

How to Create and Maintain Them

Multi-purpose ENC's for Ports

Ports require access to a wide range of data and information to function safely and efficiently, some acquired from external stakeholders but most generated internally within the port but very often managed and held within a single software application, department or business function. Streamlining how a port manages its data; by adopting a more data-centric approach, can bring major benefits. OceanWise has been working with ports for over five years and has pioneered the concept of a port, when considered more widely, as being a maritime information infrastructure.

There is nothing inherently wrong with managing and holding data within a single software application as long as processes are in place to control, quality assure and manage the life-cycle of this data. However, this often results in the creation of data 'silos' or 'stovepipes', which characteristically makes the sharing and exchange of data between departments and with external bodies difficult. As a consequence, port personnel spend more time than is necessary requesting, sending, reworking and reformatting data as well as running the risk of using data which is out of date or otherwise unfit for its intended purpose.

A maritime infrastructure is based on best practice data management principles and because much of the data that a port handles has a spatial context, it can be referred to as a Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI), operating at an enterprise level. The key elements that underpin

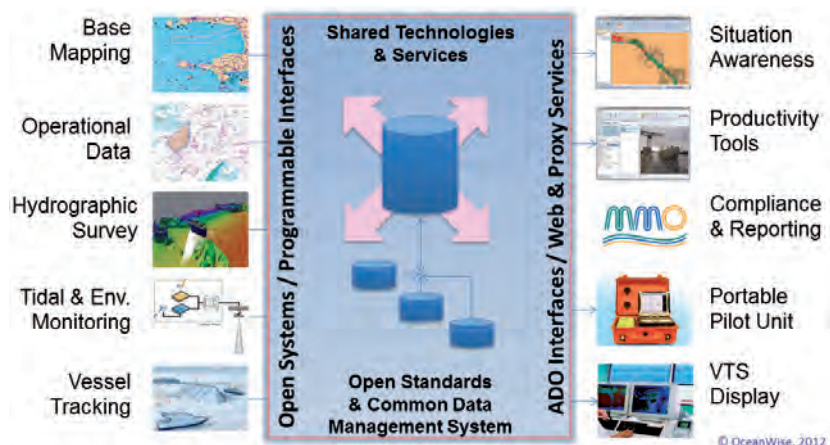
an effective SDI are data and metadata (data about the data), conformance to standards and specifications, Information Computer Technology (ICT) and governance of the data but also the people and organisations responsible for its development. Of these, data must be considered a key asset. The ability to share data between different applications is a key benefit of this approach. This SDI would typically encompass land and marine assets, as well as commercial and logistical components. By standardising how the data is structured and encoded and by making 'machine readable' the information it contains it will be more accessible and more easily understood by all users.

By developing this SDI, a port can consider its data and information as a centralised and valued asset, connecting disparate sources of data (e.g. sensors) thus making data processing and information exchange more effective whilst

delivering business improvements to its stakeholders. This also means having a data policy and data management system in place which sits alongside and supplements other business management systems, such as for Quality, Environment, and Health and Safety. Whilst it is feasible to improve how ports manage their data and information without a data policy and management system in place, it does encourage high level buy-in and managerial commitment that is necessary for long-term success. Whilst there is presently no international standard for data management, similar to ISO 9001 for Quality Management, there is plenty of reference material and examples of best practice, including within maritime based organisations, to draw on (Figure 2).

Safety of Navigation

A very important role of a port is to ensure that safety of navigation within its area of jurisdiction is undertaken as effectively as possible by creating charts and other documents e.g. passage plans. These documents are then made available to key people, such as pilots and VTS operators but can also support wider maritime operations. They utilise the same or similar data sources that are used to undertake planning and other administrative tasks, and to comply with legislation. By extending the concept of the information infrastructure, selected documents can be made available to vessels entering the port and, for example, can be provided to pilots to use onboard vessels. One of the more difficult aspects of creating and maintaining safety of navigation documents is being able to locate and collate the input data



▲ Figure 1: Typical Port or Maritime Information Infrastructure (aka Enterprise SDI).

and then convert it into a form required by the target system e.g. Portable Pilot Units (PPUs). All this is achievable, with minimal investment, using existing open standards and systems and by adopting a data-centric approach.

Port and Bathymetry ENC

Much of the data used in the creation of ENCs – and Marine Information Overlays (MIOs) or Dynamic Overlays – that can be ingested into off-the-shelf software, already exists within a port and is used daily for other purposes. This data includes the location and properties of coastal infrastructure, the location of dredged channels, including their target and surveyed depths, Aids to Navigation (AtoNs), and clearance, passage and berthing lines (Table 1). These are just a few examples where data are collated and maintained by a particular department e.g. estates, engineering and navigational systems and are used elsewhere for

Centrally Managed Type	ENC Object Class Feature Description
Bollard	Mooring/Warping facility
Obstruction	Obstruction
Berth	Berth
Aid to Navigation	Buoy, ...; Beacon, ...; etc.
Dredged Box	Dredged area

Table 1: Typical data stored centrally mapped onto ENC object classes.

Internal to Official ENCs

By managing data centrally and ensuring the required characteristics (or attributes) and metadata are maintained and remain accessible, means that the actual generation and validation of Bathymetry and Port ENCs becomes straightforward using readily available software tools such as OceanWise' Maritime Toolbar ENC Writer Extension (Figure 3) to easily create the

A maritime infrastructure is based on best practice data management principles

other purposes e.g. asset and facilities management. Initially, some of this data may need to be migrated from legacy systems e.g. CAD, spreadsheets and paper formats, but this is a one-off task, and should be part of an IT Systems modernisation programme.

ENC. But why stop there? It is often the case that official ENCs for safety of navigation within the port environment lag behind or contain insufficient information to be of use to anyone other than the casual or recreational user. Even where the HO has invested in developing

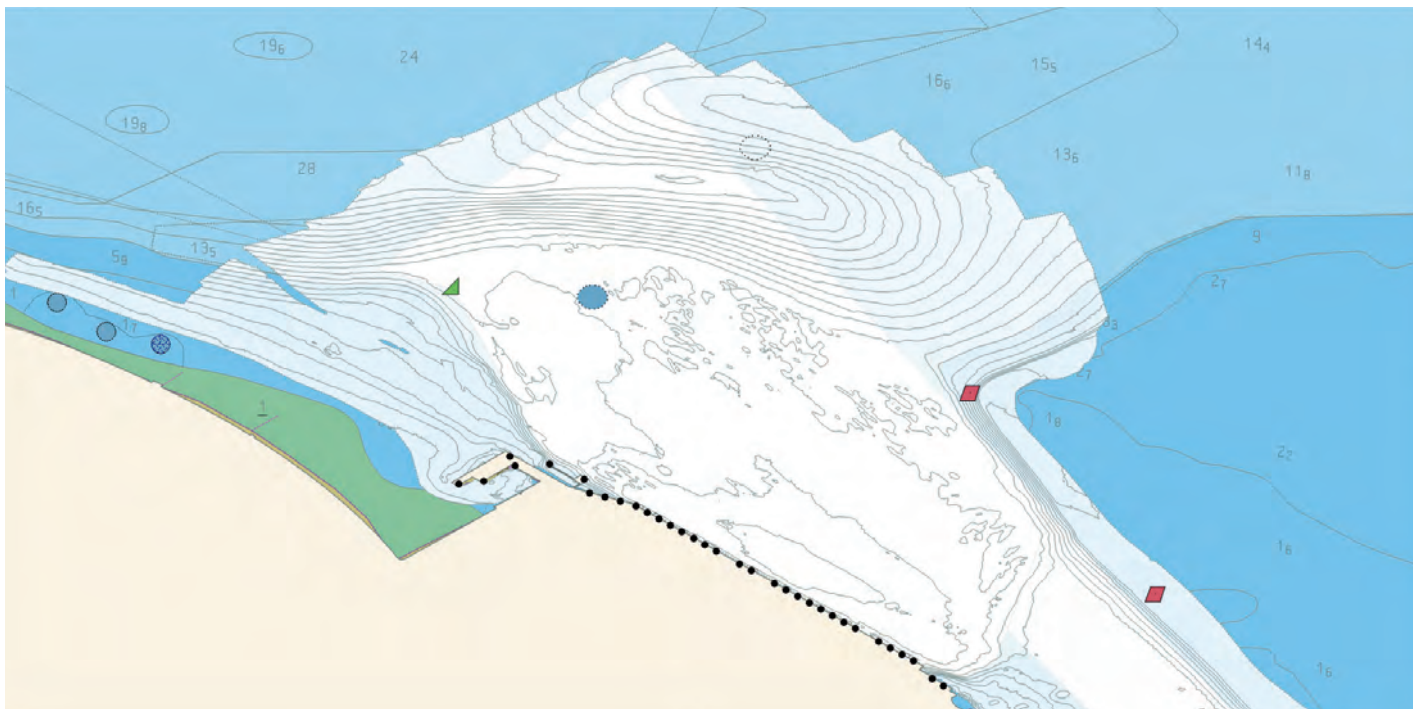


Figure 3: Example of a Port ENC created using the Maritime Toolbar ENC Writer Extension.



Figure 2: International Data Management Association (DAMA) Wheel modified by OceanWise.

dedicated procedures to update official charts from hydrographic surveys provided by the port, the whole process – from survey to ENC update – takes several weeks. This is too long for a modern port requiring a 24-hour turnaround, and arguably too long for most other users too.

The first step for a port therefore is to streamline the exchange of data with the HO. This may mean providing the elements of the official ENC that the port is best placed to manage at source - a fundamental principle of good data management - to the national HO. This could include port maintained objects such as charted depths, controlled areas, AtoNs, and passage-related objects such as passage lines. The exact list of objects, timing and other details, and how these objects relate to similar

objects within adjacent and smaller scale ENC's can be agreed and documented in a data protocol between the port and national HO.

There is no technical reason why a port cannot create, maintain and publish its own 'official' ENC's. Many ports have their own producer codes issued by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and, for those that do not, a straightforward application process exists. Indeed, a code is mandatory to publish any specification of ENC and therefore can also form the basis of publishing uniquely named ENC's via the Regional ENC centres. However, it would not at the present time be sensible for a port to publish official ENC's that replicates the function

of the national HO. It is suggested that an agreement is reached for a port to work with the national HO to streamline this important function.

Conclusion

Improving how data is managed and being able to access it for multi-purposes becomes an integral part of how a modern or 'smart' port should operate in the future. This includes using the same sets of data for multiple purposes, including the creation of ENC's for internal use by pilots and VTS centres, and exchanging data easily and efficiently internally and externally. The step to publishing official ENC's is now within the grasp of most modern ports.

However, this step should be undertaken with care and by working with national HOs, so the strengths of both organisations are presented to mariners and other users in innovative and fit-for-purpose products and services. ◀

More information

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Dr Mike Osborne, managing director of OceanWise, is an oceanographer and marine data specialist. He worked in the oil & gas sector as a consultant across the world before heading up the informatics operation at Metoc Ltd. He set up OceanWise in 2010 as an independent marine data management company providing specialised data products and services and data management advice and training.



John Pepper is marketing director at OceanWise. He trained as both a land and hydrographic surveyor and has 40 years' geospatial experience working in the UK and overseas with Ordnance Survey, DOS and UKHO. He specialises in data collection and management, planning, policy and strategy, training and marketing. He joined OceanWise in 2011.
✉ info@oceanwise.eu

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