

# Franklin County, Ohio Uses Address Verification Software to Collect Millions in Unpaid Taxes



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Mailing 435,000 property tax bills is a big enough task with a staff of eight. But two years ago when Phyllis Roberts noticed nearly 14,000 returned bills, the Franklin County (Ohio) Treasurer's Office customer service supervisor knew the department could be more diligent.

"Ultimately it's our job to get that bill to the taxpayer," said Roberts, who blamed most of the returned mail issues on clerical errors and an aging real-estate computer system. "We could type in Timbuktu and it didn't care. If it was a new ZIP code, it wouldn't recognize it."

While the 14,000 outstanding bills represent little more than 3 percent of the county's total number of tax mailings, at an average of \$2,000 each those unpaid bills add up to \$28 million for the county of more than 1 million residents, many of whom live in Columbus.

Some bills belonged in the "dead pile" -- constituted of residents who've moved -- while others just simply didn't reach their destinations.

"There are people who don't get a bill and think they don't owe anything," Roberts said. "Then they get a penalty and are very upset about it."

A cold call from Experian QAS -- an address verification software provider - resulted in an implementation that helped shrink that stack of returned bills from 14,000 down to 2,000 during the next billing cycle [in 2008]. The QAS Pro software is "mapped directly into our real estate program and just pops up," which ensures the address is actually an address, Roberts said.

The software costs \$7,000 for an annual subscription. It's installed on 20 county computers. Not much training is necessary and the software is easy to use for those who aren't computer savvy, she said.

The county plans to continue using QAS, said Roberts, who can't say enough positive words on its behalf. "I could go on the road and sell it for them," she joked. "It makes a big difference here, but nobody's offered me a job, so I guess I'll stay here."