An aerial photograph of a cemetery is the background. The cemetery features numerous rectangular tombstones arranged in neat rows. A prominent building with a red-tiled roof and a green dome is visible on the left side of the image. The surrounding landscape is covered in snow, with several bare trees scattered throughout. A semi-transparent teal rectangle is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the main title and subtitle text.

How Digital Cemetery Mapping is Modernizing the Cemetery Business

From streamlined operations to better customer experiences, modernization delivers big benefits.

OpusXentaTM

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The evolving business of cemeteries

Cemetery management is one of the oldest professions in existence—and it has evolved over time to match the changing needs of death care. Now cemeteries are in the midst of yet another big shift, as the need to modernize becomes essential to their success.

Today's customers expect personalized options and services. People are exploring different ways to memorialize their loved ones, including green or eco burials and cremation gardens. Cemetery operators are under pressure to optimize their available space, deliver value-added services, and provide excellent customer experiences—without adding significant headcount or incurring high capital expenses.

Digital transformation can help cemeteries become more flexible, agile, and profitable—and it begins with digital cemetery mapping.

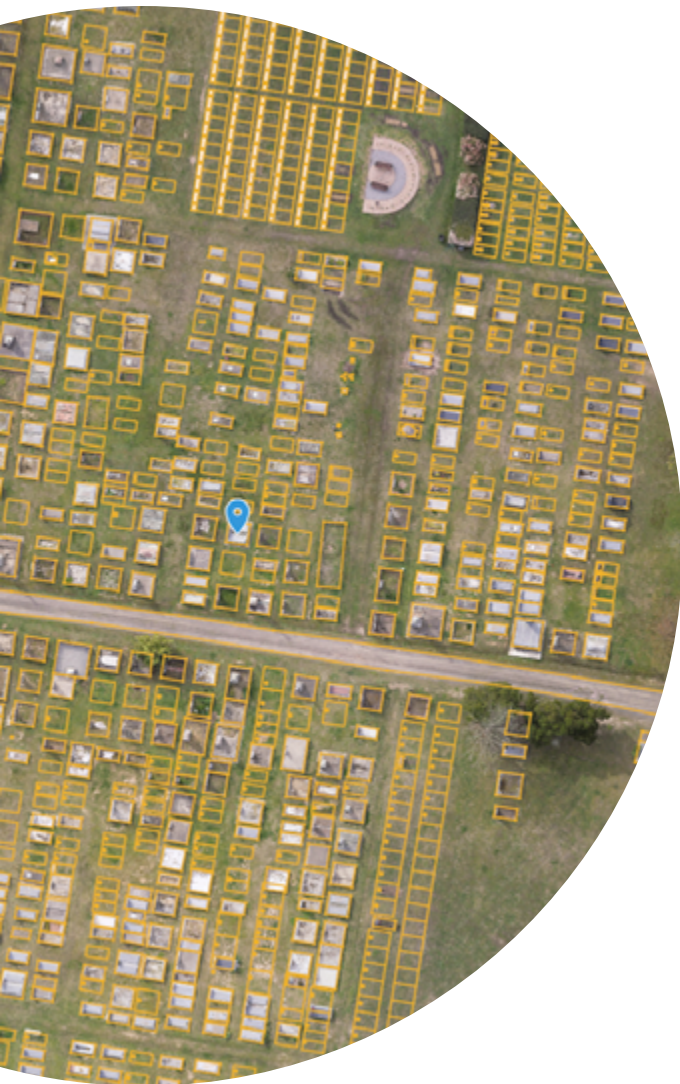
Bringing traditional systems of record into the modern world

The cemetery business revolves around record-keeping, from space allocation to plot-specific information, historical data, and much more. Many cemetery operators still rely on paper logs and maps or digital spreadsheets that are difficult to update and share.

The advent of digital cemetery mapping has been a tremendous boon for cemeteries, offering a way to digitize this valuable information so that it can be accessed and used more quickly and effectively.

Modern systems are now
a must-have.

COVID-19 has changed the way
people mourn, causing many death-
related services to go virtual—yet
one more reason to create digital
records that can be searched
and accessed online.



What is digital cemetery mapping?

At its most basic, digital cemetery mapping creates an electronic representation of an entire cemetery—including its grounds, roads, buildings, and gravesites. This map can easily be updated as new graves are laid out, for a near-real-time view that benefits visitors and cemetery operators alike.

Visitors and customers benefit from the ability to accurately navigate through a cemetery to choose a desired plot for a loved one, find a particular gravesite, visit memorial gardens, and identify buildings and monuments.

Cemetery operators benefit from the ability to quickly see which plots of land are vacant and which are sold and/or occupied—which streamlines inventory management. In addition, it allows them to deploy grounds teams more efficiently and better meet customer needs.

But digital cemetery mapping solutions vary widely. Entry-level options offer a digital map with geographic coordinates; others provide more detail and higher resolution. More advanced options integrate with other systems of record, such customer relationship management.

In the next section, we'll explore varying levels of functionality in these solutions—and the advantages provided by each one.

Evaluating the differences in digital cemetery mapping solutions

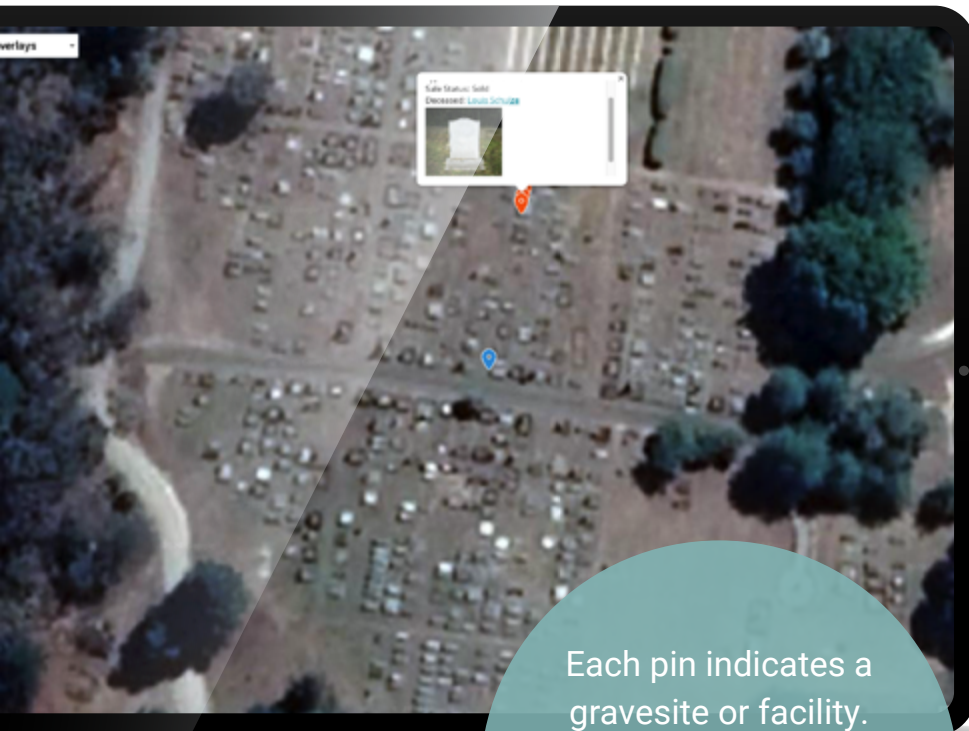
Digital mapping can be as simple as showing where every plot is located on a particular property—or it can be as involved as providing information about the deceased and their relationships to each other, historical data, all the way to displaying images of monuments.

Basic: Getting started with digital mapping

The simplest way to create a digital map is to use Google Maps, a web mapping service developed by Google. It uses satellite imagery to create a top-down, bird's-eye view of your cemetery, and offers the ability to drop 'pins' at each grave location.

Advantages of Google Maps:

- It shows the cemetery in the context of the community around it, with street maps and 360° interactive panoramic views.
- It helps visitors with trip planning by providing routes for traveling by foot, car, bicycle, and air (in beta), or public transportation—along with real-time traffic conditions. These benefits can still be realized with another mapping solution.




Each pin indicates a gravesite or facility. Entries can be color-coded to display information at a glance, such as Occupied, Sold, or Pending.

Intermediate: Mapping cemeteries quickly and affordably

Google Maps doesn't always provide the depth of information and customization that many cemetery operators need and want. Thus, many cemeteries are turning to drone mapping—a quick, cost-effective way to create digital maps. Often a drone can create a high-quality digital cemetery map in less than a day.

Advantages of drone mapping:

- One drone flight produces thousands of measurements and data points, delivering accurate, complete data for every plot, memorial garden, building, and monument—delivered in clear, high-resolution detail.
- Mapping a cemetery with a drone is up to five times faster than land-based methods. Even better, it is generally more affordable than GIS and costs less than half the cost of traditional survey methods.



Each data point represents a record. Information can be added and updated over time. It may include names or grave numbers and can even contain attachments.

Advanced: Matching geographic locations with valuable details

The most complete, powerful mapping solution can be realized with a Geographical Information System (GIS). A GIS can be used to create far more complex records than a Google Map or drone-based map, and provides a sleek, modern interface.

GIS systems add layers of detail to a digital map, including all information captured using drones, plus the ability to display grave shapes as an 'active' layer that can display the status of each grave, which can be clicked on to display additional plot details and much more. Software solutions such as ESRI or ArcGIS are examples of GIS systems.

Advantages of GIS:

- Many GIS systems contain fields that can be filled with custom information, such as names, grave numbers, and headstone details—it can even be populated with ancillary data, including historic and contemporary photos and documents.
- It allows cemetery operators to create maps that also serve as a business tool, customized for specific needs with proprietary data that they can use to provide greater value for both visitors and staff.



An aerial view provides a holistic view of the property. Each location is outlined and clickable, and can be linked to other information.



Why use digital cemetery mapping?

When cemetery data is stuck inside paper logs or static spreadsheets, it takes more time to find information for customers or business use—which decreases efficiency. It also makes it more likely that data is inaccurate or out of date. At a time when the burial rate is decreasing, you can't afford gaps in the customer experience or inaccuracies that slow your business down.

A digital mapping system improves efficiency by displaying the status of each location and ensuring that records are up to date, accurate, and easy to find. Maps are automatically updated as new information is entered into the system. Inventory adjusts with every change, making it clear which locations are occupied or available for sale.

Digital cemetery mapping also helps you deliver better customer service by making it easy for family members to quickly identify the location of the deceased and other vital information. It provides a better visitor experience by helping people navigate the site and find what they need, from memorial chapel to graveside.

The map is just the starting point

Once you have a digital map of your cemetery, you can use it to transform your business. In the pages that follow, we'll explore what you can expect and how you can get the most out of it.



Streamline ground works and operations

The productivity of your grounds and maintenance teams is directly linked to the quality of information they have. When they can immediately find locations that need attention, capture accurate data, and update systems with ease, your entire operation becomes more effective.

Boost efficiency

Get grounds team members up to speed fast and reduce wasted time with the ability to find any location quickly and accurately.

Improve overall operations

Reduce errors caused by missing or faulty information, track and escalate incidents—with a direct link to the exact location in question.

Plan with confidence

Provide accurate space dimensions that allow grounds teams to plan services without the risk of a surprise during excavation.

Proactively manage surrounding vegetation

Easily identify plants and their characteristics, including flora growth, age, and potential root movement to protect the cemetery against damage to graves and cemetery infrastructure.

Integrate with digital maintenance systems

The right solution will allow you to coordinate work orders and maintenance using tools that create tickets, task lists, or notifications for maintenance staff. Include GPS coordinates to ensure that work is completed in the right location.

Optimize cemetery space utilization



Managing land effectively is one of the most important things you can do for your cemetery business. Digital mapping provides a clear, accurate view that allows you to equip sales teams to succeed and maximize the value of your property.

Empower sales teams

Give sales teams the ability to view available inventory from their desks or while walking the cemetery, so they can provide customers with personalized options that match their needs.

Plan for expansion

Gain a clear, detailed view across your entire cemetery to better determine potential areas for expansion. Dial into selected areas to determine how to best use the available space.

Increase pre-need sales



Many people want to plan ahead—and a comprehensive digital mapping solution helps you provide customers with options and give them peace of mind. By showing them sites you are confident are available, you can create a better experience from start to finish.

Streamline the sales process

An accurate, real-time view of your inventory eliminates time-consuming steps that are necessary with static or paper-based records. It allows you to quickly find the answers customers need to complete their purchase.

Equip salespeople with modern tools

With easy-to-use digital tools at their fingertips, salespeople can excel at their jobs—without the hassle of sifting through the old paper records and maps. Choose a solution that provides the ability to view inventory on a mobile device to streamline the sales process and satisfy customers.



Expand inventory visibility

Digital cemetery mapping allows you to instantly see which plots are available and where. In addition, you can attach a rich level of detail to any plot or structure to help both staff and customers learn historic facts and plan for the future.

Group plots by category

Create custom color codes to differentiate plots based on availability, type, religion or any other grouping.

Catalog information about the deceased

Click on any plot to quickly see more details about plot ownership, burial records, and more.

Provide context and narrative

Link plot information with context about the broader cemetery and any nearby monuments, gravesites, or buildings that might help customers in their planning.

Make it easy for people to find what they need

Customers may want to find out whether a particular plot is available or explore multiple options. Family members may want to book chapel for a service. An accurate view of availability across plots and schedules helps them secure what they need quickly—without the fear of double-booking.



Better serve your community

Cemeteries play a vital role in their local communities—and digital mapping solutions allow you to provide information that helps people put family history and historical events in context.

Improve community access to information

The same information that exists in your digital mapping solution can also be shared online. Make it easy to navigate your cemetery using GPS coordinates and web or mobile-based tools. People may want to learn more about local history, find a deceased relative, or learn about notable community members buried at your site. You might also use the information to create guided tours—either by your own staff or an external resource.

Provide digital capabilities for on-site visits

Navigating a cemetery can be an intimidating task for visitors. Mobile-friendly solutions and digital kiosks direct visitors to particular gravesites, locate decedents, and help them learn more about your property—without the need for a cemetery staff member. These tools can enhance the visitor experience and make them more likely to return.

Engage visitors with a thoughtful experience

Your cemetery is much more than gravesites—it is also a peaceful place for reflection. Digital mapping software allows you to showcase the unique qualities and features of your property. Design interactive maps with background information on facilities, landmarks, interment sites, or other points of interest.



Build a digital bridge to the future

As you look to strengthen and protect your cemetery business for the future, you need the ability to quickly and accurately map every part of your cemetery and have a clear view of available inventory. Digital cemetery mapping allows you to realize the benefits of digital transformation across every part of your business—today and tomorrow.

With a solution that digitizes your records and integrates with other key business functions, you will be able to streamline ground works and operations, expand inventory visibility, optimize space utilization, increase pre-need sales, and better serve your community.

OpusXenta provides a complete software solution for running your cemetery. Digital GPS-enabled maps can be fully integrated with both your operational processes and public-facing services. With technology solutions that reduce labor-intensive record-keeping and accelerate sales, we free you up to keep growing your business.

Keep on Learning

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