Newsletter

ATLAS

ATLAS Technology is part of Crown Research Institute, Scion

www.atlastech.co.nz

December 2007

Providing integrated forest management and modelling software for the forestry industry

A word from our Manager...

The past three months have been busy ones at ATLAS, and progress has been made in a number of areas, some of which are outlined in this newsletter.

Work has been progressing on the development of bucking software for use in a harvesting / de-limbing head.

Other projects include work on a helmet-mounted device that allows branch measurement, and ongoing development of methods for single stem plotting.

Work has begun on a prototype internet-access GeoMaster. We are collaborating with Geographic Business Solutions on the project as they have a wealth of internet access mapping experience, and we hope to have a simple working prototype early in the New Year. From there we will be formulating a timetable to look at a commercial version.

We would like to congratulate Ernslaw One who went live with GeoMaster in mid-October. This was the culmination of a lot of hard work to complete the data conversion from the team at Ernslaw and from Christian Pilaar at our end. They are to be presented with our special award for the "Hardest Data Conversion". (Not necessarily a trophy to envy!)

Attendees at the last GeoMaster user group may have noticed that some of our posters and powerpoints are now sporting our new logo. This is not intended as a rebranding exercise, but it was felt that the old logo needed to be simplified to make it easier to work with. While maintaining the theme of integration from the old logo, it also better aligns with the Scion logo.

With a busy and exciting year for us now drawing to a close, I would like to to wish you all a great Christmas and an enjoyable and safe holiday.

Sarah Heine
General Manager

SCION
Next generation biomaterials

High-tech Tools for Forestry

ATLAS Technology has been working with Scion's Centre for Human Factors and Ergonomics (COHFE) in evaluating new technologies for forestry measurement practices. The aim of the project is to develop a tool to assist in the measurement of upper stem branch diameters.

The tool is based on a Head Mounted Display (HMD) – a small, transparent screen attached to the operator's helmet. Using a technique known as Augmented Reality, the operator observes a target object through the HMD. This device displays computer-generated information that 'overlay' the object in a way that assists with measurement. In this case, by displaying a calibrated reference grid (derived from the distance from the tree and the vertical viewing angle), the diameter of mid-stem branches can be more accurately determined.

The project has passed the proof-of-concept phase, and is now addressing some of the more practical, in-field aspects of the tool and its use.

Harvest Scheduler Released!

ATLAS Harvest Scheduler was released to its first customer Hikurangi Forest Farms (HFF), a medium-sized forestry company based in Gisborne, New Zealand. They intend to use Harvest Scheduler to manage the crew and harvest unit selection, to track harvest unit area depletion, and control the flow of log products from their 27 500 ha estate of predominantly steep terrain forest.

Prior to implementing Harvest Scheduler into their business, HFF used a large, internally-developed planning spreadsheet. This sheet was used within the company by everyone from the accountant (to forecast company revenues) to the production planner (who attempted to schedule crews and smooth flow of logs from their estate with it).

With the implementation of Harvest Scheduler into the business HFF are now able to prepare their data more easily. Stand data can be imported directly from ATLAS GeoMaster to obtain up-to-date stocked areas, and from ATLAS Yield Table Manager (the yield cube repository) to obtain the latest log product yield estimates.

The production planner can model crew productivity at a forest, harvest unit or harvest unit/day level. A full calendar of work days allows for detailed production estimates.

The scenario management features within Harvest Scheduler allow several people to use the system at the same time without interfering with each other.

With the adoption of Harvest Scheduler, forecasting company revenues, crew scheduling and log production planning has become easier, more secure and reliable for all the ex-spreadsheet users within Hikurangi Forest Farms.

> "I am impressed. I have produced crew targets and reports on daily, weekly and monthly time scales and found some of the functions great..."
>
> *Richard Prince (production planner for HFF)*

Marika's Musings

Just in time for Christmas our FieldMan-Wizz, Brian Clement, has decided to release a new version of FieldMan2 with brand new features, such as a keystroke "Ctrl + S" to manually save the database. An updated FieldMan Manual will be available in December as well.

A new version of Forecaster is up for grabs too. Version 1.2.6 has an improved algorithm that sets the heights of individual stems. Joel Gordon has also added some improvements for calliper and percentage pruning and other things that are described in detail in the release notes.

As all good things come in three, there was a major new release of GeoMaster (1.10) in November.

All in all the past year has been a challenging, yet exciting first year at ATLAS Technology for me. I took much pleasure in working with and becoming part of the ATLAS team and was delighted to get to know many of the ATLAS clients. On this note I'd like to thank everyone for all the training, support and understanding I was given, which made this first year so very enjoyable.

Ich wünsche Ihnen allen Fröhliche Weihnachten und einen guten Rutsch ins Neue Jahr!

(I wish everyone a very merry Christmas and a good sleigh-ride into the New Year)

Marika

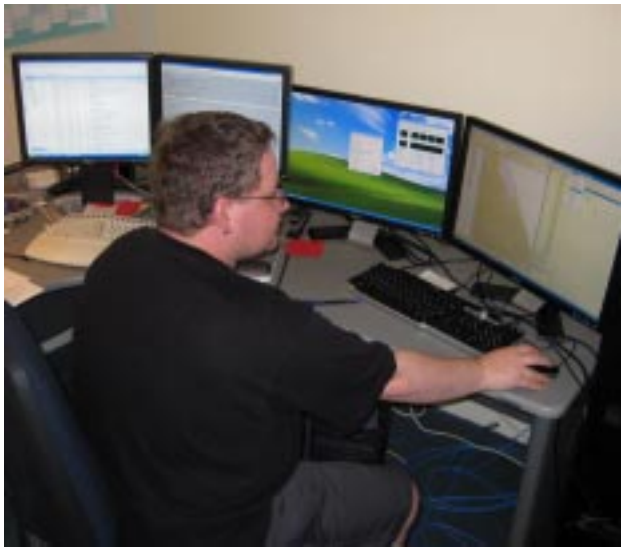
What's new with GeoMaster

There has been a high level of activity among the GeoMaster team in recent months. The release of v1.10 of GeoMaster has brought a raft of changes – some cosmetic, such as the layout of forms. Other changes will bring you more efficiency, such as being able to bulk update Client Fields.

After the user meeting in June, users prioritised a list of potential developments, and about half of the top 15 features were implemented in v1.10. The remainder have been blended in with new suggestions that arose during the November meeting and will provide direction for the next upgrade. Popular suggestions included the ability to edit multiple events concurrently, and the provision of application level security so that data could be viewed but not modified when being accessed through other tools such as Excel or Access.

The user group meetings continue to be an effective means of identifying issues and potential solutions both with the software, and with the management of forest data in general. Issues often arise in discussion that we as developers are unaware of, and these set us thinking about how we can adapt the software to better support those who use it. Examples of this include meeting area audit and FSC reporting requirements.

To improve access to documentation, a "white papers" section has been added to the GeoMaster support page on the ATLAS website. This section contains documents that describe how specific features of GeoMaster work, and how to use them. The range of documents will grow over time as new features are released, or the need to better explain existing features becomes apparent. As users we invite you to alert us to topics that require better documentation and we will endeavour to provide it.



Forecaster Update

Forecaster V1.2 is being used to compare predictions of a number of growth models with PSP measurements. To enable this to be done more easily, Forecaster has been enhanced to import PSP data from CSV files. It will also export data once a simulation has completed so that the comparison of measured and predicted values can be made.

Merry Christmas from the team at ATLAS

Upcoming Conferences

AUSTimber 2008
3-8 March 2008
Mount Gambier, Australia

The conference this year focuses on careers in the Forest Industry, and will include visits to forest-related enterprises.

ATLAS Technology will be at the exhibition, which runs from Thursday 6 March to Saturday 8 March from 9am to 4.30pm.

We look forward to talking to you about how our software tools will maximise your value recovery from plantation forests. So drop past and see us at site number 47 in pavilion 4.

www.austimber2008.com.au

Forest Tech 2008
Albury, Australia
April 2008

Tools and technologies to improve forest planning and operations.

http://www.innovatek.co.nz/conferences_and_events.html

To learn more about ATLAS products

www.atlastech.co.nz

Our products apply to key areas of the forestry value chain, enhancing the management information available to provide value-added decision support:

- Forest and land information (ATLAS GeoMaster®)
- Forest resource assessment (ATLAS Cruiser®)
- Forest management DSS (ATLAS Forecaster®)
- Quality assurance (ATLAS SilviQC)
- Forest estate planning (FOLPI)
- Data collection (ATLAS FieldMan)
- Harvest planning (ATLAS Harvest Manager)
- Harvest scheduling and log allocation (ATLAS Market Supply/ATLAS Yield Table Manager)
- Document management (ATLAS Document Manager)
- Map production (ATLAS GeoMapper)

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