

“Working with BMI was an incredible experience. Their Digital Reel solution provided us with the accessibility we needed while ensuring our microfilm records were preserved digitally. We couldn’t be happier with the results.”

*Ana-Elisa Arredondo
Diocesan Archivist
Diocese of Tucson Archives*

INDUSTRY

- Religious Institutions | Archival Preservation

LOCATION

- Tucson, Arizona

CHALLENGES

- Extensive collection of 577 rolls of microfilm
- Complex indexing requirements for diverse record types
- Funding constraints that required flexibility in payment and project execution

BMI Solutions

- Scan & convert microfilm to digital format
- Utilize BMI OLIS indexing method to simplify complex index requirements
- Digital Reel secure hosted platform

Outcomes Achieved

- Secure and rapid scanning of microfilm records
- Simple organization of records using OLIS
- Streamlined access using Digital Reel hosting

Case Study



Diocese of Tucson Archives

Overview

The Diocese of Tucson, which oversees numerous religious, administrative, and historical records, needed a solution to digitize and preserve their extensive microfilm archive. The project began in November 2022, when Ana-Elisa Arredondo, the Diocesan Archivist, reached out to BMI Imaging Systems to explore microfilm scanning solutions. After initial discussions, BMI proposed Digital Reel, a hosted application that would allow for enhanced access and preservation of these critical records.

With over 577 rolls of microfilm, the Diocese sought not only to preserve these records digitally but also to make them easily accessible for future use. The solution would incorporate text search capabilities, image enhancement, and a secure hosting platform.

Initial Project Discussions

In November 2022, Ana-Elisa contacted BMI to discuss the possibility of scanning 577 rolls of microfilm. After several meetings to assess the scope, BMI presented Digital ReelL as a solution to improve access and preservation.

A sample was provided to demonstrate the functionality of Digital ReelL using actual Diocesan records, showcasing features like text search and grayscale image enhancement. Convinced of the platform's benefits, the Diocese opted to move forward.

Grant & Agreements

To fund the project, the Diocese applied for and received a grant in March 2023. However, the grant covered only a portion of the project cost.

BMI and the Diocese then negotiated a flexible payment plan, allowing the entire project to be completed, with final payments deferred. This ensured the Diocese could immediately benefit from Digital ReelL, even with budgetary limitations.

After final project scoping and tidying up the agreement, the contract was executed in August 2023 and the project was green-lighted to proceed.

Milestone 1 Proof of Concept Process

The first phase of the project, initiated in November 2023, involved processing a small batch of microfilm.

Using lockable Pelican cases for secure shipping, BMI received 10 rolls, representing various document types such as burial records, tribunal records, and sacramental records. Due to the complexity of the indexing required, BMI introduced its Online Index System (OLIS) application, enabling Ana-Elisa to create and maintain a detailed indexing file.

Each microfilm roll was carefully indexed, with barcodes attached to populate the Digital ReelL system and provide the information for file naming and document segregation. Once the M1 phase was completed and approved, the remainder of the project moved forward.

Delivery & Implementation

By February 2024, all 577 rolls were scanned and uploaded to Digital ReelL.

Additionally, BMI provided the Diocese with traditional bitonal (black/white) and grayscale PDF files. The first batch of cropped image PDFs was delivered as part of the final output.

The Diocese also received supplementary funding to complete the PDF delivery and continue using Digital ReelL as their primary method for accessing the records.

Outcomes Achieved

The Diocese achieved several key outcomes through the implementation of BMI's solutions.

First, the adoption of Digital ReelL significantly enhanced access and usability, providing the Diocese with streamlined, easy access to its extensive archival records. With advanced search features and image enhancement and optimization tools, the system allows staff to quickly locate and retrieve the information needed, improving efficiency across its operations.

Additionally, the Diocese benefited from BMI's OLIS application, which enabled the creation of a precise and comprehensive indexing system. This tailored approach to indexing ensured that all records were easily searchable and well-organized, simplifying future access and retrieval.

Another major achievement was the secure and long-term preservation of the Diocese's records. All 577 rolls of microfilm were successfully digitized, safeguarding the documents from further physical deterioration and ensuring their availability for future generations.

Finally, BMI's flexible payment plan proved crucial in enabling the Diocese to complete the project on schedule. By offering a solution that deferred some payments until additional funds became available, BMI allowed the Diocese to move forward with the digitization project without being hindered by immediate financial constraints. This approach ensured that the Diocese could reap the benefits of the completed project without facing budgetary pressure.

Ana-Elisa commented: "Working with BMI was an incredible experience. Their Digital ReeL solution provided us with the accessibility we needed while ensuring our microfilm records were preserved digitally. The flexibility in the payment plan allowed us to move forward with the project, and the ability to use OLIS in the indexing process has made a world of difference for our team. We couldn't be happier with the results."