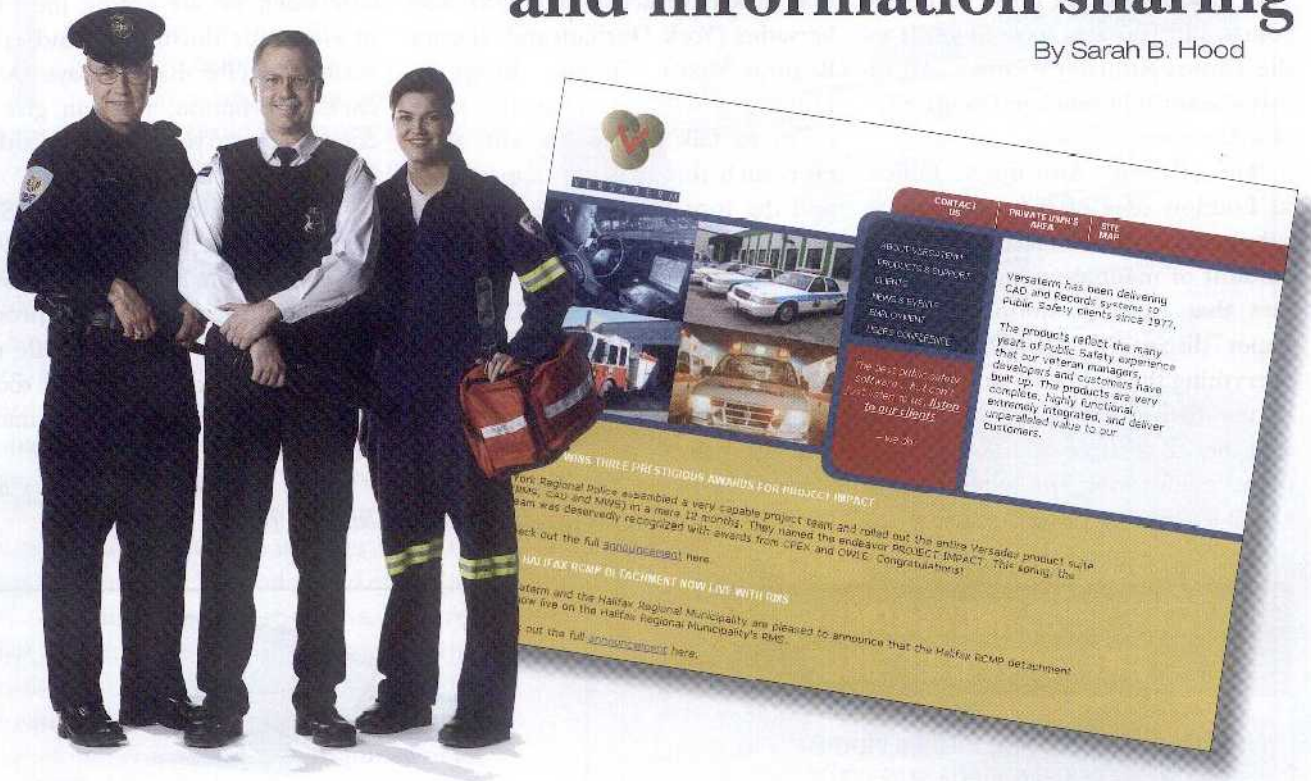


# From the car to the courtroom, Versadex simplifies record management and information sharing

By Sarah B. Hood



There used to be a staple scene in every police movie: the tired officer at the battered desk laboriously filling in statements on an old manual typewriter. Since Versaterm ([www.versaterm.com](http://www.versaterm.com)) created the set of tools called Versadex, used to handle Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD), Record Management Systems (RMS) and mobile solutions, this image is as outdated as the typewriter.

Used from Austin to Anaheim and Tampa to Denver, Versadex is one of a small number of products (others include Niche and Enterpol) that have revolutionized police information handling and sharing.

"Versadex can be used within any service," says Sgt. Paulo da Silva, who works within the Information Technology Unit for York Regional Police. Like Ottawa and London in Ontario, Halifax and the entire province of British Columbia, York Region has made Versadex their system of choice.

"One item that was important to us is that Versadex actually has modules for other public safety providers, like Fire," says Ron Huber, Manager of the Information Technology Unit with York Regional Police. "So in Ottawa, Halifax and Ogden, B.C., they're using it as well as the police. You can see all of the units responding to an incident, and everyone can get the same information at the same time," he says, pointing out that such a system, had it been in place at the time, could have eliminated some the incidents that came up with the 9-11 scenario in New York.

"The Versadex system gives you all the capability to manage really everything connected to a case," says Eldon Amoroso, Senior Director of the Support Services Division for the London Police Service. "People, property items, exhibits, tickets, street checks; all sorts of information is captured about all kinds of individuals... And that's just in the RMS."

Versadex eliminates the need to recopy any piece of information. Once the data has been entered, it can automatically be transferred into other kinds of records without any need for retyping.

"In 1993, when we started with Versadex, there was a huge amount of duplication in the effort," Amoroso says. "The same person's name would be written on all these forms, the same charge. Most officers don't mind doing it once; they hate doing it five times."

Back in the '90s, officials with the London Police Service noticed how much time was being used on record management. After analyzing the way they were handling information, they introduced Versadex.

"We wanted a process from the car to the courtroom with no duplication," says Amoroso. "The number of steps and duplicated efforts has been incredibly reduced. It's never re-keyed; it's never duplicated. Our officers write very little in their duty books any more, because the computer record is the investigation."

Versaterm is constantly listening to feedback from Versadex users and responding with new features that address the suggestions they are given. In 2001, Versaterm created the Law Enforcement Information Portal (LEIP), which is now known as Police Information Portal (PIP) and has been chosen by the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police as the standard national system for sharing police information.

The Versadex Record Management System is completely integrated into PIP. "The services that have Versadex have the ability to go and access that portal," says da Silva. "Even services that don't can access records if they contribute to the PIP. That is a huge advantage for our front-line officers. With

one query, an officer can find out whether someone has been involved in break-and-enter, or is a criminal offender in another jurisdiction. We're currently working on testing the integration between Versadex and Major Case Management."

In York Region, it was very constricting having access only to our own data, notes Huber. "Now, a front-line officer has the ability to pull up a picture from the vehicle

with the click of a button. And there's a mapping system, so when an officer is dispatched, they can see exactly where that address is.

"We now have the ability to do mobile reporting from the car," he says, "So now, an officer can stay in the car and be visible to the public. It's put us into the 21st century and beyond."

*Sarah B. Hood is a freelance writer based in Toronto.*