



**If you want to publish your maps and data
easily on the web you need Opus**

What do you mean by 'publish on the web'?

Publishing on the web means having the ability to deliver any map, any data, any document and make them accessible through a standard web browser. Opus is software for doing this. It is a hosted system that helps you to publish your maps and data directly on the web, either for the Internet or as part of an Intranet.

Despite it being hosted on our servers you can use Opus directly – again through a standard web browser - to publish and maintain your own mapping websites and web applications for your maps and data.

Opus gives you direct control from in-house in how and when you publish maps, data and documents. That is fundamental to Opus: it gives you 24/7 access to and control of your data.

Why is it easier to publish on the web with Opus?

That's our opinion based on our understanding of Opus compared to other software designed to publish maps online. We use GIS and other mapping software so we understand what comparisons can be made.

Opus was originally designed to help us build mapping websites for our customers but when we showed them how we used Opus to build their websites they asked if they could use it themselves. So we had to come up with a way of providing access to Opus for customers to use and from that demand we created a new business opportunity.

But the key issue from the outset in how to provide access to the Opus system was that our customers were not necessarily GIS experts or webmasters. They were planners, planning technicians, administrators, project leaders, managers and decision-makers, the people who actually understood the practical requirements of their data, who understood to whom the data needed to be presented and what drivers were in place to publish their data in accessible formats.

So we had to keep Opus simple and easy to use for our customers without losing sight of the technical features and functions they wanted nor of the way that they wanted the public and other stakeholders and users to interact with and identify with their maps and data. Opus had to factor in not only where the maps and data were coming from but also where they needed to go after they had been prepared by our customers. So Opus had to be more than a GIS, it had to be a user-friendly system that could be used and made accessible to as wide an audience as possible and as wide a user base as possible.

Having said all of that we do have customers who use Opus to fulfil ongoing web GIS requirements. So if you want Opus to form a part of your GIS requirements then it's more than capable.

So what exactly is Opus? How do we use it?

Opus is web technology software for delivering and interacting with maps, data and documents through web browsers. The software is hosted by us on our servers. The software was developed and built by us.

Hosting Opus on our servers means that no part of the system sits on your computers or network. You access all parts of Opus through a standard web browser. That's another reason why we say Opus is easy to use because we remove the potential problems of hosting on your own servers or with installing software across your network. Our servers are optimised for Opus and nothing else so there are no conflicting priorities in how our servers are configured because the only software on there is the software to support Opus. This means Opus is fast, dependable and accessible 24/7.

To provide you with access to Opus we create a web domain on our servers that identifies you and your organisation. Once that web domain is set-up you have direct access to the Opus system via your preferred web browser. Again, that's another reason why Opus is easy: you can use it through an interface you already know and love!

Because Opus sits on our servers you don't have to worry about ongoing maintenance or updates to the software. We take care of all of that on our own servers. You just focus on your maps, data and documents. That's another reason why Opus is easy to use: it's built around your maps and your data.

How does Opus publish my GIS data on the web?

Opus includes a Content Management System or CMS. You access the CMS via your preferred web browser. We supply you with a URL, a username and a password and you're straight into the CMS.

The CMS is the part of Opus that links your maps, data and documents to your web audience through a dedicated website or through a webpage or even through another web application.

The CMS allows you to upload map data directly into the Opus system. You can upload map data in a number of different formats, including ESRI SHP and MapInfo TAB. Don't worry; you don't need to open a GIS to access your map data. It's probably on your network somewhere, all you have to do is browse your network for where the relevant files are stored and the CMS takes care of uploading and you're away.

Once your data is in the CMS there are a range of functions available to you for configuring how you want to publish that data on the web. There's more about those functions further down.

Does Opus only work if you already have GIS data and mapping to publish?

Not at all. With Opus you can build a map for a website using other map and data sources in addition to or as an alternative to your own. That's because Opus is built using open standards and open source technologies. You can, for example, publish a website using OS Open Source Mapping and Data combined with points of interest compiled from your own street gazetteer. For example, you might want to publish a Constraints Map online which involves using data supplied by 3rd parties. Opus can do that for you.

The mapping you use can either be published via Opus from our servers, from your servers or from an external domain. Opus is flexible in what mapping can be used and where that mapping is stored and accessed by Opus.

What functions are available to me in Opus for publishing on the web?

There are many functions in the Opus CMS but the main ones are about how you want visitors to your website to view and interact with your maps and data. In the Opus CMS you can style each map layer, create a map legend, set what viewing scales you want your data to appear at, show text on the map and allow visitors to draw on the map.

We've produced a simple checklist of the functions Opus delivers.

What maps can I use on my website?

Opus can support any base mapping you want to use. If you want to use Ordnance Survey mapping like MasterMap Opus can handle that. If you want to use mapping provided by a WMS feed you can set that up in the CMS. If you don't have any mapping then we can set you up with options such as OS Open Data, The People's Map, Open Street Map, Google and Bing maps.

Is Opus safe and secure? Is my data safe?

Yes.

What are the benefits of using Opus rather than a proprietary GIS?

There are a number of benefits that we can identify.

First things first: we like GIS. We use it ourselves in all our data and mapping projects. However, for the web we prefer to use technologies that have been designed specifically for the web and in particular open source technologies. As a small business we find GIS expensive to licence and maintain and if we were to use a GIS to do what Opus does it would cost us more to do it. That cost would have to be passed onto you.

With open source technologies we have a set of components, tools and processes that we can build on with our development team. We can customise open source technologies to make maps and data as easily accessible as possible and we think that approach has four key benefits to you over a recognised or proprietary GIS.

Firstly, with Opus you can manage and maintain the maps and data yourself in the CMS via a standard web browser. You don't have to install any software, plug-ins or downloads nor do you need to be a GIS expert or a webmaster to use Opus. This means that Opus can be more easily and quickly implemented throughout your department or organisation because access is so simple and the method of access (i.e. a web browser) is recognisable to all users.

Second, you can use Opus with your existing personnel and resources, it doesn't need you take on more resources in order to gain the benefits of the system. As we said above, you don't have to be a GIS expert or a webmaster to use Opus. Anyone can use it because the software is designed for anyone to use. You don't even have to change your web browser!

Third, using open source technologies means that we are not dependent on a proprietary development model for improving and updating Opus in order to bring you more features and functions that you need and want. We are free to develop Opus the way our customers want it to be developed and are not reliant, for example, on value-added reseller licensing models that are designed to benefit the supplier rather than the customer. Opus development is driven by its users.

Fourth, open source technologies are well supported globally. We can therefore easily and readily identify and implement new and improved features into Opus. Because Opus is built using open source your data can be easily transferred into updates and upgrades to Opus without you even knowing about it! That's because open source is built on open standards. That in itself brings considerable benefit to you. You know that your data is always accessible to you because it isn't stored in a proprietary format and can be exported by you from Opus into any other software that supports open standards at any time. Also using open standards helps to future proof your data to any changes in resources in-house, either in our business or in your organisation. If we fail in our role as a supplier your data will not be compromised or lost.

So what's the catch?

The only catch is that Opus is not free.

We are generous in our licensing terms and while we set User limits that is really to ensure we can provide a level of training and maintenance to a high standard that we can all

maintain. We're not going to deny you access to Opus if one or two more Users come on board but to accommodate a large upsurge in Users we would need to factor in the overhead of maintaining that larger user base. More demand on our servers has a cost implication.

So our pricing is fixed for the purposes of giving you a tangible cost to budget for but we aim to be as flexible as possible in accommodating your own resources and ongoing requirements. Most of our customers have a team of 4-10 Users so we think the User limit is reasonable and has the capacity to accommodate most of your ongoing and long-term needs.

Global Mapping, Glebe Farm, Turweston, Brackley NN13 5JE Tel: 01280 840770
Email: nick.watson@globalmapping.uk.com www.globalmapping.uk.com