Imaging Projects
Deciding What’s Best For Your Records

Imaging your paper records can result in some valuable benefits for your department—including space savings and ease of retrieval—but there are many considerations that need to be made before jumping into an imaging project. Imaging is not simply a solution for physical storage issues, nor is it an alternative to proper retention policies, and any imaging project should be evaluated to determine how it might improve your workflow and business processes.

Considerations When Deciding to Image

To begin deciding what’s best for your records, answer the following questions:

1. What is the minimum retention period for the records?
2. What are the access requirements for the records?
3. What is the volume of the records?
4. Are there any legal considerations that require you to retain the original paper copies?

Retention Periods

The longer that you are required to retain a records series, the more benefit you will gain from imaging. Records must be accessible during their entire lifetime and you will either need to choose a system that you know will be maintained and supported for the lifetime of the records or you will need to put a migration plan in place. Paper and microfilm have been shown to be sustainable for many years. Digital imaging has not yet been proven as a long-term preservation media and would require a migration plan. A migration plan outlines when and to what media records will be saved to maintain them during their lifetime.

Access to the Records

How often do you need to access the records? Who needs access? If you have a system of records that several people in the department, or throughout the University, need to access, then a distributed system may improve business processes.

On the other hand, records that are not accessed often or that are specific to a certain position or office may be more efficiently stored as paper.

Volume of Records

A large volume of records in a frequently accessed system may be a candidate for imaging. Does the volume hamper your ability to efficiently access the records? An imaging system with an integrated retrieval mechanism may be the answer to this problem. On the other hand, even if the volume is large, if the records are seldom accessed imaging may be a more costly solution than it’s worth. In this case it’s important to look back at retention periods. Compare the cost of retaining the records in paper form during their lifetime with the overhead of imaging.

Legal Considerations

Is there anything that requires you to retain the original document? If so, you will not be prevented from imaging the original, but you will not be able to destroy it, which may or may not defeat the purpose of imaging.

Making the Decision to Image

Answering one of these questions alone will not give you the information that you need to make a good decision, rather you should consider the picture as a whole. Use the information that you have gathered and do a cost-benefit analysis to determine the best plan for your records.

There are costs to consider with any retention system. The cost of a migration plan must be considered when determining if digital imaging is justified. You’ll have storage and labor costs with any system, but during the life of paper

(Continued on page 3)
records those costs will be higher. With imaging you will have the additional cost of equipment, supplies, vendor fees and costs associated with the management of the project.

Media—Digital Images vs. Microforms

Are microforms still an option? You bet. The major benefit to microforms is that you need little more than a light source and a magnifier to read them, making them ideal for vital records programs. The huge amount of microfilm already in existence makes it likely that reader-printers will still be available for purchase in the distant future. The slow retrieval offered by microform systems, however, make them a poor choice for frequently accessed records.

Choosing a Vendor or System

There are many vendors in the area that offer both microfilming and digital imaging services. You will want to talk to several to determine who will best suit your needs and your budget. A list of vendors can be found on the Records Management website at http://www.libraries.uc.edu/libraries/arb/records_management/vendors.html

This decision tree may help to determine whether or not to image based on retention, volume, and access requirements.
Records Management Basics
Getting the Most Out of Forms

From a creator’s standpoint the primary purpose of a form is to collect information from a user. A form itself should be designed in the simplest way possible to effectively draw the desired data but not burden or confuse the user.

Before designing a new form decide if one is really necessary or if you can solicit the desired information in another way such as by requesting an email or a phone call. Forms are best used when the same data is collected often from many sources. Consider the volume of information that you seek and the scope of your audience when deciding whether or not to create a new form for the purpose of data collection. Consider existing forms before creating a new one and determine if they can be modified to collect the new information that you need or if the data is already being collected elsewhere.

If you devote some time to designing your forms in the beginning you will save time spent processing the data that you gather and ensure the you are collecting better information.

Content & Design
Ask only for the necessary information and be able to justify every item on the form. Users are more apt to complete a form properly if it is short and to the point.

Give multiple choice answers where appropriate and where their use will streamline data entry and analysis. When creating a multiple choice question on a form, place the box to be checked in front of the option that it designates, not after it.

Preferred format: ☐ Yes ☐ No

Less desirable format: ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐

Allow adequate space for users to enter the requested information. A common complaint by users concerning printed forms is that there is not enough room on the form to write the answer. The optimum format for form entries is a box with an upper left caption. This format maximizes the space allowed for the user to enter data, presents a cleaner, easier to follow design, and clearly shows the user where data should be entered. Standardize the format throughout the page to create a streamlined, cohesive design.

Preferred format

Name

Address

The format below is less desirable: does the name go above or below the caption? It can be confusing.

Name

Address

This format is also less desirable: the captions take up valuable real estate.

Name:

Address:

Keep instructions on the form itself to a minimum and at the top of the page and opt for a separate sheet of instructions rather than cluttering the form itself if instructions have to be detailed. Some data collection areas are self-explanatory and do not need instructions, such as name, age, sex, etc. Try to make the collection areas self-explanatory by using descriptive, but short, captions. Show distribution and routing on the form, either on the bottom or in the instructions.

Physical Format
Paper forms were the norm for a long time and they are still widely in use, but are quickly giving way to electronic formats. Paper is the way to go if the document requires an original signature, although the use of digital signatures is emerging as a viable alternative. When designing for paper, space is going to be more of an issue since more text is going to translate to more money when printing. Make sure to maximize your space usage and get the most for your money.

The printing of paper forms can be done in-house using standard office reproduction equipment or a printing department such as UC’s Printing and Duplicating Services, or you can use a commercial printing vendor. Consider
desired quality, employee time, special needs, and cost when deciding how you will print your forms. Pre-printed forms with multiple, carboned copies will require additional services, but a simple single page form that you can produce using Microsoft Word might be a candidate for the office copier. Printing can also be passed on to the user by putting the form in an electronic document on a website or a server and asking the user to print and complete it.

Interactive electronic forms can come in many different varieties, such as portable document format or Microsoft Word fill-ins, or web forms. An advantage of web forms is that the user can do entry directly into a database and it reduces the work that needs to be done on the backend. Designers can easily control the format of the data that is to be collected and ensure more uniform information.

The obvious benefit of using an electronic form is the cost savings realized over printed forms. Also, when an electronic form is updated there are no older paper copies in circulation that have to be destroyed. Electronic forms can be placed on a server and can be widely distributed without creating copies. They can also be easier for the user to complete and submit.

There is no specific type of software that is better for forms design than another. The information being gathered and/or analyzed and the user’s experience and comfort level with the software are the most important considerations when deciding what to use. Financial and accounting forms might be created in a spreadsheet software, such as Microsoft Excel, which allows you to automatically calculate fields. Word processing software, including Microsoft Word, and portable document format software allow you to create fill-in forms that can be completed and submitted electronically.

Desktop publishing software provides flexible options for visual design that can be used to produce professional looking printed forms, but it may also require more training to become proficient enough to create good documents.

When does a form become a record?
Blank forms are not records. A stock of blank paper forms leftover after a form revision can be discarded. Data entry forms may be records, but are used primarily for facilitating the entry of information into a database, and can be disposed of after verification of the electronic data.

The biggest indication that a form is a record is its presence on your approved retention schedule.
Program News

Schedule Development

New Schedules
- Biomedical Engineering
- Health Sciences Library Business Office
- University Honors Program

Records Transfers

The following University records have been transferred to the University Archives:

College of Medicine Annual Reports
Cataloged in UCLID as W 19.5 AO3 C574a, 28 volumes

Resident Education and Development
Accession No. UA-08-09, 3 Boxes
Records including operations manuals, meeting
minutes, and Resident Assistant and Resident

Office of the President, Joseph Steger
Accession No. UA-08-10, 16 Boxes
Papers, including speeches, recommendations and
nominations, research, and non-profit work. Includes
papers from his emeritus years, 1975-2008.

Women’s Institute for Leadership Development
Accession No. UA-08-11, 2 Boxes
Records including financial reports, business plans,

College of Pharmacy, Office of the Dean
Accession No. UA-08-13, 1 Box
Records, including correspondence, faculty
appointments, reports, and subject files from the

University Athletics Committee
Accession No. UA-08-14, 1 Box
Records, including committee minutes, reports, and

NCAA Certification 2005-2006 Interim Report
Accession No. UA-08-15, 1 Box
Records created during the process of compiling the

Raymond Walters College, Office of Continuing Education
Accession No. UA-08-16, 3 Boxes
Records including historical financial information,
correspondence, and subject files from the office of

Center for the Study of the Human Environment
Accession No. UA-08-17, 1 Box
Records including annual reports and studies, 1976-
1989.

New Financial Policies Effective January 1, 2009

Policy # 2.3.1, Payments to Individuals for Service

This policy outlines several documents required for engaging
individuals to provide services to the University, including
personal services contracts, contractor status questionnaires,
foreign visitor supplements, limited service engagement forms,
A114s to request payment, timesheets, and any associated
invoices. All records described in this policy should be retained
for the active life of the contract plus five years following the
dissolution of the contract.

Policy # 2.1.13, Capital Assets

This policy describes responsibilities associated with tracking
capital assets, including required recordkeeping procedures.
Capital Asset records should be retained for the life of the asset
plus six years.
Records in the News
West Virginia University Records Woes

West Virginia University has been experiencing some negative publicity lately connected to their records creation, use, and retention practices. The issues lie in two important areas of University recordkeeping, degree verification and athletics.

Missing Athletic Records?
Upon returning from the Fiesta Bowl in January, 2008, WVU’s football staff discovered that all of the records kept by former coach Rich Rodriguez in his private office were gone. They believed that included in those files were records on summer camps, boosters, recruiting—and every file that Rodriguez kept on every student athlete in the football program. In addition to Rodriguez’s office files, players’ strength and conditioning files that were maintained in the weight room were also gone.

Rodriguez resigned on December 16, 2007 to accept the coaching job at Michigan, and was seen cleaning out his office and shredding documents on December 18. Rodriguez did not leave WVU on good terms. He accused the University of not fulfilling the terms of his contract, and WVU sued him for $4 million for breaking the contract.

While a WVU spokesperson confirmed that the academic records of student athletes are maintained by the Office of Admissions and Records, and are secure, the football staff does not know what records existed in Rodriguez’s office and what is now missing. Rodriguez admitted that he shredded documents, but countered that everything that was shredded has a copy somewhere else in the organization.

Despite a WVU announcement that the University would investigate the missing records, little news has surfaced into what may have been discovered. That’s not surprising as neither side had concrete evidence to support their position, but the application of proper records management procedures would have provided evidence for determining the truth in this case. First of all, a records inventory and subsequent records retention schedule would have revealed what records the football office maintained, and where the official copy of a record was held. Also, outgoing employees should not be permitted to dispose of records alone, but should review the records that they maintain with a remaining staff member. This is for two reasons, one, of course is to make sure the University records remain in the custody of the organization, and two, is to retain the corporate knowledge necessary to continue operations.

Degreed or Not?
In January, 2008, the MBA awarded to Heather Bresch, daughter of WV Governor Joe Manchin, and chief operating officer of Mylan Pharmaceuticals, came into question. It was discovered that Bresch was short 22 credit hours in the requirements for the degree, which was awarded retroactively in October, 2007, ten years following her departure from the University. Officials blamed a recordkeeping error that happened when student records of the College of Business and Economics were converted from paper to electronic. But a five-member investigative panel comprised of two WVU professors and three professors from other universities, concluded that the degree was falsified by administrators, who added courses that were not taken and changing incompletes to letter grades. WVU Provost Gerald Land and Business School Dean Steve Sears resigned after the panel’s announcement.

The scandal prompted a review of other degrees that had been awarded, and the results showed that the records of 261 undergraduate degrees and 27 M.B.A. degrees showed discrepancies in requirements. The independent records management consulting group of The American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) that conducted the review issued 29 recommendations designed to overhaul the recordkeeping and record-reconciling systems of the University. WVU will adopt all 29 recommendations, a significant one of which is to establish a permanent University registrar to centralize the management of all student academic records.

In a press release issued by the University on February 2, 2009, WVU interim President C. Peter Magrath “noted that he came to WVU at a time when the University was facing some serious problems, and many of those—in the end—were rooted in inefficient record-keeping practices.”
Words of Wisdom

Information is the oxygen of the modern age. It seeps through the walls topped by barbed wire, it wafts across the electrified borders. …

- Ronald Reagan

Records are the corporate memory, everything else is anecdote.

- Unknown