has a layered architecture, with platforms or libraries built atop other platforms or libraries, until you get to what the actual user sees. Ours is no different, so the meaning of "platform" means different things based on what layer you're discussing.

In general, we mean one of the following:

- ◆ the computer hardware,
- ◆ the operating system,
- ◆ the Java Virtual Machine and libraries,
- ◆ the Partner modular development platform,
- ◆ the Partner map application platform, a.k.a. Rover,
- ◆ the Partner distributed data platform, a.k.a. Haversack.

Our development and map application platforms have evolved over more than a decade into their current forms, and are both stable and well-established. Haversack is the new kid on the block; it is the latest incarnation of what started as our Inspection System, and is designed to make it even easier to write distributed, map-based applications. It will be the foundation for both Partner Mobile and Partner Inspection modules in the near future.

So what is it? As many of our customer-developers know, it is trivial to "put dots on the map" - build a simple map-based application - on the Rover platform. Where things get hard is when you grapple with data modeling, data entry forms, and data synchronization. Our initial mission for Inspection was to simplify and standardize as much of those tasks as possible. When we started work on Mobile Outage, it became clear that we could apply those same concepts, and that it was no longer appropriate to call it "Inspection". Thus, Haversack was born.

Conceptually, Haversack is still pretty simple. You define a "rich

schema", which includes not just the data model, but also information on how to build forms and reports. The Haversack platform then takes care of all the tedious details of setting up the database, generating the forms, creating wheel menu actions, and handling synchronization. You are then free to concentrate on the more interesting parts of your application, and customize details like the map styles and integration. Everything gets stored in a straightforward SQL database model, so you can always get at your data when you need it, or use it with third-party applications and tools.

This platform is so powerful and flexible, we think we'll probably build all new products on it.

Haversack has also proven to be the solution to the thorny question of how to support non-PC platforms. Java has allowed us to run our software on most major operating systems; we actively work in several versions of Windows, Mac OS X, and Linux. Unfortunately, support for Java on mobile platforms like Apple iOS and Google™ Android is either limited or nonexistent. This makes building applications on those devices much more difficult.

With the introduction of Haversack, though, we have a simplified model for data synchronization, viewing, and editing. While we can't share much code between a PC running Windows and Java and an iPad running iOS, we can share the design, data model, and other concepts. The handheld version of Haversack is called "Handy", and includes only the components required for end-user applications on those devices.

To further simplify Handy, we are moving most of the validation and custom scripting to the server side. Haversack will always run disconnected (since, in a utility market especially, we can't trust mobile communications to always be there), but synchronization is still critical for collaboration and centralization of data. There are two options here—we can run the Haversack Hub component on an internal machine, which is fine for Inspection-type applications, or use a hosted server,

which is ideal for Mobile-type applications.

For 2012, we have reorganized our presentation of our products and platforms to include these concepts. We have divided the various platforms into three tiers:

- ◆ Partner Basic—Rover map viewing, dynamic map sets, update, publishing,
- ◆ Partner Plus—Haversack on a local network,
- ◆ Partner Complete—Haversack on a hosted server and on mobile devices.

Actual product applications are then built on, and require, one of these tiers. Our flagship Field Designer production, for example, is built on Partner Basic, and does not require Haversack. Distribution Inspection and Right-of-Way are Haversack product modules built on Partner Plus. Mobile Outage and Damage Assessment are Haversack product modules built on Partner Complete.

As you get the more advanced tiers, other capabilities will be unlocked. For example, if you have Partner Complete, then you will also be able to use Distribution Inspection on the hosted server and on mobile devices. We also imagine using Haversack to view and edit Field Designer job header information. Our goal is to make the value of each product and platform tier you purchase from us increase based on tier capabilities and integration with your other products.

We won't finish it all by the end of this year, but we should have plenty to show off at our User Conference and useful applications ready to ship when you need them. ❖

Showcases

Thus far this year, Partner has held one technical showcase at **Salt River Electric Co-op Corporation** in Bardstown, KY. Partner is planning more technical showcases in the very near future. Watch our website, www.partnersoft.com, for details about these upcoming events.

Partner's First Regional Conference

by David Shaw

We understand today's economy makes it difficult to justify taking time and money to travel to Athens, GA for Partner training and camaradery. With the idea of making this easier, our first Regional Conference was held at **Hawkeye Rural Electric Cooperative** in Cresco, IA. We feel it was a great success and would like to thank Dave Wilkes and the Hawkeye staff for hosting such an excellent event. It allowed more than 25 people from over 10 local co-ops to preview the latest and greatest in Partner Field Design and Tri-Global MobileStaker™. Additionally, classes, such as Map Publisher, were available that usually are only offered at our Athens office. In fact, it was so successful that we will be hosting a second Regional Conference in Iowa next February and are planning a conference for eastern Texas in March. ❖

Partner Is Moving

After five years in the same location, we are moving to a brand new building in September. Our new office is so NEW that there is still a large crane hovering over the building while they finish it. We are gaining a lot more space and we'll all be on the same level unlike our current office where we occupy two floors.

Our new physical location will be Suite 700, Skyline Terrace, 125 West Washington Street, Athens, GA 30601. Our mailing address, however, will remain the same—P.O. Box 748, Athens, GA 30603. ❖

NOTICE: ESRI® ArcMap Upgrade to Version 10

by John Dolezal

Partner customers who are currently considering upgrading their ESRI software to version 10 should be aware that the Partner Map Translator and Map Publisher are not yet compatible with this version. Partner is working to resolve this issue soon, with full expectation to have a solution for the Map Publisher in place by the fourth quarter 2011. This solution will not apply to Map Translators—Translator users will need to purchase and convert to the Map Publisher. It is of utmost importance that our customers be aware, at press time, that an ESRI version 10 upgrade will impair the Map Translator and Map Publisher—as well as prevent mapping updates for the Field Design, Field Inspection and Mobile applications.

Customers who are considering an upgrade to ESRI version 10 should consult Partner Software immediately to determine if this issue has been resolved. ❖

PARTNER'S 2011 USER CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 27–29, 2011

USER TRACKS: PARTNER PLATFORM, FIELD DESIGN, INSPECTION/MOBILE, VENDOR

ONE-DAY TRAINING SEMINARS: DEVELOPMENT, INSPECTION—FOCUSING ON DISTRIBUTION & RIGHT OF WAY, TRI-GLOBAL

PARTNER IS OFFERING TWO-DAY MAP PUBLISHER TRAINING ON SEPTEMBER 26 & 30, 2011.

See www.partnersoft.com for details.

Partner's Staff

LEADERSHIP

Paul Reavis—President
William Fay—Chairman

DEVELOPMENT

Paul Reavis—Director
Jaim Ahmed—Field Design System
Thrane Jensen—IT Director & CFO
Rich Stepanski—Field Inspection System
Jeremy Tarver—Integration

Eric Wagoner—Partner Web
Dan Wentworth—Support Tools

TESTING & QUALITY ASSURANCE

Richard Fay—Director

SUPPORT, CONFIGURATION & INSTALLATION

John Dolezal—Installation & Configuration
Chris Dluhy—Inspection Support
Adam Drogan—Staking-to-GIS
Russ Hicks—Director of Support
Bryan J. Howard—Support
Nakisha Johnson—Support
Burt McCollum—Integration
Dave Rowe—Field Inspection System
Allen Rowell—Production Coordinator

Jay Tootle—Installation
Kyle Veitch—Support
Dominique Walker—Reports
Ryan Webber—Support

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Ashley Bagwell—Marketing
Richard Catanise—Inspection Sales

COMMUNICATIONS & ADMINISTRATION

Linda Basinger—Director