

The rebirth of Ashtech

We are witnessing a significant period of change in the survey and GIS fields, and the recent rebirth of the Ashtech brand from Magellan Professional is symbolic of this change.
—by Francois Erceau, vice-president, general manager, Ashtech

Magellan Professional to Ashtech

Magellan Professional was our brand within Magellan, a well known GPS company with a big presence in the consumer market. With the sale of the Magellan Consumer division to the MiTAC Corporation in early 2009, the rights to, and ownership of, the brand name changed. Magellan Professional will not be able to continue using the Magellan name beyond 2011.

However, since we had enormous equity in the Ashtech brand, one of the oldest and most respected names in the GNSS industry, we decided to leverage it immediately and rename our company Ashtech. The renaming benefits us because of Ashtech's early and deeply rooted presence in the high-precision GPS, and later GPS/GLONASS, professional survey markets.

We see the renaming of our company as the rebirth of Ashtech. The Ashtech brand has long stood for technology, precision, and innovation, and that is exactly what we offer and want to continue to offer to our customers. Our new logo which sports a trendy new style, conveys the continuity of the renowned Ashtech brand into the 21st century.

Ashtech Past and Future

We have long played an important role in the progress of the GNSS industry, and we fully expect to continue that tradition. We were the first to come out with a GLONASS GNSS board (GG12, 1998), and the first to market a Survey/GIS combined instrument (ProMark 3, 2005). More recently, we introduced a line of incredibly compact, professional grade GNSS products and an innovative series of handheld GPS/GIS receivers.

Ashtech's product launch road map for 2010 is very ambitious. We have already launched several major upgrades to enhance our latest generation of products, some of which are specifically for

survey professionals. We have also introduced a number of completely new products.

The upgrades impact our GNSS board offerings as well as our marine and land survey receiver product lines. This January we released the ProMark 500 V4, the newest version of our renowned RTK GNSS system. We have also launched two entirely new rugged RTK sensors, the ProFlex Lite and ProFlex Lite Duo. In February, we released the newest generation of our mobile mapping software, a suite which includes MobileMapper Field and MobileMapper Office. Initially available on our best seller MobileMapper 6 handheld GPS for GIS and mapping, this "field-to-office" suite will extend to our entire handheld line. We intend to keep this fast pace of new technology and product introductions all year long.

Industry Trends

The increasing integration in the surveying and GIS data collection equipment is an important new trend. For example, Ashtech's newest ProMark 500 V4 offers multiple wireless means of communication, including Bluetooth, UHF, and cell phone. As wireless bandwidth increases, more collected data will be sent immediately to the office, while another stream of data will flow from the office to the field, such as job orders and digital models and maps. We pushed this trend with the first cable-less Survey GPS system (Locus, 1997), the iGRS in 2002 (first Internet-enabled GPS reference station), and the first combined survey/GIS instrument (ProMark 3, 2005).

Other integrations will include miniature inertial systems to improve performance in difficult tracking areas and lasers combined with GNSS data collectors, which would allow offset measurements to be made with the data collectors themselves.

Our new MobileMapper Field software offers a direct interface to Laser Technology Inc.'s (LTI) ranger-finders. The direct interface enables auto-

John Lawrence using Ashtech's MobileMapper CX to locate monuments



matic input of distance and bearing to a distant object in order to easily collect offsets.

One can expect reduced power consumption, increased battery performance, and improved display technology making fieldwork easier. Ashtech is spearheading this trend with many firsts, such as the first GPS survey system below the price of a total station (ProMark 2, 2000), the first color touch screen on a handheld GPS mapping system (MobileMapper, 2003), and the first sub-meter real-time GPS mapping device prices at less than \$3,000 (MobileMapper CE, 2004).

Most recently, Ashtech has added a new, entry-level ProMark 500 configuration which delivers RTK capability for free within 3-km baselines. This new offering dramatically lowers the cost of the RTK rover (or a rover/base system) for surveyors who are willing to acquire a state-of-the-art GNSS survey equipment. The new entry-level price offer is 10 percent less compared with the previous RTK rover pricing

With Ashtech advancing GNSS technology, communications, and greater ease-of-use of GNSS technology, we will continue to produce survey and GIS hardware and software which will give professional users more efficient choices than they had ever before. ■

Improving Indiana Land Trust Management

Conservation land trusts, of which there are about 1700 in the U.S. and form one of the fastest growing and most successful conservation movements in American history, are beginning to reap considerable benefits from GIS technology. A case in point is the Sycamore Land Trust comprising more than 5,500 acres on 66 parcels of beautiful, southern Indiana open space.

Recognizing that good land management calls for good mapping practices, Sycamore Land Trust has taken steps to upgrade its GIS proficiency. In this endeavor, it is assisted by GIS specialists from 39 Degrees North, LLC, and Ashtech technology.

John Lawrence, who as assistant director and chairman of the Stewardship Committee oversees the mapping of parcel boundaries, hiking trails, areas of invasive species, and locations of rare plant species, had until recently used a consumer grade GPS receiver. When the trust switched to Ashtech's MobileMapper CX equipped with Mobile Mapping software, Lawrence found that mapping accuracy and efficiency have improved dramatically.

"The meter to sub-meter accuracy of the MobileMapper CX helps speed locating existing monuments and markers, and I have more confidence that I am accurately walking boundaries," says Lawrence.

Much of Lawrence's fieldwork is "an iterative process." For boundary work, he creates a polygon of the parcel in ArcView using survey information and legal descriptions. Then he exports the polygon as a shapefile (the ESRI .SHP file) to the MobileMapper CX using MobileMapper Office and overlays a topographic background map. On site, he walks the area with the MobileMapper, orienting the polygon and making field adjustments based on found markers and monuments. "The MobileMapper CX is a huge time saver for me. I always carry it with me in the field so that I can add and update data at every opportunity I get," says Lawrence. — Claire Geffroy, Ashtech ■

About Sycamore Land Trust—Founded in 1990, the mission of Sycamore Land Trust is to preserve the disappearing landscape of southern Indiana.

About 39 Degrees North—Founded in December 2004, 39 Degrees North LLC is an Indiana-based company specializing in software development, principally the design and implementation of Geographic Information Systems (GIS).

About Ashtech—Recognized as an industry innovator, Ashtech has been developing GNSS technology for more than 20 years. ■