



Examining Your Microfiche Archives for Deterioration Before It's Too Late for a Microfiche Scanning Solution

In today's fast paced world of digital data, microfiche and microfilm are viewed as legacy technologies - infrequently accessed, out of sight and out of mind. However, it is a mistake to think that your records are safe and sound within your microfiche and microfilm archives. Just as paper records in the past had to be monitored for deterioration (e.g. yellowing, brittleness), so too should your microfilm and microfiche archives. In the end, a microfiche scanning solution is the best way to avoid losing precious records due to microfiche deterioration.

Large quantities of vital business and government records, much of it unique, still exist solely on microfiche and microfilm. Deterioration of these archives is a growing problem and if microfiche and microfilm collections are not examined and a microfiche scanning project is delayed, some organizations could find themselves in the possession of damaged or unusable records.

In many cases, microfiche and microfilm collections suffer from neglect. A qualified staff person may not even be dedicated to the microfiche and microfilm archive. As older microfiche and microfilm begin to deteriorate, it's critical that someone within the organization or a qualified outside company examine the microfilm and microfiche archives on a regular basis to identify issues before it is too late.

The safest way to avoid problems associated with microfilm and microfiche preservation issues is to consider a microfiche scanning solution that moves your records to a digital format. If you decide to research a microfiche scanning or microfilm conversion project, consider three factors: microfiche scanning accuracy, digital image quality and affordability.

Is Anyone Examining the Microfilm and Microfiche Before it is too Late for a Microfiche Scanning Solution to Work?

Many organizations, both public and private, house microfiche and microfilm archives. Large archives often contain a mixture of new and older microfilm, microfiche and even aperture cards. Deterioration, tearing and bending can occur as researchers use the archive. When microfilm and microfiche begins to deteriorate, it will give off a vinegar smell. This chemical deterioration is known as vinegar syndrome. Once vinegar syndrome sets in, the microfilm can become brittle and it can start to break apart. The microfilm may also start to stick together. Thus, salvaging your vital records could become almost impossible if deterioration sets in. In some cases, if deterioration has really taken hold of your records, a microfiche scanning project may not work.

Many chemical processes are accelerated by heat, and heat tends to speed the deterioration. High temperatures and high humidity can encourage fungus growth and blemishes. As fungus attacks a photographic image, the deterioration it produces cannot be reversed. And if excessive humidity makes a microfilm emulsion tacky, unwinding the film for viewing might strip away the emulsion from the film base. Microfiche scanning services may not be able to recover all the records.

Breaking Reader Printers and Improper Usage

Issues with physical microfilm and microfiche can be compounded as reader printers begin to break and need repair. Users of microfilm can also unintentionally harm microfiche if they are not trained properly to use the reader printer equipment. Equipment made by multiple manufacturers operates differently. For example, when advancing microfilm with one popular reader printer, users are expected to lift a lever separating two glass plates that hold the film flat for viewing. Another film reader is designed so that the act of advancing or unwinding microfilm automatically separates the glass flats, so microfilm can pass without danger of being scratched. The second machine will reduce the likelihood that a user will damage the film but the differences in usage themselves can confuse operators, causing them to unintentionally damage your microfilm records.

Do You Really Want to Spend Money on Maintaining a Legacy Technology? Would it Be Better to Invest in a Microfiche Scanning Solution?

One option would be to repair and replace the damaged microfilm and/or the reader printers. However, budgets are razor thin and as a storage medium, replacing microfilm and microfiche doesn't have the budgetary appeal that other digital projects have (e.g. new networks, applications and databases).

In addition, most users, whether they are employees or citizens, simply do not like to use microfilm, microfiche and reader printers. It takes time to learn how to find the records and then use the equipment. Users are accustomed to computers and instant results with quick searches and easy downloads.

What Do I Look for When it Comes to Microfiche Scanning?

An essential first step is to examine the microfilm and microfiche archive. Oftentimes, it makes sense to let a professional organization with years of experience examine the microfiche. If your organization decides to give serious consideration to a microfiche scanning project, what are some key considerations?

Microfiche scanning accuracy, digital image quality and affordability of the solution are three key considerations you should examine when evaluating possible microfiche scanning services.

About BMI Imaging's Digital Reel Microfiche Scanning Solution

Digital Reel is both a microfiche scanning service and a software application. Digital Reel is a microfiche scanning and conversion service that includes software designed for viewing microfilm, microfiche and aperture card digital images. Digital Reel is unique in the microfiche scanning and microfilm conversion industry for providing adjustable image enhancement to the end-user, allowing users to choose from multiple print settings. The Digital Reel microfiche scanning service creates an exact digital replica of your microfilm, microfiche and aperture card records. The Digital Reel application is available as software installed at the organization's site or can be accessed from a workstation with a web browser. In addition, BMI offers Digital Reel as a hosted service - users store their digitally converted microfiche records with BMI, accessing their images from the Digital Reel Web interface.