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Chris Atherton
Projects Coordinator, Chancery Clerk
Harrison County, Mississippi



INDUSTRY

- State & Local Government

LOCATION

- Harrison County, Mississippi

CHALLENGES

- Records archived to physical microfilm for long-term storage, but no equipment to access records.
- Microfilm cabinets taking up unnecessary real estate.

BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- Microfilm conversion and ongoing digital hosting of records from BMI’s California production and hosting facilities
- 295 microfilm rolls converted, including land records, marriage licenses, court records, and military discharges
- On-going FTP uploads of newspaper images, made viewable and text-searchable within Digital ReelL

BENEFITS

- No IT requirements made deployment and on-going support efficient for County
- Easy access to records through online app
- Money saved by digitally offering daily copies of Sun Herald newspaper

Case Study



Overview

John McAdams, Chancery Clerk, manages a unique and diverse office in Mississippi government. As the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, he records the official minutes. As Treasurer, he prepares the claims docket and payrolls for all departments of the County, and after Board approval, he writes and signs checks for payments. He also serves as the Countywide Records Manager, Public Recorder of Real Property, the County Auditor, Clerk of Land Redemption and Clerk of Chancery Court.

Chris Atherton, Projects Coordinator, states “Many of our records were microfilmed for long-term storage. There was a big push to make everything digital and accessible and we decided to look for digital alternatives to microfilm storage.”

The County evaluated three solutions, say Atherton. “As a fully hosted solution, Digital ReelL met our requirements.”

Books, Microfilm, and the Need to Go Digital

Atherton states that “In 2001 we had to solve a problem with our historical records that were archived on large physical books. At the time, the books were starting to fall apart and it was too expensive to get them bound. In some cases, it wasn’t even possible to refurbish the books.”

The County worked with another company to microfilm these historical books with records ranging from 1840 to 1950. That microfilm was moved to climate-controlled storage. Atherton continues, “We were never able to secure equipment to access the microfilm records.”

Fast forward to 2018. As part of its digital initiative, the County wanted to convert this microfilm archive to make it readily accessible to staff and the public.

No IT Support Required with Cloud-Based Deployment

“One of our key requirements for any microfilm conversion solution was ease of deployment. Cloud-based, hosted solutions were attractive options to us because we don’t have a large IT staff to support us,” says Atherton.

Solutions the County looked at required us to install software and leverage external browser plug-ins.

“When we found Digital ReelL it was exactly what we were looking for. We could ship our microfilm rolls to BMI and then get all these digital records back as a hosted solution,” states Atherton. “Easy, and it met our requirements.”

Public and Internal Access to Records: Intuitive Interface and Ability to Adjust Image Quality

The historical records from 1840 to 1950 include a wide variety of information: land records, marriage licenses, court records, and military discharges. Handwritten text is common and, in some

cases, it’s illegible on the original document in microfilm form.

Atherton states, “Not only is it easy to locate a record within the Digital ReelL app, but it’s also easy to adjust the quality of the image. Our users really benefit from the optimization features of Digital ReelL that enable them to crop sections and fine-tune the image until it’s optimized for their eye.”

Ongoing Newspaper Scanning Avoids Costly Expense of Storing Physical Copies

Another use case for Digital ReelL has been centered on the County’s requirement to store and make available copies of the Sun Herald newspaper.

Atherton states, “By statute, the County is required to keep a daily copy in bound form. We have papers dating back to 1800s in the vault now.”

Working with BMI and leveraging Digital ReelL, Harrison County is now avoiding the expense of binding and storing daily physical copies. The County uploads its newspaper images directly to BMI via FTP (file transfer protocol) electronic import and makes them available to the public on self-service public workstations. In the future, vaulted newspaper copies may also get converted into Digital ReelL.

“Public stations that are “view only” ensure that we are legally compliant,” says Atherton. “We’re able to offer digital access to citizens and save space and money. This newspaper conversion solution has been a win-win for the County and our citizens.”

Conclusion

Atherton concludes, “Digital ReelL met our requirements and we’ve gained the efficiencies we were looking for in a solution while bringing our records into the digital age. We’re now looking at other ways to use Digital ReelL in the future.”