The MapInfo Tools Community

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In August 2010, the lights went out on the "Free Files" site at Directions Magazine. Disks were spun down, equipment re-tasked and the site was closed. It was great while it lasted and many thanks to Directions Magazine for hosting a free GIS-related file exchange service for so many years. Whether it will be restored is unknown at this time, but one day, without warning, it was gone and we've lost over 240 programs, utilities, code examples -- a lot of knowledge gone as well as lots of handy little tools. And we have no backup!

Or are these assets really gone? Those files were downloaded many times, and transported to every corner of the globe. They're out there somewhere, loaded into MapInfo menus or sitting on a GISTools directory. Quite a few of them are great timesavers or they solve othe difficult problems. They're all out there, but they aren't being shared or maintained and if we don't act soon, one by one they will be lost.

So rescuing these software tools and getting them back into circulation is the first goal for MapInfoTools.com. The second goal is to continue to provide a home for a permanent free file exchange for the community designed to protect what exists and encourge new growth. And finally, because power, rent and Internet connections can't be paid in disks of contouring shareware, the third goal is to generate enough real money to pay for the infrastructure and make the service self-sustaining.

Free doesn't come cheap. A good free file exchange doesn't build and maintain itself. But if many people put in just a little effort, it doesn't cost much, either. However, it needs your help. It needs people who still have those lost utilities to bring them in and restore them to the collection. It needs others to organize the files, rating them and writing reviews, which improves indexing and searching. And of course it needs authors to post new files so that it doesn't grow stale and continues to grow.