

# Case

## STUDY

### New Imaging System Revolutionizes Document Management for Williams County Document imaging enables county departments to efficiently store and share information



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The 26 departments of Williams County, Ohio, have their hands full serving a population of nearly 40,000. And until recently, county departments were also full of heaps of paper they neither could store nor retrieve effectively.

Overrun with documents — some dating back to when the county was founded in 1820 — county employees scrambled to find space for their growing files. With limited onsite storage, they did what any resourceful pack rat would do: Store the documents in various locations around town. Records crept into county office basements, swamped the barn on the historic society's fairgrounds and even filled a coal bin.

"Paper records took up an unimaginable amount of space," said Linda Scott, director of the Williams County Records Center. "Eventually, it became impossible not to think about an alternate way to manage our documents."

When Scott began to consider replacing microfilming equipment a couple of years ago, upgrading the county's paper-based system to digital imaging seemed the most logical solution. Scanning paper records would simplify the county's recordkeeping practices and free up physical space. Additionally, the ability to store the scanned information on a centralized system would allow personnel to easily access and share information across departments.

#### **Multiphase Rollout for Multiple Departments**

With more than two dozen departments in multiple locations — each with unique document management needs — upgrading to digital imaging would be a Herculean task. The first order of business was to identify the departments that most urgently needed document imaging. This included the Clerk of Courts, whose employees routinely rushed to locate, copy and mail files to lawyers who often wouldn't receive them for up to three days. It also included the Sheriff's Office, which would benefit from a system that allows a deputy to transmit orders electronically to the sheriff, rather than physically delivering the associated paperwork.

To that end, Williams County decided to gradually transition to a countywide imaging system through a multiphase rollout. Scott, who oversaw much of the project's installation, determined which departments to bring on during each phase based on their need for the technology and their ability to adapt to and support that technology.

#### **Changing the Way Williams County Handles Paper**

With the county looking toward a digital future, Scott enlisted the help of CASNET, an Akron, Ohio enterprise content management (ECM) solutions provider. After assessing Williams County's workload and departmental needs, CASNET recommended Trüper 3200 scanners from BÖWE BELL + HOWELL Scanners (BBH). In particular, it identified Trüper 3200's flatbed scanning option as an asset for scanning the county's many fragile and odd-shaped documents. Prior testing by CASNET also revealed Trüper's speed and productivity as the best match for the county's scanning volumes.

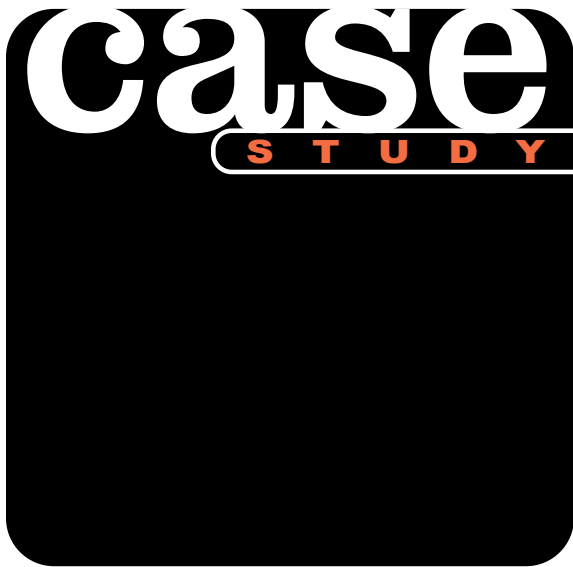
Scott and CASNET began distributed scanning operations at Williams County by outfitting departments at multiple locations with low-volume production scanners that are programmed to send the scanned images or data into a central repository. This move included the Auditor's Office, Engineer's Office, Probate Court, Clerk of Courts, Job and Family Services, and the county's Records Center. CASNET quickly trained departmental employees to operate Trüper so that they could begin scanning.

The scanned information is managed, shared and archived using OnBase software, the county's primary document management system. Additionally, Williams County integrated several other software components into its imaging system to help with specific document management needs. The Clerk of Courts, for example, uses MAXIMUS CourtView, a program that helps manage caseload, docketing and document imaging. The



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Job and Family Services department employs an application enabler and Ohio state software for human services.

While state regulation requires Job and Family Services to house their document images on a separate server, document images from all other departments are stored on a central server for easy access.

To date, the Clerk of Courts, Probate Court, Auditor's Office and Child Support Enforcement Agency alone have more than 1.8 million document images on the system — from marriage records to court case files.

#### **Trüper to the Rescue**

The scale of scanning projects is as varied as Williams County's departments. The Clerk of Courts, for example, is digitizing documents that date back to 1988, when it first transitioned to a computer system. The Probate Court has completed scanning its records dating back to 2000, but also must revisit the 1800s to scan fragile estate and genealogy records.

Trüper's exceptional speed and functionality help department personnel scan with ease. A durable production scanner, Trüper allows for increased productivity by scanning documents at up to 62 pages per minute, with a duty cycle of 10,000 pages per day. Scott especially praised the scanner's duplex mode, which scans up to 106 images per minute. Trüper also comes bundled with VirtualReScan™ (VRS) image enhancement software that automatically corrects document images for brightness, clarity and color. This feature is particularly valuable to the Clerk of Courts, which often scans faded fax sheets and delicate, thermal paper copies.

For fragile, exception and bound documents, such as the Clerk of Courts' thermal paper copies, Trüper 3200's flatbed is ideal. The flatbed also handles the Probate Court's old estate records and 14-inch by 17-inch pages extracted from ledger-sized books with ease. The Clerk of Courts also benefits from the ability to control Trüper's Ultrasonic Multifeed Detection feature, which ensures that every document fed is scanned. Because notes and mail receipts are taped to many documents, the court enlists Trüper's Multifeed Ignore function, which allows users to disregard these items and continue scanning.

#### **Departments Reap System Benefits**

The departments' ability to share and retrieve information as soon as it's on the central server is invaluable. For Williams County, this means far less time spent searching for files and making copies, as well as happier, more productive employees.

The public also benefits. Citizens now can receive public files — from a genealogy record to a civil case file — over e-mail without waiting for a Probate Court or Clerk of Courts employee to find and copy those documents.

"The imaging system has made it possible to instantly access files regularly requested by the public as well as county departments," Scott said. "Prior to document imaging, there were instances where an employee spent days searching for a mislaid file."

Even 10 minutes saved can make a world of difference when dealing with a high volume of requests. For example, it used to take Probate Court employees up to 15 minutes to locate a marriage license and make copies for a citizen. Now, it requires only a few minutes to draw up and certify a license. Similarly, Clerk of Courts employees now can send lawyers their requested indictments, motions or judgments electronically.

"The process for an employee to send a document or case file used to take an inordinate amount of time, what with finding the file, tearing it apart, making copies, stuffing envelopes and handling postage and mailing," Scott said. "Now, the document imaging system allows an employee to bring up documents on-screen and send them via e-mail."

Williams County also has substantially reduced the amount of paper stored. After completing regular schedules of retention and disposition to approve the length of time necessary to retain a permanent record on paper, the county has rid itself of many paper documents, such as budget reports and meeting minutes. Once scanned, some county documents are also converted to microfilm to comply with an Ohio state requirement that permanent county records remain in an eye-readable format. Eye-readable records, such as paper or microfilm, do not require hardware and software to access the data they hold.

As scanning and microfilming continues, Scott predicts that more paper will exit than enter. Already, with its backfile conversion project well underway, the Child Support Enforcement Agency in Job and Family Services no longer creates paper files, and the Clerk of Courts is working to scan documents as soon as it receives them.

#### **A Digital Future**

Williams County's document management system has facilitated information sharing throughout the county and state. It also has helped save time, cost and labor in terms of hunting for files and making copies, as well as mailing or physically delivering paperwork.

Looking ahead, Williams County aims to add several more departments per year until the majority of them are using the imaging system. And with seven satisfied, information-sharing departments already on board, many of those remaining crave document digitization.

With its new imaging system in full swing, Williams County can better concentrate on keeping its barn uncluttered, and its employees and public well served.



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