

2015 London Tree and Woodland Awards

Winner of the Tree and Technology Award: Jon Robinson for the Open Source Canopy Cover Assessment application



Jon Robinson receiving his award at City Hall in May 2015 from Roger Evans (Deputy Mayor of London) and Ian Gambles (Director of Forestry Commission England).

This award is given for the development and innovative use of technology to help plant, manage and understand London's urban forest.

Jonathan works for The LB of Hackney but in his own time and under his own motivation developed this innovative software. It is very simple and effective for users, to help understand the amount of canopy cover over a chosen area. It complements other measurement methods and avoids aerial imagery licencing issues.

Jon said "I was surprised when I was nominated for this award, and even more so when I found out that I had won it. I have enjoyed working on this project, and getting to know more about trees and the LTOA in London. I hope that the project gets picked up by more London boroughs and this can be used to provide evidence of the change in canopy cover across the capital. Trees are a lot more important than most people realise."

Introduction to the project

The ability to measure canopy cover is an important step forward in the strategic management of the urban forest as it is more representative than tree numbers and can be directly correlated to the level of ecosystem services being provided.

Until the development of the Open Source Canopy Cover Audit (OSCCA) it was not possible to obtain Canopy Cover estimates without having to employ expensive specialists, who produced estimates using remote sensing techniques.

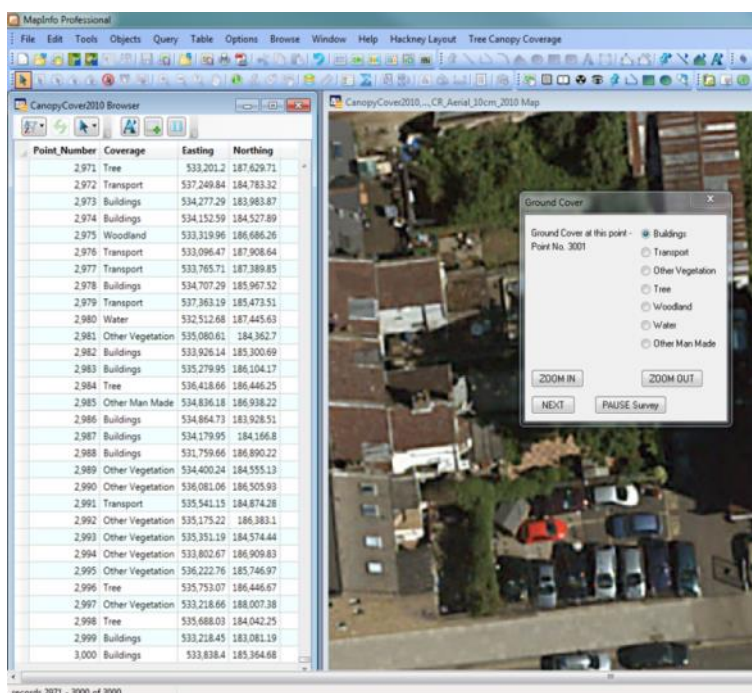
Project Activities

The London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) approached Jonathan who agreed to write an application which could produce an estimate of canopy coverage based on random point sampling of aerial photography.

We called it the Open Source Canopy Cover Audit (OSCCA). It was originally written in MapBasic code to be used in the MapInfo Professional Geographical Information System (GIS) – later on the instructions were written up for this to work in other GIS packages.

Project Outcomes

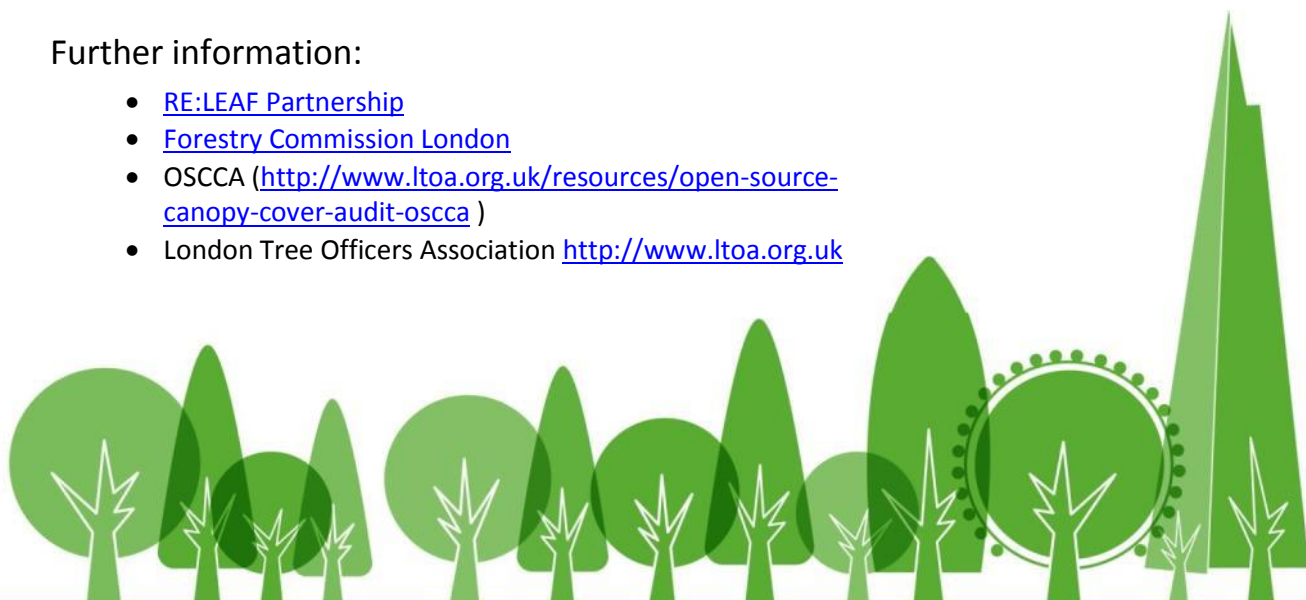
OSCCA now gives Local Authorities, Tree Wardens, Community Groups or Students the ability to estimate canopy cover quickly and at a fraction of the cost. It is a very easy tool to use and doesn't require specialist knowledge to function but the results can be far reaching.



You can use any aerial photography that you have access to so this allows you to do historic surveys. Several London Boroughs have already done OSCCA surveys and have arrived at canopy cover values for various years. Hackney has four sets of aerial images from 2004, to 2014, and with these we can build up a historic timeline of canopy coverage as evidence for future tree planting budget.

Further information:

- [RE:LEAF Partnership](#)
- [Forestry Commission London](#)
- OSCCA (<http://www.ltoa.org.uk/resources/open-source-canopy-cover-audit-oscca>)
- London Tree Officers Association <http://www.ltoa.org.uk>



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