
CEMETERY ♦ OPERATIONS

BY BRANDON FINLEY ♦ RAMAKER & ASSOCIATES
SAUK CITY, WI

WHY 2007 IS THE YEAR TO TAKE ACTION AGAINST OUTDATED RECORDKEEPING SYSTEMS

It's an honor and privilege to work side-by-side with cemeterians and give them the tools they need to organize and run their cemeteries. The resources available for them today are more cost-effective than ever before. I've personally worked with two types of cemeterians – the owners who have had tragedy strike and those who are preparing before any incidents have occurred. While computerizing records is still the aim and critical for both, it's no doubt less painful to work with those who have prepared without tragedy striking.

WHAT WILL YOUR REASON BE?

Cemeterians have many reasons why they've chosen to transfer their records to computer. The one we hear the most is 'time.' Many realize that their time is better spent in other cemetery operations than in searching through books and file cabinets for a person who has stopped by to visit a loved one. Some cemeteries have five different record keeping systems that need to be cross-referenced before an answer can be found. Or, the paper trail may not exist at all and many rely on persons who have tended the cemetery for years. Have you ever evaluated how much time it takes you to find someone with limited information? Our clients repeatedly tell us that a computerized system is significantly faster, less prone to error and lets them focus on other aspects of the job.

One benefit that computerized cemeteries are now discovering is that they're able to obtain an accurate account of the available or unclaimed plots in the cemetery. They can now, for the first time ever, get a clear picture of how much land is available and how much time they have before they need to expand. The act of computerizing their records has become an unexpected tool in long-range master planning for cemeterians across the nation.

Ultimately, the one reason some cemeterians haven't updated their records is cost. They feel they don't have the resources needed to make this investment. If this is the case, there are still steps to take in protecting the cemetery. If entirely still on paper, make sure copies and records are kept in a separate location and updated regularly. Also, just

entering owners and burials on a computer spreadsheet would be helpful and the data could be transferred to a more sophisticated system at a later time.

AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF YOUR CEMETERY

During the process of computerizing your cemetery records, lot cards, plot books, and hand drawn maps, will all be uncovered. Through the stories and people you discover while computerizing your cemetery records, you will be gathering priceless historical information about your community. These records are valuable assets desired by genealogists and historians and there may be untapped revenue streams. In addition, do you know how many veterans, mothers or fathers are buried in your cemetery? Would their loved ones pay for remembrance of them on special occasions?

Taking action today doesn't mean that you'll be prepared for the spring celebrations this year, but it will mean that by Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and Father's Day in 2008, your cemetery can unveil to the public your new ways of record keeping and prove your investment in their future. They'll know that you will continue to honor their rich heritage.

\$5,000 GRANT FOR CEMETERY SOFTWARE

Do you or someone you know want to have CIMS (Cemetery Information Management System) software, but can't afford it? Ramaker & Associates is offering the opportunity to make a dream come true with a grant of up to \$5,000 worth of CIMS Software.

RULES: All grant applicants must be a non-profit cemetery and willing to tell Ramaker & Associates about their cemetery and its needs. The criteria for selection of the grant recipient will be based on creativity and need. The grant application should include one of the following options:

- Write an essay of no fewer than 200 words
- Created a video not less than five minutes in length,

- Or use your imagination to express your cemetery's needs.

Ramaker & Associates wants to help you, so put your creativity to work and be rewarded. Explain why you need CIMS more than any other cemetery.

DEADLINE INFORMATION: The recipient will be chosen by a pre-selected group from Ramaker & Associates, Inc. The recipient will be contacted directly and also listed in the next Newsette following the award of the grant. All grant applications must be received by: **4:00 p.m. CST on Friday, June 1, 2007.** The decision will be made public on or before July 20, 2007. This

should make it possible for CIMS or CIMS Light to be up and running for the winning cemetery by the end of the year.

TO ENTER: Fill out the grant application form. Make certain to include your description, video, etc. and send the grant application by registered mail or deliver to:

Ramaker & Associates, Inc.
Attn: CIMS Grant
1120 Dallas Street
Sauk City WI 53583

	CIMS 2007 Grant Application Official Form	
Name of Cemetery	<input type="text"/>	
Contact Name	<input type="text"/>	
Phone Number	<input type="text"/>	
Email	<input type="text"/>	
Mailing Address	<input type="text"/>	
	<input type="text"/>	
Type of Application Submitted	Essay <input type="checkbox"/> Video <input type="checkbox"/> Other <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you interested in: CIMS Light (data only) <input type="checkbox"/> CIMS (mapping) <input type="checkbox"/> Not sure? <input type="checkbox"/>		
Signature _____ Date _____		
<p>By submitting this grant application, you agree to let Ramaker & Associates, Inc. use any submitted images or text for promotional purposes. Thank you and Good Luck!</p> <p>Remember — you must be a Non-Profit Cemetery with a 501 3-C number to enter.</p>		