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Surell Consulting Fills in the Blanks with Microstation FDO Reader

By Samantha Uliano, ConnectPress Editor

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Sometimes your software can't do it all, and that's where third-party solutions come in to fill in the blanks. Earlier this month, we were able to sit down with Krister Surell, of Surell Consulting AB, makers of the MicroStation FDO Reader, which helps users do just that. The company is based in Stockholm, Sweden, where Surell himself basically has the market on MicroStation consulting.

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Okay so we weren't in Sweden, but caught up with him on the phone.

Surell's role as the most experienced MicroStation consultant in Sweden led to a direct influence for the FDO Reader. Surell Consulting AB has been around since 2002, and Surell himself has over thirty years of experience in IT and nearly twenty-five years of MicroStation experience. "The MicroStation FDO Reader first came available at the end of 2015," said Surell. "It's a brand new product."

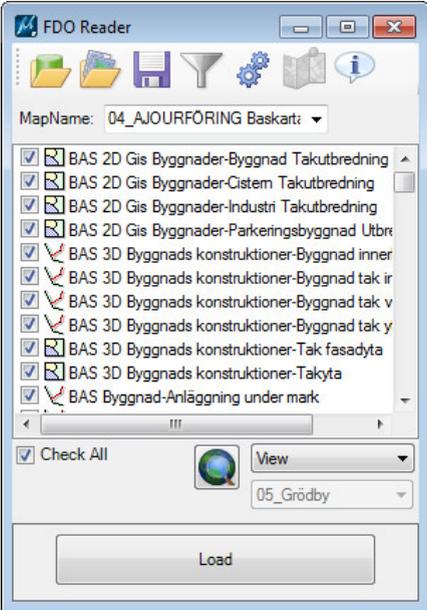
The FDO reader isn't Surell's first rodeo. The company also provides training and consulting for clients new to MicroStation environments. They help with product development, map production clients and already have produced several other apps for similar purposes. After all, they have been around since 2002 and watched the industry-- and Bentley Systems' software-- develop and grow. But throughout all of Surell's consulting, he saw a need-- and a blank to be filled.



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"Our clients wanted to translate data to MicroStation," he said. "They needed something that would put their spatial data directly where it was best suited."

Of course, Bentley already has a program which does this-- Bentley Maps. But for smaller companies, smaller projects, and those with small budgets, it can be too much. "It can be hard to get if you just need it for simple things," said Surell. "Our reader is easier and cheaper. It connects to multiple data programs," including industry favorite, Oracle Spatial, "and translates the data from all of them."

The program is simple and intuitive: "You load it, start a dialogue and implement the data source, select players, formatting, whatever you want," said Surell.

Feature Data Objects (FDO) itself is built on an open API originally built by Autodesk, according to Surell.

MicroStation FDO Reader makes it possible to load geometries and attributes from databases and sources from MicroStation. Data from multiple sources can then be combined into maps and loaded for selected areas.

The reader can also read Shapefiles, make text annotations, define symbology and use a view or fence

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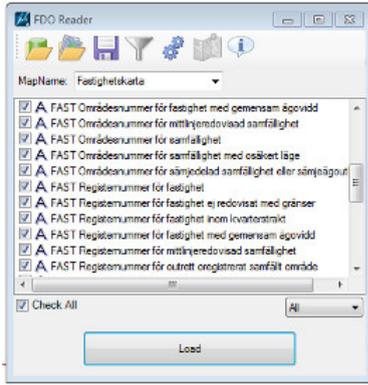
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Its ODBC provider can read data from Excel, ACCESS and other sources. Plus, not only can it read geometry data, it can retrieve any attributes from the data source. In addition point data can be placed as text using data from the selected attribute. If the attribute contains a cell rotation or text that element can also be rotated.

Last, MicroStation FDO can use saved map definitions and the map layers can be filtered using a SQL to create multiple layers from a data source.

The reader is currently just available for MicroStation and MicroStation Powerdraw on Surell's website. Prices are subject to change due to currency exchange rates, but they are \$780. And Surell offers discounts for more licenses purchased. Currently, the company only has a couple of customers outside of Stockholm, although within Sweden, it has been very well received.

An English version of the [Surell Consulting website](#) was recently updated to direct English MicroStation users towards reader.

Sam Uliano is originally from Spokane, Washington, but currently lives in Florida. Her fiction has been published in the magazine [Silvertongue](#), and several other publications. With what little time she doesn't spend writing, she brews mead.

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Published 06/29/2016

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