

Seeing it through Augmented Reality

James Nolan travels through city streets and down country roads seeking a new view on the world

Augmented Reality (AR) is an established technology, but its potential use in the retail and leisure property sector is yet to be fully realised. With a limited number of accurately geocoded data sets and a user-base yet to adopt the technology fully, there is huge potential for growth. AR is poised to play a significant role for GIS, property professionals, retailers - and for their customers.

Starting out

Once installed, and while connected to a network, the AR application allows geocoded point data to be downloaded from a central GIS database onto the mobile device. The data is displayed on a conventional map with points and labels - and as pop-ups with attributes in a two-dimensional plane. Points are viewed on screen through the camera and appear relative to the user's location using the GPS in the mobile device. Once point data is downloaded, the device can operate offline; this is useful in remote locations.

On the ground

Data shortage has long been a major limiting factor for geospatial applications, usually

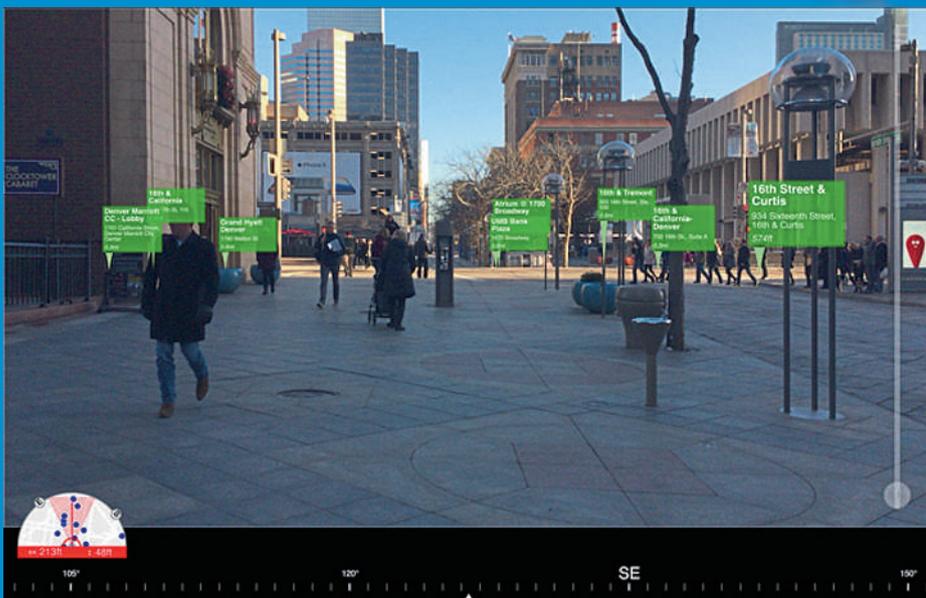
because of the cost of collection, licensing and maintenance. However, when accurately georeferenced, there is a commercial benefit. The author used a database of a global coffee shop chain at various locations in two countries to highlight the point (see illustrations below and facing page).

The Yellow Brick Road

Buildings are static; it is their use that changes over time. If points are loaded with historic attribute data using the AR application, this can be shown while surveyors examine the building in question. Knowing the previous use of retail space may provide clues as to why a business has closed.

The application can look through buildings into a shopping mall or into another street. A competitor store may be on a separate pitch but in the same market. A site visit takes precious time, so the ability to see property attributes held on a mobile database while in the field adds to the efficiency for surveyors and location planners.

Retailers want to be found first in a crowded market. With the AR application in their pocket, customers can now know the



City centres, with many commercial locations, need very precise coordinates.

direction and distance to a store by simply viewing it through their mobile device. Any retail unit making its locations available in this format has an advantage over those not yet listed. If a store is relocated or a new branch opens, communicating this with AR is now an effective way of alerting customers.

Make it your own

The next generation of smartphones is being marketed as AR-ready. There is now another platform for suppliers of quality geographic point data products; for software suppliers, new markets for their products; and for location planners and surveyors, a new tool to assist their work. Geographical information and AR is ready for business. The question is - are you?

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Restricted view emphasises the need for accurate coordinates



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