



DELAWARE COUNTY CLERK OF COURTS

Integrating Document Imaging and Case Management Improves Service

Some call it urban sprawl and others call it economic development. In Delaware County, Ohio's fastest growing county, the transition from rural community to Columbus suburb isn't always smooth. For example, residential and commercial development often requires zoning changes, which are frequently disputed in Civil Court. In a recent case, a single response to a filing was more than 900 pages in length. Because it is a public record, there must be a mechanism in place for ensuring that this document and hundreds of additional pages are available to citizens as well as attorneys and judges.

In Ohio, the responsibility for Civil Court filings like these, as well as those in Criminal Court, Appeals, Domestic Relations, state liens and more, falls to the county's Clerk of Courts. Jan Antonoplos, Delaware County's Clerk of Courts, wanted to meet the growing needs of the county of 150,000 and its judges and attorneys without increasing staffing or expenses. In addition to other duties, microfilming, photocopying and filing all incoming filings was very labor intensive for the dozen employees of the Clerk's Office, and staffing increases were not proportionate to the growing volume of work.

Ms. Antonoplos spearheaded a two-phased technology initiative to improve secure access to records while reducing associated labor. The first phase of this project was to upgrade the county's existing (CMS) case management system to CourtView® from MAXIMUS, Inc. Enhanced functionality, such as the ability to service a case as a one-time entry, allowed faster docketing.

To complement the docketing information, Ms. Antonoplos investigated how ECM (enterprise content management) technology, such as document imaging, might be used to provide better access to the filings themselves. Delaware

County's Records Department was using an OnBase® solution designed and implemented by Results Engineering, an authorized OnBase solution provider, to archive documents from multiple departments, including the auditor's and prosecutor's offices. Developed by Hyland Software, Inc., OnBase is an integrated suite of ECM software solutions, including core capabilities in document imaging and workflow, COLD/ERM and records management.

By building upon an existing county technology investment, the Clerk of Courts' Office was able to cost-effectively implement a solution that not only manages images of filings, but makes them available directly from the CourtView interface. This reduces the burden of the solution on its users by eliminating the need for additional training or time to navigate between applications when retrieving documents.

Immediate Access to Filings Through CMS

When a civil, criminal or appeal filing arrives at the Clerk of Courts' Office, it is time stamped and given to the clerk assigned to docket that type of filing. She enters data from the filing into CourtView to assign a judge and case number, input information for all parties, service the filing and docket it when complete. Using OnBase Application Enabler™ in conjunction with an API (application programming interface) written by Results Engineering, the indexing values are used to create bar-coded stickers printed on a Dymo® label printer.

After affixing the sticker to the filing, the clerk scans it on a Panasonic Corp. KVS7065C document scanner, which simultaneously prints a scanning date and time on the document to provide an audit trail. Based on the bar code information, OnBase automatically completes all of the indexing fields that can be used to search for documents.

AT A GLANCE

By integrating document imaging with its court management system, the Clerk of Courts in one of the nation's fast growing counties is improving access to filings for attorneys, judges and the public and holding the line on staffing increases despite an increasing volume of work.

BENEFITS

- Manage the increasing volume of work without increasing staffing
- Support immediate access to filing for judges, attorneys and the public
- Improve service for fax, mail and counter requests for documents

APPLICATIONS

- Civil Court filings
- Criminal Court filings
- Appeals

ONBASE SOFTWARE

- Document Imaging
- Application Enabler

COMPLEMENTARY PRODUCT INTEGRATIONS

- Panasonic Corp. KVS7065C document scanner
- MAXIMUS, Inc. CourtView® case management system

Application Enabler eliminates the need to search for documents through the OnBase interface by linking documents to relevant fields in CourtView. By double-clicking on a field (such as a case number), users can immediately retrieve the relevant document(s) (such as an original filing). OnBase cross-referencing functionality also makes it possible to move from one document to a related one by double clicking.

While this will save time for clerks who must answer requests received by mail or fax or at the counter, OnBase has also made it possible for users to simply access the documents they need via the intranet. Very soon, the same documents will be available via the Internet so that they can be viewed by judges and clerks from the benches, title agencies, the press, attorneys and citizens from their homes or at public terminals located in the county courthouse. The enhanced search functionality will allow lawyers to enter their Supreme Court Numbers and quickly access a specific case.

According to Ms. Antonoplos, training the staff to use the new solution was very easy. "When I first started having documents scanned in the Clerk's Office, I had some misgivings," she admits. "I was afraid I would have to hire someone to help get them into the system, but it's been a very smooth transition. Whoever is assigned to a case takes care of getting it scanned and indexed into the system. We bought baskets for the clerks' desks because we thought the filings would pile up, but we almost never see anything in the baskets." Considering the volume of cases filed in Delaware County, this is a significant accomplishment for a staff of just a dozen people. In 2004, the office managed filings for 571 criminal cases, 905 civil filings and 83 appeals in addition to other responsibilities. On average, each document involved in these filings is about 20 to 25 pages long, but they can commonly be as long as 100 pages.

As Delaware County continues to grow and evolve, OnBase will assist the Clerk of Courts' Legal Division in its mission to keep the courts' records correctly and timely and to provide prompt, accurate and courteous customer service.



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