

“We researched traditional film-to-digital imaging solutions, but found the products too expensive for our record requirements. Digital Reel provides an exact digital replica of our microfilm and is accessible on our existing workstations. The price amazed us – 50% less than any other solution we looked at.”

Judie Welch
Records and Identification Bureau Administrator
Phoenix Police Department, Arizona



INDUSTRY

- State & Local Government, Law Enforcement

LOCATION

- Phoenix, Arizona

CHALLENGES

- Only 3 users could access the microfilm archive to make paper copies of requested incident reports
- Potential digital solutions always came in too expensive due to the requirement of manual key data entry

BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- 5,500+ microfilm rolls representing over 15 million images dating back to 1970 were digitally converted
- Digital Reel used by up to 1,500 workstations
- Digital Reel integration with EMC ApplicationXtender

BENEFITS

- Price less than 50% of a standard, content management application
- Virtually no training of new users
- Streamlined police record retrieval
- Eliminated 3 reader printers and 3 microfilm cabinets
- Estimated savings of 8 hours per day

Case Study



Overview

Phoenix Police Department (PHX PD) is comprised of more than 3,800 officers and support personnel who protect a population of more than 1.55 million. PHX PD is responsible for patrolling almost 516 square miles – the biggest city from a geographical standpoint in the country.

PHX PD has been a national leader, implementing many technological and procedural improvements – from the first police radio system in Arizona to the newest 800MHz system. While obtaining its ISO 9001:2000 certification, PHX PD recognized that retrieving incident reports from its vast microfilm archive was a process that could be significantly improved.

While mapping their process it became evident that digitizing the microfilm would save time in responding to their customers. After evaluating 8 potential solutions, PHX PD selected Digital Reel for its 100% conversion accuracy, image quality, ease of use and cost effectiveness.

Slow Department Report Retrieval Times Triggered the Need for a Better Solution

Incident report retrieval is frequently requested for high profile cases, re-opened cases and by those simply conducting research. The Public (e.g. high profile cases cause a spike in requests), detectives, the Records and Identification Bureau and other departments are all common requesters of this information.

Prior to the BMI Digital ReelL implementation, PHX PD maintained 3 cabinets of microfilm and 3 reader printers to house all incident reports older than 1998. The reports were organized in chronological order by year and by incident report number within a particular year (starting with 00000001). 1991-1997 Incident Reports were organized by filmed date because the reports originated as computer output to microfilm (COM).

PHX PD responded to a request by first querying their case management system to determine the correct year and incident report number or filmed date. Once this information was discovered, the request was forwarded to the Record's Department where the clerks would locate the correct roll(s) of microfilm, load it into a reader printer and print the requested report. Occasionally reports were filmed out of order, necessitating the clerk to search the entire roll of film. It was also not uncommon for documents added to a case after the case had been originally filmed to be located on supplemental rolls.

Because there were only 3 reader printers and a limited number of clerks responsible for maintaining the microfilm archive, turnaround times for requested information could easily take days. PHX PD had previously searched for solutions to this problem, including the integration with their current EMC ApplicationXtender system, but found the expense too great. "Every other solution we looked at involved conversion from film and required substantial key data entry" states Buck

Buchanon Operations Supervisor in the Records and Identification Bureau. "We just couldn't justify the cost of digitizing and indexing all of the 15+ million images when a majority of them will never be viewed again. However, when a high profile case is reopened, we need to get to the archived information in a hurry".

Typical conversion processes are prone to miss images and traditional bi-tonal scanning can result in poor image quality. "If the images aren't totally legible, then it generally requires the customer to keep the microfilm and reader printers in operation" states Brad Penfold, Vice President of BMI Imaging Systems. "The goal is to retire those old machines and re-capture the storage space".

A New Approach: 100% Accuracy and High Quality Film Conversion

"When we saw the Digital ReelL demonstration and heard the price, we were pleasantly surprised. For the first time, we were looking at a solution that could be justified," explained Judie Welch, the Records and Identification Bureau Administrator.

The Digital ReelL Conversion Service made an exact digital replica of each PHX PD microfilm roll so no images were lost during the conversion. PHX PD also took advantage of Digital ReelL's adjustable grayscale feature. As each image was converted, a photographic quality was added to the image so that users can adjust the brightness and contrast of an image until it is optimized.

Mr. Buchanon continues, "The quality of the grayscale images really raised our confidence level in the Digital ReelL solution. Because of the 100% accuracy and the quality, we will be able to safely eliminate our cabinets of film and the 3 reader printers – a real plus that only Digital ReelL could deliver."