Digital ReeL Microfilm Scanning Solution Selected By Skamania County Clerk Washington

Microfilm scanning service completed at BMI's California facility; exact, digital replicas or each microfilm roll created and accessed online via Digital ReeL Cloud Option

Sunnyvale, California – January 24, 2012 - BMI Imaging Systems, a leading provider of microfilm scanning, microfiche conversion and document management solutions, announced that Skamania County Clerk, Washington is using the Digital ReeL microfilm scanning solution.

The County Clerk has a microfilm archive containing court case records (mostly probate) from 1869-1970. Sharon Vance, Skamania County Clerk states, "When we received records requests from this archive, we would drag out the reader printer and film roll and spend time locating the record(s). Poor quality was an issue and in many cases we would have to print the records to read them."

"After discovering Digital ReeL at a conference, we were attracted to the price per roll concept. Once we viewed how our image quality would be improved, we knew it was the right solution," Vance states. Skamania County Clerk shipped its microfilm archive to BMI's California facility where exact, digital replicas of each microfilm roll were created. The County Clerk selected Digital ReeL's Cloud Option, storing the digitally converted records at BMI's data center. Currently, County Clerk researchers log into the Internet, accessing their virtual microfilm records from the Digital ReeL web interface.

Digital ReeL Cloud Option Facilitates Disaster Recovery

The County Clerk stores the official microfilm records at the Washington State Archives. The County Clerk holds a second copy of the microfilm archive at its office for search and retrieval requests. Vance states, "With Digital ReeL's Cloud Option, we've created a new, digital copy of our records that are now stored at BMI's secure, SAS 70 compliant data center. We will also store a hard drive of the digital records at the Washington State Digital Archives.

We will have an additional digital copy of our records at a different site." Vance continues, "We've not only made it easier for our staff and public to access these records, but we've enhanced our disaster recovery plan because these records are digitized, stored and protected in multiple locations."

Existing Micrographic Index and Full-Text Search Make it Easy to Find Case Files

Digital ReeL combines full-text search with the original micrographic indexing method, enabling users to quickly find information in a number of ways. The County Clerk's physical microfilm records were originally organized by case number. In the past, researchers had to page through physical index books, searching for a name associated with a case. Once the name was found, the case number would allow the user to locate the appropriate, physical microfilm roll(s).

Vance states, "By digitally scanning the index information and the microfilm to Digital ReeL, the search for case files is faster, easier and more flexible. Researchers can now use the full-text search of Digital ReeL to locate specific names within the index pages." When queried, the names will appear in context of their location in the index books, allowing some initial qualification by the user. Once the specific name is located, the corresponding case number is identified. Users can then type in the case number and bring up the digitized record of the case, just as originally presented on the microfilm. If the text of the old index book is not indexed by OCR (e.g. if it was hand-written), users can simply page through the digital index books in Digital ReeL (just as they would page through the physical book) to find the location of the case file reference. Vance states, "Record searches that might take 30 minutes or longer in the past are now completed in a matter of seconds using Digital ReeL."

Adjustable Grayscale Enhances the Image Quality of the Entire Archive

Many of the County Clerk records are very old, dating back into the 1800's. Originally, the records were written on onion skin paper. When the records were converted from paper to microfilm many years ago, the filming techniques were not refined and as a consequence, many of the images were difficult to read from the microfilm archive.

Occasionally, during a record search, the images found were not readable on the County Clerk's microfilm copy and they had to request the original microfilm roll from the Washington State Archives - which further delayed the record retrieval process. Vance states, "Digital ReeL's adjustable grayscale is incredible, enabling us to bring into focus a record that was almost unusable on the physical microfilm. We can now bring it into focus, lighten it, darken it and fine tune the image into a high quality document."

Next Steps

In the future, the County Clerk will be able to include these digital records in the Clerk ePass system. Vance concludes, "Our Clerk ePass system makes it possible for the public to purchase electronically certified records through a secure web-site on the Internet.

About BMI Imaging

Since 1958, BMI Imaging Systems has been a leader in microfilm scanning, microfiche conversion, aperture card conversion and document management solutions. BMI offers industry-leading scanning products from Canon and the ApplicationXtender document management product line from EMC Corporation. In addition, BMI has developed the Digital ReeL microfilm and microfiche scanning solution, which is available nationwide. Today, BMI staff consists of 80 employees, many who have been with BMI for decades. BMI converts an average of 3 million images per month. BMI serves commercial and government agencies throughout the United States and has developed a customer list of more than 2,000 accounts. BMI is headquartered just outside San Francisco in Sunnyvale, California, with an additional production and sales facility in Sacramento, California.