

Cincom Product
MANTIS

Past

- MANTIS installed in 1984

Present

Applications built using MANTIS include:

- Real Estate Appraisal system
- Appraisal Review Board system
- Residential Appraisal system
- Ownership Maintenance system
- Many others

Future

- MANTIS will continue to be Tarrant Appraisal District's primary development language for all online, CICS applications.



Profile in Success: **Tarrant Appraisal District**

Tarrant Appraisal District calculates the value of MANTIS® as high



"Cincom has always been a pleasure to work with. The company produces a stable and very productive development tool in MANTIS and has always supported it very well. Cincom has also been very responsive to me and the user community. In fact, they seem to anticipate what we need and work toward that need. We are extremely pleased to be a customer of Cincom."

– Robert Hall, Associate Director of Information Systems,
Tarrant Appraisal District

MANTIS provides needed functionality

In 1984, Tarrant Appraisal District purchased and installed two applications: one to process real estate appraisals and one for personal property appraisals. Personal property in Texas includes the assets of the business, and requires a different type of appraisal approach to value, versus valuing real estate and property improvements. Therefore, two packages were required. Unfortunately, neither of the two had enough functionality to meet all the needed requirements. "We bought MANTIS to address the needs we had to fulfill, and used it to add enhanced functionality and integration into those two products," explains Robert Hall, Associate Director of Information Systems. "Since then, those original packages have almost been completely replaced by new MANTIS functions. They're still based on the same foundation, so the majority of the staff has no idea that most of that functionality has been replaced by MANTIS."

Since its original implementation, MANTIS has been used for most of Tarrant Appraisal District's applications. For real estate, there are residential appraisal and commercial appraisal applications, all written in MANTIS. There are ownership maintenance applications that monitor ownership of the more than 670,000 pieces of property, all written in MANTIS. There is also an appeals process application that is supported for people who want to appeal their property values, all written in MANTIS. "When we purchased MANTIS from Cincom," comments Hall, "there was no tool on the market that had the power, flexibility, ease of learning, and ease of use found in MANTIS at that time. And to my knowledge, MANTIS still has no direct competition."

Tarrant Appraisal District has gone through many hardware upgrades since 1984. They have also gone through many different upgrades to their operating system. By year-end, they anticipate upgrading to the most current version, and are not concerned about the migration. "We've never had a problem with MANTIS and our environment," says Hall. "MANTIS has never prevented us from any migration that we had planned. Cincom and MANTIS were always at the head of that migration plan for us."

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Client background

In the state of Texas, every county has an appraisal district that appraises property in its county in order to calculate its taxable value. Tarrant County is an urban county located in the north central part of Texas. Fort Worth serves as the county seat to a county population of approximately 1.4 million citizens. The Tarrant Appraisal District, which employs approximately 200 people, uses mass appraisal techniques to value over 670,000 properties in Tarrant County. Some of the major commercial properties being appraised in Tarrant County include the DFW Airport, American Airlines, Radio Shack, Pier One Imports and Bell Helicopter, to name just a few.

Instant application

MANTIS has both procedural and non-procedural components. MANTIS allows programmers to focus on the procedural aspects of an application – the business rules – without having to deal with the basic housekeeping associated with opening/closing files, moving data from files to screens and from screens to files, establishing addressability to data, acquiring and freeing memory, and so forth. The screen definition facility is also much simpler and much more efficient than defining screens with BMS (IBM's Basic Mapping Service). For Tarrant Appraisal District, developing MANTIS applications has proven to be many times more productive than developing applications in COBOL with BMS.

For example, not long after MANTIS had been installed, the Deputy Chief Appraiser described a need to one of the programmers. The need was for an application that could browse and update data in an existing VSAM dataset. The programmer was able to demonstrate a working prototype of the new application, complete with menu and browsing capabilities, along with inquiry, add, change, and delete functions later that very same day. Once the screen content and functionality were discussed with the users, the business rules were added and the application was put into production two days later. According to Hall, "This would have been impossible using COBOL and BMS."

"We feel that Tarrant Appraisal District has always been a leader in developing extremely sophisticated appraisal applications for our use here in Tarrant County. MANTIS has been a key component of our success here. We couldn't have done it without MANTIS."

– Robert Hall,
Associate Director of Information Systems,
Tarrant Appraisal District