specialized cartographic functions into a single integrated software system. Data compression technology is used to reduce storage demands and to speed processing and transmission.

InforMaster is designed to control distributed information with minimal programming support. It acts as a "librarian" to keep track of information that has been "checked out," ensure data integrity, and prevent duplication. When checked-out data is returned, InforMaster processes all updates. In effect, it enables different departments or agencies to remain autonomous in their operations but still interact transparently with each other's databases when required.

Key to the system is the Distributed VAX Center, a complete mapping database system contained within a high-performance graphics workstation. The DVC can function as a stand-alone center, an expandable host system, or a node in a VAX-based distribution network. A virtually unlimited number of additional workstations can be supported; they can consist of MicroVAX II workstations, IBM PC's, and dumb terminals in varying combinations, depending on the performance requirements of the user.

Synercom's workstation support software facilitates input, editing, and output functions. Operators check out data from the database on a Distributed VAX Center. While a particular layer is in read/write use, that data is available to other users only for reading. Transmission between a Distributed VAX Center and supported workstations can be handled via Ethernet, 9600-baud phone lines, or microwave transmission.

Synercom has developed special interface software that allows the company's systems to communicate with industry-standard plotters and screen copiers.

InforMap III takes advantage of DEC's VAX BI series computers with the advanced BI-bus architecture. The higher data transfer rate provides a significant boost in performance over similar applications running on older VAX computers with Unibus.

**One last problem**

Although electronic mapping information management may solve a number of problems for organizations with geographically distributed assets, it can also create a new one: What do they do with all those outmoded filing cabinets, drafting tables, and reams of paper maps that were never quite up to date?