

Costs and benefits data mapping of BIM laser scan integration: A Case Study in Australia

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Abstract. Building information modelling (BIM) has been increasingly popular in the utility industry due to substantial benefits of cost and time savings, and improved performance and asset management during the operations and maintenance (O&M) phase. With the recent addition of point cloud from laser scanning, the level of details opted BIM 3D models from ‘as-designed’ to ‘as-constructed’ which paves the way for more benefits to other stakeholders during the O&M phase. This research identified and developed the cost benefit elements of the laser-scan integrated BIM as part of a case study research project of a water treatment plant (WTP) in Queensland, Australia. The costs elements from stakeholder’s perspective are predominantly BIM supporting software, hardware, labour and training. Whereas, the benefits are categorised based on communication, asset, data and risk management elements for the WTP stakeholders. This research evaluated the costs and benefits through 3D modelling, including asset input, of a WTP study section, site surveys and interviews. The research developed an association mapping between all costs and benefits elements for the WTP case selected.

Keywords: BIM, As designed as constructed assets, BIM adoption in the water industry

1 Introduction

Building Information Modelling (BIM) is one of the most promising developments in the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) industry. It is a digital representation of a physical structure and functions of a project/facility supported by multiple software and technologies; and are managed by AEC professionals and other stakeholders. BIM is currently used by individuals and organisations such as business and government agencies for planning, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining various physical infrastructures from different industries including the water sector [1,2]. The recent advancement of BIM technologies has opted 3D models from “as designed” to “as constructed”. Although construction industries have proven BIM adoption to be beneficial, case studies of the adoption in the water sector have

demonstrated related benefits such as reduced frequency of site survey, and enhanced client communication and associated costs.

BIM is an object-based organisation of information that represents a building to intelligent objects to carry detailed information which can be extracted, exchanged or networked to support decision-making, in contrast to the traditional method of file-based organisation of information which causes errors and omissions, and leads to financial expenses and delays [2]. However, [1] believes that BIM in a broader spectrum is not just an object but rather a human activity that involves people, system process and software. BIM connects AEC professionals and other stakeholders such as contractors and suppliers contributing and collaborating towards a common data environment (CDE). The CDE consists of project and asset 3D models which involve graphical and non-graphical data, and associated documents [2]. These 3D models are the stereotypical reflection of BIM since it constitutes technological advancement.

BIM 3D models are initially designed to record drawings and documentation during the design and construction phase [1], which is referred as "as-designed" BIM [3, 4]. It is argued that BIM excels mostly during these phases. However, the recent advancement of BIM technologies has opted BIM from "as designed" to "as-built". The latter is referred to as the utilisation of laser scan (LiDAR) technology and associated applications such as point cloud and web-share [5, 6]. For example, FARO Scene software utilises LiDAR equipment, where application includes point cloud generation from images; and extension file conversion to other software [6]. Another application of the software is the ability to share the 3D view (digital twin image) to the selected stakeholders including a webshare cloud option [6]. There are many BIM software products and associate tools either in conjunction or compatible separately on the market, but the majority have the same principle and use. They can be categorised based on the manufacturer, life-cycle stages use, and the main BIM dimensions i.e. 3D-modeling, 4D scheduling, 5D cost, 6D sustainability, and 7D (O&M) [6,7]. The use of these BIM technologies is also dependent on the activities and specific management system such as the drinking water treatment plant (WTP).

A WTP is a public facility that treats raw water and distributes it as portable water to clients from different sectors such as residential, commercial and industrial. The conventional water treatment processes include coagulation, flocculation and clarification, sedimentation, filtration, and disinfection; and are managed and operated by facility personnel including operators, maintenance planners, process engineers and asset managers. WTP assets include pipes and other equipment within the plant, and piping and instrumentation drawings (P&IDs), structural drawings, asset records/register, warranties and other documentation. In Australia, the water industry continues to recognise the community benefits of water infrastructure and is taking a more businesslike approach, with a number of Water Service Providers being commercialised and some corporatised [8].

The elements of this businesslike approach include a more rigorous infrastructure investment decision-making process with non-asset solutions, full cycle costs, risks and existing alternatives being considered before deciding to construct infrastructure; making the best use of existing infrastructure; ensuring that infrastructure can sustain agreed customer service standards; and a recognition that asset management is a core

business function to support service delivery [8]. For this purpose, the Queensland Government created and recommended the QLD water total management planning (TMPs) [9]. The “TMPs were introduced in 1994 to promote best practice planning and least cost outcomes for water supply and sewerage planning”. A TMP quantifies and assesses the condition of assets, prioritises expenditure, and identifies options for cost saving and improvement in ways that are environmentally and financially sustainable” [8, 9]. This research adopts the TMPs’ and identified four critical elements for better planning and managing of a water treatment asset. These elements are asset, risk and data management, and communication. This research mapped the BIM integration benefits in regards to these four elements.

BIM adoption has recently been increasing in the water industry due to substantial benefits in cost and time savings; and improved performance and asset management during the construction phase. With the recent addition of point cloud from laser scanning, the level of detail (LOD) and level of information (LOI) of as constructed assets are captured which pave the way for more benefits to other stakeholders during the O&M phase. Although many case studies are elaborating the benefits of using BIM in the construction industry [10], the water industry is also gaining momentum [11]. A case study in Queensland, Australia shows that the Kawana sewage treatment plant upgrade has successfully used BIM for design, construction and operation; through the 3D utility software Autodesk AutoCAD Plant 3D and other BIM software [12]. The case study illustrates the benefits of adopting BIM. Other case studies worldwide have also been reviewed and illustrated similar results [11]. Research reveals some of the workflows of the 3D modelling from laser-scan images to Plant 3D software and other BIM software such as Autodesk Navisworks with the aid from third party software FARO products [13]. Other workflows have also been illustrated in the 3D modelling case studies from other reviews [10]. These workflows will be explored during the 3D modelling process of the WTP case in this research.

2 Research Methodology

The scope of this research includes 3D modelling using point cloud which is extracted from laser-scan images; WTP asset input and validation; and investigation of the WTP stakeholders, for cost and benefit investigation of BIM integration and the creation of a data map for the WTP stakeholders. After a thorough review of relevant literature, the research adopted a mixed-method to allow for a combination of identifying patterns and categorising cost and benefit elements. An in-depth exploration of costs and benefits to relevant stakeholders across the asset life-cycle was conducted. The data collection methods comprised case study reviews and other 3D modelling processes evaluations; utilisation of WTP existing data; structured interview and equipment survey from the WTP site visit and group meetings; and experimentation of 3D modelling processes.

3 Results – 3D modelling processes and case studies comparison

The research reveals the costs, benefits and WTP stakeholders of BIM during the data collection mentioned in the previous section. The costs and benefits of the BIM adoption were recorded during the experimentation workflow shown in Fig.1, reflective of the actual BIM design phase; and literature review through case studies' defined costs and concluding benefits, reflective of the actual O&M and construction phases.

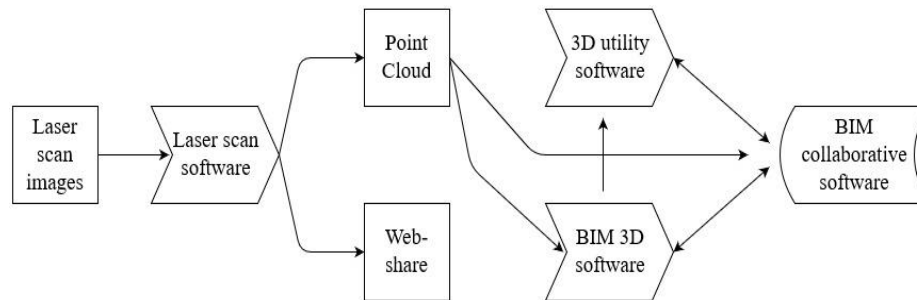


Fig. 1. The workflow of 3D modelling from laser-scan images.

The overall costs include software such as scan processor software (e.g. FARO Scene and Autodesk Recap), BIM software (e.g. Autodesk Revit and Navisworks), and 3D utility software (e.g. Autodesk AutoCAD Plant 3D). Although the research hardware available is web-browsing devices and 8G RAM PC specification, other PC specifications have been recommended for optimal 3D modelling and model use. To quantify the labour and training costs, the intensities have been quantified based on a scale of high, medium and low as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Labour and training scale reflective of the costs identified during the data collection.

Element	Low	Medium	High
Labour	0 to 20 hours	20 to 40 hours	40 to 80 hours
Training	Online tutorials	Same with scale Low plus manual consultations	Same with scale Medium plus expert consultations, e.g. diagnostic blogs, company inquiry request, expert advice

Through experimentation and literature review, the costs of the WTP BIM adoption were observed and recorded during the BIM life-cycle phases i.e. BIM design, O&M, BIM redesign for WTP upgrade and construction for WTP upgrade activities. BIM design and redesign for WTP upgrade activities include laser scanning, laser-scan to point cloud, web-share uploading, and 3D modelling using different BIM software, and utilities, and other tools. The O&M and construction for WTP upgrade activities include data access, input and output, and surveying. Through literature review by comparing benefits from case studies and experimentation by validating benefits from case studies,

the benefits include reduced time and costs during all phases, clients' serviceability and improved communication.

4 Discussion – Costs and benefits data mapping

The research reveals that the costs and benefits of BIM adoption can be described based on their respective elements. Costs of point cloud-based BIM or webshare from the laser scan images are predominately software, hardware, labour and training elements as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. Cost and source references.

	Software S	Hardware H	Labour L	Training T	Source R
1	Scan processor	PC -8G RAM	High	High	Lit. Review
2	FARO Scene	PC -16G RAM	Medium	Medium	Online Tutorial
3	Recap	PC -16G RAM above	Low	Low	3D Modelling
4	Revit	Web-browsing device	Utility U		Site survey
5	Plant 3D		Internet CXN		Site Interview
6	Navisworks				Scan Company

These cost elements were identified during the 3D modelling processes experimentation and case study comparisons from all BIM life-cycle phases. Each phase consists of activities and thus, to avoid duplication of costs, the data are presented in matrix form as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Some costs investigated for the different BIM life-cycle phases. (Refer to Table 2)

Activity	Code	Processes / Function	Cost Element					Source
			Software	Hardware	Labour	Training	Utility	
Experimental BIM design								
Scan	C1	Laser scanning site	AUD \$3500 (provided)					R6
P. Cloud	C2	Scanning processes	S2	H1	L2	T1	U6	R1,R2,R3
Webshare	C3	Uploading processes	scan package					R6
O&M and Potential upgrade								
Access	C10	Webshare viewing		H4	L3	T3	U6	R1, R2
Input	C12	Webshare data relay		H4	L2	T2	U6	R1, R2
Output	C15	Webshare print out		H4	L3	T2	U6	R1, R2

Table 3 shows the cost-activity matrix of laser scan processes during the experimental BIM design and fixed prices from the laser scan company. The table also shows the WTP cost-activity matrix during the O&M and potential upgrade found in the literature review. Other WTP costs associated with 3D modelling using utility software and BIM software, are presented in the same manner. It was found that this

software has cost impacts when using in conjunction with each other, and could potentially reduce the cost of the processes. Benefits can be organised from the data, asset and risk management, and communication elements based the TMPs' interpretations i.e. Queensland government's recommendation of asset management as a business-like approach as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4. Some of the LS-I-BIM validated benefits. (Refer to Table 2)

Code	Benefit	Elements	Source
B1	better design solutions	Data/Asset	R1,R3,R4
B12	increased client satisfaction	Comm./Risk	R1,R4
B18	increased profits on projects	Asset/Risk	R1

Table 4 shows some of the potential benefits with respect to the activities illustrated in Table 2. It shows design, client and overall project benefits which were found during literature review and experimentation. Other benefits were also found regarding the O&M and upgrade phases, and the design of BIM models. An accurate design of BIM models is essential since it will become the CDE of all stakeholders. WTP stakeholders were found to have their respective costs and benefits when adopting LS-I-BIM, presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Generalised WTP cost and benefit data map. (Refer to Table 3 and 4)

Stakeholders	Relevance		BIM life-cycle phase				Potential Costs	Potential Benefits
	Webshare	LS-I-BIM	BIM design	O&M	Upgrade			
					Design	Const.		
3D Team	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	C1-C14	B1-B5, B8- B9
Facility PER	✓	✓		✓			C10-C18	B2-B9
Managers	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	C10-C11, C5 - C17	B5-B9, B11-B18
Contractors	✓				✓	✓	C10-C11, C15- C18	B2-B9, B11-B18
Clients	✓				✓		C10	B12, B14, B15
Owners	✓				✓	✓	C10-C17	B1-B18
AEC Prof.	✓	✓			✓	✓	C4-C18	B1-B11, B16 -B18

Table 5 shows a data map of potential costs and benefits to a generalised WTP stakeholder group. For example, facility personnel include operators, maintenance planners, schedulers and process engineers. These specific WTP stakeholders and respective BIM costs and benefits were identified during the literature review and were validated from the other data collection methods. The data map also shows the relevance of other types of BIM tools such as webshare and the laser scanning BIM functionalities, and during BIM life-cycle phases. It shows that webshare benefits all

involved stakeholders. However, the overall relevance of BIM is distributed throughout different phases.

5 Conclusions

This research has evaluated the cost-benefit of laser-scan integrated BIM through experimentation of 3D modelling processes and other data collection and created a data map for WTP stakeholders. Despite an initial increased cost by using multiple software packages, the overall costs are significantly reduced when these are used in conjunction with each other. The benefits were shown to significantly outweigh the costs. The created BIM cost-benefit data map can be beneficial for WTP stakeholders, other water sector facilities, and future researchers interested in laser scanning BIM cost-benefit analysis.

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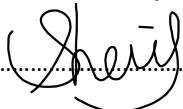
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