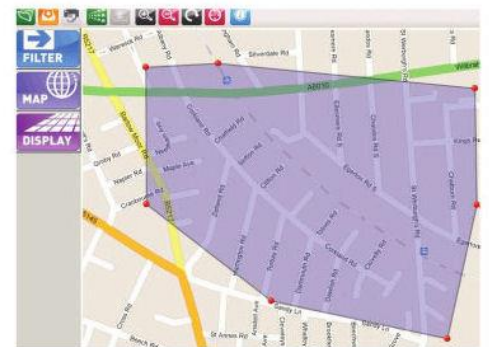
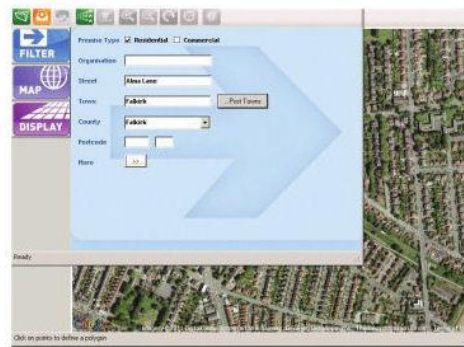
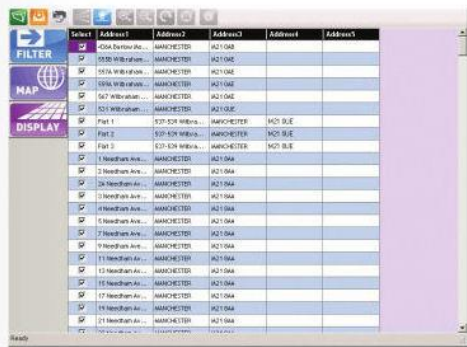


Enhancing PAF with MR data

Royal Mail's Postcode Address File is the UK marketer's go to file for direct mail work and a lot more, but a rare weakness in the files is how it deals with multiple residency data – which is where Arc En Ciel's AddressList utility comes in handy with some neat functionality, finds **James Lawson**.



Arc en Ciel's AddressList utility is a selection tool for address and address-related data from Royal Mail. Using the PAF for list generation has long been a low cost way to get hold of both UK business and residential addresses and use them to generate mailing lists. According to PAF owner Royal Mail, that means more than 28 million addresses – including 1.7 million business premises – and two million postcodes across the UK, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands.

The big difference with AddressList is that it also contains Royal Mail's Multiple Residency (MR) data set. This means the record count can increase by 20% over PAF in high-density urban areas due to extra shared-entry addresses, self-contained flats and other subdivided buildings not held in the PAF.

Take the W9 postcode district as an example: PAF returns 12,592 residential addresses but this increases to 14,676 by adding in the MR data – a 16% increase. This also implies better targeting and less wastage in direct mail: letters addressed to a single delivery point when a house has in fact been divided into four or more flats are far more likely to go astray.

Once the application is installed, you can generate as many lists as you like. Note that addresses are all you get, as adding some form of the Edited Electoral Roll to generate names would be prohibitively expensive. Direct marketing will be the main application for this product, where it can be used to plan anonymous "To the householder" mailings or door drops. Other current users include council departments, wind farm developers and demographic researchers.

To select the addresses required, you can either use the Filter function at street, town, village, county or postcode area level or employ

the built-in Google mapping. The former offers the full set of PAF fields including residential or business, town name, premise type (commercial or residential) and so forth. It's also possible to select on a few extra fields taken from the Postzon file such as country, NHS Authority and Local Authority.

Laudably, AddressList's mapping function employs OS CodePoint data which gives grid references for each postcode's centroid to within 1m, rather than the Postzon data which is only accurate to 100m. The user simply draws a polygon or a circle to define the area of interest: for example, a set of blocks of flats.

Fine tuning is simply a matter of dragging the "handles" that define the polygon or circle. This geographical selection is used in conjunction with the criteria already set on the Filter page, for example, in order to restrict the list to residential properties only. From here, a click on the Generate button creates the list of addresses. Filtering, mapping and extraction of hundreds of thousands of records all worked rapidly and smoothly, even on an old XP machine.

You can also grab a shot of the mapping screen or print it out. Other simple options like zooming and re-centering by postcode, place or street name give control of the mapping.

At this point AddressList's work is almost done. There's the option to generate lists in CSV, Excel or XML, so it's simple to export lists to other applications, perhaps moving into Excel as

source for mailmerging within Word or using a fully-fledged mapping application like MapInfo. These would give many more options for manipulation, reporting and visualisation.

Though it's hardly needed, the application has sufficient help information and there are three simple exercises to work through that cover all the filtering options. One thought for the developers is that this application might better be delivered online. That way, access could be via a password and data downloaded via an encrypted connection, updates would be transparent and further functionality from Arc En Ciel's numerous other addressing products could be added at will.

Given the quality of the base data, there are many other things that could be done with it. A unified yet modular approach might also remove the need for separate PAF licences for each application as is currently the case.

The data sets are of course available separately, but it's the neatly packaged nature of the data and the list generation application combined that is the key attraction here. Bringing the PAF together with MR data, CodePoint and elements of Postzon make it unique in the UK market, and the mapping function adds an extra attraction for those such as small retailers or estate agents who have catchments to market to. The data itself may be the big attraction, but AddressList gives less affluent users the power to access and exploit it without needing to invest larger sums in other software. ■

Pricing and Specification

AddressList runs on MS XP, Vista and Windows 7. It costs £580 to purchase, with subsequent annual licences fees of £390. This single payment covers all the relevant data set licences within the product, including the commercial licence for Google Maps. Quarterly updates via the web and telephone support are included in the price. www.arcenciel.co.uk