

Late 1950's	<p>In order to understand the background of the technology we have today we need to go back to the 1950's and an organisation in Saint Louis, Missouri called McAuto (McDonnell Automation Company), a subsidiary of the McDonnell Aircraft Corporation.</p> <p>The aircraft industry was one of the first users of computer systems for engineering design and analysis and McAuto was very proactive in this endeavour. Its first Numeric Control (NC) production part was manufactured in 1958 and computers were used to help layout aircraft the following year. Eventually, this NC experience would become one of the company's technological backbones.</p>
The 1960's	<p>In the 1960's McDonnell decided to utilise this experience and enter the computer services business. Its McAuto subsidiary was established that year with 258 employees and \$7 million in computer hardware.</p>
The 1970's	<p>McAuto's primary product was CADD, which was developed internally and was only available on large IBM mainframes. The hardware included very expensive Evans & Sutherland Picture System terminals and the software was optimised for the design of aircraft structural components. Even though CADD was possibly the most sophisticated CAD/CAM system available at the time, it had a few major problems that prevented it from being widely used.</p> <p>Besides the obvious reliance on very expensive hardware, McAuto was prevented from selling CADD to anyone who might be considered a competitor of any of the various aerospace divisions of the parent corporation. As a result in 1976 United Computing was acquired by McDonnell Douglas. United Computing product Unigraphics software is the parent software of today's version of MicroGDS, the flagship product from ISI.</p> <p>With the developments in the technology, McAuto had become one of the largest computer services organisations in the world with over 3,500 employees and a computer infrastructure worth over \$170 million.</p>
The 1980's	<p>McAuto had long been involved in providing timesharing services to civil engineering users. It was one of the first organisations to provide MIT's ICES software on a time-sharing basis. However, very little software was being developed internally by McAuto, especially for the architectural market. To address this market place in March 1981, McAuto signed an exclusive license agreement with Applied Research of Cambridge, founded in 1969, to market two packages for use by architects, Building Design System (BDS) and Graphic Data Systems (GDS).</p> <p>GDS was a fairly straightforward drafting package particularly applicable to architectural and engineering drawings. BDS was implemented to facilitate the design of repetitive buildings such as schools and hospitals. Initially, the software ran on Prime computers using Tektronix 4014 graphic display terminals.</p> <p>By mid-1985, McAuto acquired the company outright along with its software for \$12.5 million.</p> <p>The company continued to show great promise, reaching over \$1 billion in revenue and 14,000 employees by the end of that year. Its largest single customer during of this period was the military aircraft design group of its own parent company.</p>
Late 1980's	<p>The biggest impact on the company was the purchase of Electronic Data Systems (EDS) by General Motors (GM). During the consolidation of software and infrastructure Unigraphics software was selected by as that company's primary supplier of CAD technology in 1987. The impact of this decision then catapulted the company into another dimension.</p>
The 1990's	<p>By 1990, as a result of customer demand and the EDS requirements the company supported a variety of workstations from Digital, Hewlett-Packard, and Sun Microsystems.</p> <p>In 1991 the EDS subsidiary of GM acquired McDonnell Douglas Systems Integration Co. (MDSI) for \$350 to 400 million including the Unigraphics, BDS and GDS.</p> <p>Over 2,000 MDSI employees became EDS employees with this transaction. The Unigraphics activity became the EDS Unigraphics Division and most of the former MDSI managers led by John Mazzola stayed with the new organisation.</p> <p>In 1992 with an aim to address the AEC market EDS released a new PC version of GDS called MicroGDS from the previous acquisition of Applied Research of Cambridge. This was a Windows implementation that supported multiple user access to drawings, multi-window entity manipulation, and multiple drawings open in a single session. The software was originally developed in Cambridge, England. It was priced at \$3,500 and was sold by a direct sales force within EDS.</p> <p>In mid-1993 EDS sold the GDS division of the company to a group of outside investors led by Murray Holland, a Dallas lawyer. But in 1994, GDS was subsequently acquired by shareholders of EDS, GDS and UGC Consulting of Englewood, Colorado. The resultant company was called the Convergent Group. Graphic Data Systems Corporation continued as a separate wholly owned subsidiary of Convergent. By mid 1997 Convergent had acquired the development and marketing rights to the MicroGDS and Piranesi product lines under the Japanese parent company Informatix Inc.</p> <p>In the same year Informatix began development of Piranesi Version 1 from an original concept by Simon Schofield and Paul Richens at the Martin Centre for Architectural and Urban Studies. The product was later released to the market in 1998.</p>
The 2000's	<p>Throughout the 2000's Informatix continued to develop both Piranesi and MicroGDS based on requirements from the Japanese parent company and customer requirements.</p> <p>In February 2009 Selective Software Holdings (SSH), a British-owned company, saw the potential in this quiet giant and purchased the UK business of Informatix Software International Ltd (ISI) from Informatix Incorporated, the Japanese parent company with the rights to market the products world-wide, with the exception of Japan, where such rights will be retained by Informatix Inc.</p> <p>Under new management the company have released Piranesi 5.1 which was the simultaneous release of the product in Windows and Mac versions. This release boasts many enhancements including support for Google SketchUp v7 files, direct access to Google 3D Warehouse, lock highlighting features, additional commands, added support to read Autodesk FBX files as cutouts and many more. MicroGDS is now on version 10 and delivers a true multi-user experience designed with ease of use, collaboration and quality in mind. Being fully compatible with Microsoft Office, users can embed quotations or specification spreadsheets, presentations and word documents into the file allowing for multiple users on the one project simultaneously. With its own PDF creation tool and full documentation management there is also the cost savings on purchasing additional Adobe or other desktop publishing licences.</p>
The Future	<p>Informatix Software International continues to build on the strength of products, brands and technology that ISI hold working closely with our customers around the world to ensure that our products deliver value and address the challenges of an ever evolving market place. The future of this organisation is very bright as we plan to release Piranesi v6 and MicoGDS 11 later this year. Both releases will address a lot more customer requirements and challenge competitors in the market giving the user more choice in their CAD programs. For more information on product releases and to input on our product strategy visit our user forum.</p>

References:

The summary above is based on research from [David E. Weisber's website](#), the [Unigraphics Virtual Museum](#) and various internal resources