



# City of Lincoln practices democracy through the Internet

The City of Lincoln, Nebraska, is at the forefront of web-enabling public access to its systems, using the latest CICS technology to deliver information to citizens from existing databases.

“CICS and the Internet have enabled us to be cost effective and at the same time better serve the public,” said Randy Ober, Technical Support Manager and Operations Manager for the City.

## Hot property

Since providing public access via the Internet to the Property Assessment and Taxation System, the City of Lincoln has seen anywhere from 2,500 to 18,000 data requests per day from the public, with no appreciable increase in computer utilization or response time.

The City could not have chosen a better application as their first implementation for providing web-access to public records. Property owners are able to compare their assessments with other properties considered to be similar and have praised the City for providing quick access to assessment data.

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—Randy Ober, Technical support Manager and Operations Manager for the City of Lincoln

People are benefiting from the advanced technology, those wishing to buy or sell properties can rapidly obtain current tax information, rather than relying on dated printed reports, or waiting on human assistance by the City staff. Annette Miller, Lead Technical Support Specialist for the City’s Information Services Division boasts that “The City can handle more queries with greater accuracy with the same number of staff.”

## Exploiting CICS and the Internet

“The City of Lincoln wants to be aggressive and progressive when it comes to new technology, but we have to plan carefully given our IT budget limitations,” cautions Randy Ober, Technical Support Manager and Operations Manager for the City.

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**Application** Internet access to the Property Assessment and Taxation System for the City of Lincoln

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**Business benefits** Better and faster customer service within the IT budget. More productivity and transparency

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**Technology** IBM CICS Transaction Server for OS/390 1.2 on IBM OS/390 2.5

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City of Lincoln, headquarters

After looking at various alternatives, the most attractive web-enablement solution was to utilize CICS support of the Internet, which is available from IBM at no charge. Capitalizing on the City's expertise in REXX programming, IBM was able to quickly design and implement scripts for use with MVS's Common Gateway Interface (CGI).

Property owners, realtors, title companies and many other interested parties are able to enter inquiries directly from a web-enabled workstation, and have their request routed through MVS's Internet Connection Secure Server (ICSS) to the CICS system and the property application. The property application is accessible by the public 24 hours per day, seven days per week, with only one planned restart of the system during the weekend.

### **Solid foundations, quality structure**

The InterLinc project that provides information to property owners and other businesses involved with property management became fully operational using the CICS Transaction Server for OS/390 1.2, in December 1998. Annette Miller compliments the IBM solution saying, "CICS proved a total solution, everything we needed was right there - there was nothing else to purchase." None of the original application programs were changed in order to provide the new web access.

The City's IT staff considered other alternatives for providing property tax information to the public, but none offered the advantages of the CICS Internet solution. Other solutions considered would have entailed more hardware as stand alone servers, and the undesirable replication of data from the mainframe. Offloading the data would have required new programming whereas the CICS Internet support enabled the reuse of existing applications with no change.

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### **Leading the way**

The City's success with web-enabling heritage CICS applications has drawn attention from other city and county government IT organizations. Furthermore, Annette Miller has received numerous calls from other agencies asking for a description of their CICS web-enabled property application.

With the Property Assessment and Taxation System migrated to the CICS Transaction Server for OS/390 1.2, the City is already making plans for the implementation of still newer technology. The enhanced CICS Web Interface (CWI) will be considered for its 3270 Bridge facility and incorporation of a secured server interface.

### **Future perfect**

The success of the City's initial web-enablement project has given new impetus to accelerate further the exploitation of the Internet as a way of forging closer relations with the people of the city of Lincoln. Thanks to IBM CICS 1.2, the City has gained considerable confidence in doing business via the Internet and is looking for other ways to make their processes more productive and yet keep the same amount of staff.

The City's computer center handles the billing application for the public water supply system, and this too is being considered for Web-enablement, offering citizens the ability to access their records online. Further web enhancements to the property application include making deeds and lien information available online, and there are opportunities for cost savings by enabling property owners to pay taxes online via the Internet.

The Parks and Recreation Department is looking forward to being able to schedule more events and handling online registration for classes and other activities via the Internet, and the CICS Internet solution could assist with election data, so that voters can determine the location of polling places by accessing voter data held on the City's CICS system.

The key to much of the success of the CICS technology and the opportunities for future Web-enablement is Application Mining - the ability to access existing data in new ways - which will keep on benefiting the public and the City.



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