

Providing integrated forest management and modelling software

November 2010

I am sure as I get older time seems to speed up. We are well into spring, Labour Weekend has been and gone, and Christmas is just around the corner. It feels like I have only just finished writing this article for our last newsletter back in June. However, looking back and as this newsletter will attest, ATLAS has not been idle since that last newsletter.

The ATLAS team continues to grow with two more new appointments. Sabita Ghimire has joined us as a Test Analyst. Sabita is well qualified as a software tester and has many years experience testing a wide range of software. Originally from Nepal, Sabita has moved down from Auckland with her husband, to live in Rotorua. We have also recruited a senior Business Analyst, Albert Jovner, who started on 1 November. Albert has extensive business analysis skills and experience. By growing our business analysis and testing capability we are looking to improve how we design, develop and deliver our software.

ATLAS has organised two recent events. Firstly, the Forestry GIS conference, where we had over 100 people attend to look at the use of spatial technology in the forestry sector. Check inside for more information on the success of the conference. Secondly, the Crown Research Institute (CRI) Developer Workshop, where we had six of the eight CRIs, plus

others, to show each other capabilities, technologies and methodologies, and identify where we could help each other to better implement science through software. With the Government adopting the CRI Taskforce recommendations, their expectation is for greater collaboration between the CRIs to accelerate the technology transfer of science to industry.

Finally, to ensure ATLAS is keeping up with the latest and greatest that technology has to offer, a couple of our developers recently attended Microsoft's annual TechEd Conference in Auckland. This is where 2,500 geeks get together, talk shop, and generally soak up everything technological they can with their industry peers. It's quite a spectacular event and ATLAS gets great benefit from attending.

Bob Forgan
ATLAS Manager
bob.forgan@atlastech.co.nz



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Microsoft TechED 2010



TechEd is an annual mega 3-day technology event for IT professionals and developers organized by Microsoft NZ. It's always held at the SkyCity convention centre in Auckland. The conference includes local as well as international speakers and is touted as the largest computing conference of its kind in New Zealand.

Along with about 2500 other IT professionals, we (Luke and John) were selected to head off to TechEd. The 2010 conference consisted of over 170 sessions. Of these, more than 35 were web or desktop developer specific sessions. At some of the more interesting sessions we learned...

- "How to Pimp My App". User interface expert, Shane Morris, showed the principles of good user interface design;
- How to "Parallelise your .NET App with Parallel Extensions in .NET 4";
- What's new in C# and .NET 4;
- About the goodies in "ASP.NET MVC version 2 & 3";
- How to perform Advanced UI testing in Visual Studio 2010.

There were even "deep-dive" sessions on Windows 7 phone development. Obviously Microsoft has BIG plans on taking on Apple's iPhone and Google's Android!

However, the conference wasn't all work and no play. Most notable were the brilliant lunches. The food (as usual) was exquisite! The TechFest (party night) was a Mexican theme and was held in the old Auckland town hall where we were entertained by the rock band Midnight Youth and by the distinctive voice of Gin Wigmore.

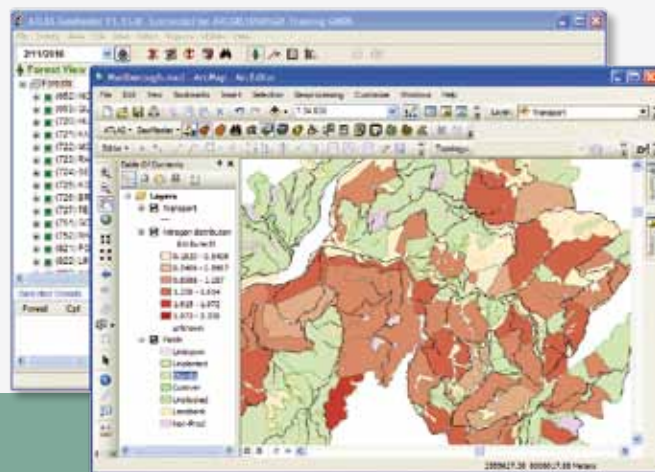
GeoMaster Update

It's been "all hands to the pump" in GeoMaster land of late. Having made the switch to the latest compiler, we've discovered plenty of surprises - components that behave differently, or not all, text on forms that doesn't align any more, or shows through other form controls. Add to this the various environments GeoMaster needs to support - two operating systems (XP & Windows 7), three versions of SQL Server (2005, 2008, and 2008 R2), three geodatabase options (PGDB, File GDB, and SDE) and finally two significantly different versions of ArcGIS (9.3 and 10) and you'll have some idea of the labyrinth that testing has become for v1.15. And that is just to stay where we were.

But there's little satisfaction in staying put, so there will be the usual range of enhancements to simplify (or complicate) life for GeoMaster users. In v1.15 Events can have Client Fields which means organisations can add their own fields for recording authorisation and financial information or performance criteria for example. Organisations will also be able to add columns to key layers in GIS and have them automatically populated with values from selected fields from GeoMaster. This would enable the GIS to retain information on croptype or tenure for example, to add value to map outputs.

The recent GeoMaster user meeting had a different feel than usual, in that quite a number of non-GeoMaster users chose to stay behind after the Forestry GIS conference and participate in the GeoMaster meeting as well. It was a good opportunity to review industry issues such as the impact of the ETS. Peter Eredics, the Forestry manager at ESRI, gave an overview of international trends in forest management systems (and rated GeoMaster up there with the best!).

Nitrogen distribution: GeoMaster with ArcGIS 10.0



Test Analyst, Sabita Ghimire

Test Analyst, Sabita Ghimire, has been tasked to look for faults in the ATLAS software. In-house testing is expected to reveal issues that can be resolved as the product is still being developed. Sabita tests the software from a user perspective and challenges the programmers to ensure ATLAS software is user-ready before release.

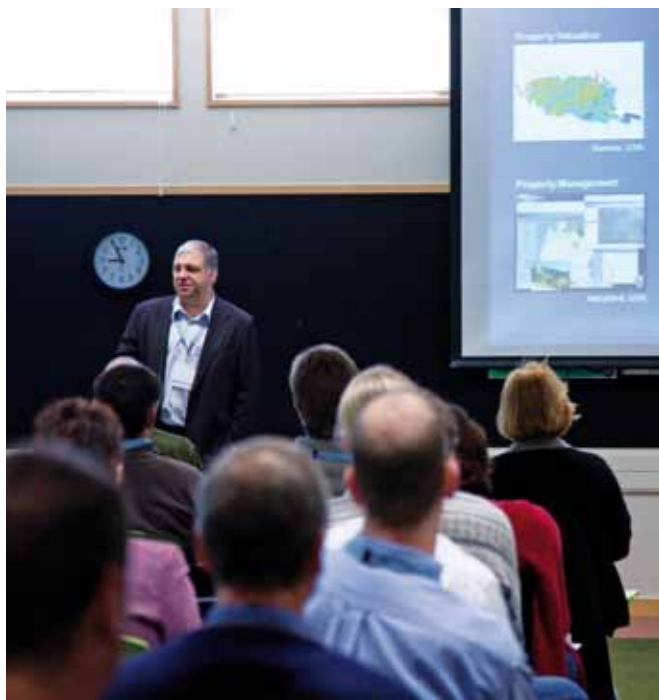
Sabita is a Business graduate of the University of Utah, and a professionally Certified Tester, with three years testing experience in the insurance industry before she immigrated to New Zealand in 2010.



In January when she returns from three months maternity leave, Sabita anticipates working directly with clients to identify issues that affect their use of ATLAS products.

"There will be opportunities to increase our understanding of client needs, and for ATLAS to provide training for new software releases", she says.

GIS conference draws crowd



ATLAS Technology recently hosted a one-day forestry GIS conference at the Waiariki Institute of Technology School of Forestry. Conference speakers included experts from the New Zealand forestry industry and the international GIS community. The event proved to be hugely popular, with registrations exceeding 100.

The keynote speaker, Peter Eredics – Forestry Manager at ESRI (pictured above) highlighted how forestry was one of the earliest adopters of GIS technology but stressed that forestry now needed to look to other sectors for innovative ideas on improving the effectiveness of GIS in forestry.

Cris Brack (Waiariki Institute) talked about a step change in forest measurement made possible through tools like LiDAR that could help to meet the increasing demand for quality and quantity of information. His talk was complemented by other talks on LiDAR by speakers from Scion and FFR.

Further examples of GIS application included a demonstration by Luke Bettis (ATLAS) of the Acres prototype. This is a web-based tool for assessing the financial, environmental and carbon effects of integrated land management and landuse change. Jithen Singh (Eagle Technology) introduced the new look and features of ArcGIS v10 and ArcGIS mobile technology.

There were a host of other speakers during the conference, and if you are interested in getting hold of their presentations, they are available on the Scion website: <http://www.scionresearch.com/forestry-gis-conference/presentations/> until 23 December 2010.

Given the enthusiastic response from attendees, ATLAS intends to host more events of this type in the future.

Praneita's Postings



Kia ora to all readers,

Are you using the latest and greatest versions of ATLAS applications? I hope all our users are nodding a yes to that!

If you are using an out-of-date version, you may be potentially missing out on significant bug fixes and enhancements that could make your interaction with the application more efficient.

To check the version of the application you are using, go to Help| About on the menu to get the version number. The version number is also displayed on the introduction screen when you run the application.

The latest releases (as at 3 November 2010) include:

Cruiser	2.7.8	
FieldMan	2.3.3	(v2.4 planned for release late Nov 2010)
Forecaster	1.8	
GeoMaster	1.14.3	(v1.15 planned for release late Nov 2010)
Harvest Scheduler	1.3.8	
Licence Service	2.4.3	
PSP	4.5	
SilviQC	1.12.0	(v1.13 planned for release late Nov 2010)
VMan	1.3.0	
Yield Table Manager	2.2.8	(v2.3 planned for release late Nov 2010)

If you're not on the latest version, do visit the ATLAS website www.atlastech.co.nz and look through the release notes to decide if it's worthwhile installing the latest version.

Those who have moved on to Forecaster v1.7.4 or later versions would have noticed the "new" look with the Future Forests Research (FFR) logo now displayed on the introduction screen to indicate FFR's ownership of Forecaster. We look forward to this Scion/FFR partnership to improve the usability of Forecaster and increase its uptake within the forestry industry.

As an additional note to YTM/GeoMaster users: documentation on linking the two applications is now available on the ATLAS website under Support|Yield Table Manager Support|Yield Table Manager white papers. We would appreciate any feedback you have on this documentation.

Cheers,
Praneita



Upcoming work in Forecaster –

opportunity to have your say

Under the Intensive Forests Systems (IFS) programme administered by Future Forests Research (FFR), we are investigating some significant changes to Forecaster. A couple of scoping projects are under way to determine potential enhancements relating to:

- 1. Spatial interface** – while this has been in use for some time now, we have had some good improvements suggested by users. Further enhancements will be made, but if you have any suggestions from your use of this feature, please let us know.
- 2. Further role-based interfaces** – similar to the Yield Generator interface now available, these would aim to provide a single-screen interface for foresters carrying out silvicultural scheduling or regime analysis. We are interested in potential demand for either of these tasks, as well as feature requests.
- 3. Economic Analysis** – Forecaster currently takes results to volume and (non-discounted) value by log product. This extension will provide discounted cashflow analysis, among other features. We are interested to hear what other needs users may have.

While we have already been actively talking with several users (we initially approached a sample of FFR members), we invite suggestions from the wider community as well.



In addition we are investigating options for delivering Forecaster and the Radiata Calculator as a web application rather than a desktop application. This approach has a number of advantages, but as always there are a few drawbacks as well. We are particularly keen to hear feedback on this topic – from Forecaster users (or potential users) as well as IT teams responsible for roll-out of applications to users and control of web access. Please feel free to pass this news on to any interested parties.

Once complete, the scoping study will be subject to approval of the Technical Steering Team of FFR's Radiata Management theme before any development work is commenced. The final scoping reports should be available through the usual FFR channels by the new year.

All feedback will be greatly appreciated – please contact support by email or phone.

To learn more about ATLAS products

visit www.atlastech.co.nz

Forestry information management and decision making support tools, to maximise the value of your business:

- 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 Harvest Scheduler/ATLAS Market Supply)
- Inventory design (ATLAS Assessment Planner)
- Map production (ATLAS GeoMapper)
- Yield Table Management and Manipulation (ATLAS Yield Table Manager)



ATLAS Technology, 49 Sala Street,
Private Bag 3020, Rotorua 3010, New Zealand.
To contact Atlas phone +64 7 343 5624 or 0800 RUN ATLAS (NZ only)
Email software.support@atlastech.co.nz



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