

Space Utilization in a Records Management Program

Most records managers are faced with the delicate balance of maintaining sufficient storage space for document-based active records, with the space their company allocates for those records. Rapid and significant changes in business organizations today caused by mergers, acquisitions, downsizing and reorganizations, make the records manager's job more challenging in order to keep pace with these pressures from sources external to the records area. Significant change can affect not only records program policies, procedures and staffing but also the physical space in which a records program operates.

Under these circumstances the records manager has an opportunity to contribute to the organization's overall strategies and goals by analyzing the company's records workflow and recommend an efficient physical records center layout that can save the company space and money in an environment of increasing square foot lease rates. Even though records programs are cost centers and do not contribute to a company's profitability, a reduction in costs (through a reduction in staff or more efficient use of space) can be even more valuable to the bottom line than an area that generates revenue, because there are costs associated with revenue generation. A records manager's ability to communicate a well thought out plan for the storage of active records that saves space and money while increasing staff efficiency, can contribute to the manager's (and the records program's) credibility with senior management and support the company's strategic goals.

It's usually a fight for space for the records program when a space redesign is considered. However, it's not how

much space can be acquired, but what specific layout provides the most efficient use of space considering the company's future active records storage needs. Space must be allowed for both staff and records. In most records programs, the records are allocated more space than the staff. Because of this allocation, an efficient utilization of space for the storage of records can yield significant cost savings. The following elements are designed to save space and enhance staff productivity in the filing and retrieval of records in a records center environment.

- Think in terms of using space from the floor up. Regardless of the media that is contained in the records center, using shelving units that are seven or eight openings (76" to 88") high will significantly increase storage capacity if for example lateral file cabinets (4-5 drawers high) are used.

- Manage your records retention schedule aggressively. Frequently move semi-active or inactive records to an off-site storage facility that is less costly to maintain than the active records area. Year band designation labels and bar code tracking systems can help identify records that have not recently been used and are candidates for off-site storage. Permanent records that must be kept for long periods to satisfy legal or regulatory requirements can also be stored out of the active records area.
- Evaluate the possibility of micro-filing or imaging records. As an alternative to off-site storage, records can be microfilmed or imaged for more convenient and cost effective retrieval. Many third party firms specialize in providing these services and can help advise you with the best alternative for your specific program.

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Why Document Imaging?

What Are the Advantages?

Document imaging can be a powerful tool but is only a small piece of a records information management (RIM) system. The most efficient and logical use of document imaging is for documents that have a high retrieval rate by multiple users, especially in remote areas. Imaging should not be used to solve space problems.

There are a few questions that should be answered before investigating the implementation of an imaging system:

- What documents do you want to image?
- What is the retrieval rate of these documents (how often are they accessed?)
- How many people access these documents?
- What do you see as the benefits of having these documents available electronically?

More often than not, if the answers to the first three questions are sufficient

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Effective Space Utilization *(continued from page 1)*

- Make documents as accessible as possible to those who use them the most. Depending upon your company's security and control policies, some records might be kept in individual departments and others in a centralized records area.
- Select filing systems that reduce the need for aisle space. Mobile shelving can save up to four times the space of drawer files and twice the space of

open shelf filing arrangements. This means that filing capacities can be quadrupled or doubled over drawer or open shelf systems respectively contained in the same space. Rotary files can eliminate the space normally allowed for pulling out drawers and doors, saving up to 65% of floor space in the process. Rotary files can also accommodate a variety of media as changes occur in the records center.

Configuring an office and filing system environment to provide maximum efficiency from a cost and efficiency perspective requires the skills of an experienced resource. Consult an expert in filing and storage systems and layout design. Working closely with a professional filing systems firm that has a proven track record helping companies with solutions to their space planning requirements can result in a well thought out records management facility and records system that can be a significant asset to a company's resources.

Article by John Archer, President & CEO of Concepts for Business, LLC.

Why Document Imaging? *(continued from page 1)*



If you do move forward with an imaging system, keeping the index system concise and as limited as possible keeps the system user friendly and cost efficient. Scanning documents is easy and scanners are relatively inexpensive. The question is will anyone ever be able to find the document after it has been scanned? Also,

to determine if further investigation is sensible. However, the fourth question is vital in that it is a start to addressing the return on investment question that undoubtedly will come next. If having certain documents available electronically aids in the level of customer service, then you may well be on your way to implementing a system. If, however, many of the benefits include issues such as "no more lost or mis-filed items", then you are probably attempting to drink soup with a fork!

When used specifically to address issues of retrieval and multiple accesses, imaging can be a solid solution. There are also times when certain documents are included in the imaging process as a convenience to upper management. This can be a valid reason with VPs who have a heavy travel schedule and the need for vital documents on a regular basis. It also provides security for original documents without sacrificing access to the information they contain.

remember that you must put your house in order before you scan. An inefficient paper based system will translate into a messier electronic system!

As for keeping the originals, that depends on what is scanned. If only certain documents are scanned from a file and you must still keep the file because of miscellaneous correspondence or other documentation, then you might as well keep the scanned original. What is more important is that both the paper and the image be part of a comprehensive retention schedule.

For additional information on document imaging solutions, please call your local ASA member. A complimentary on-site readiness assessment is also available when requesting additional information.

Article by Anna L. Stratton, Director, Information Management Services, Systematics, Inc.

Problem Solver

Problem:

Customer had large plan files that needed to be stored in both flat and rolled format. They also required a large working area. Their original plans specified a large working table with minimal storage for flat and rolled plans.

Solution:

The design of an "all in one" space using two sets of five-drawer flat files with a base and custom built roll storage, covered with a laminate top for the work surface. This custom piece has a working height of 36" and is 90" long x 42" deep which provides a generous work surface for laying out large sets of plans.



For expert solutions for all your large document storage needs, call the ASA member in your area.

Article by MaryJane Casey of Advanced Systems Plus in Denver, Colorado.

County Jail Purchases High Density System on State Contract, Increasing Capacity and Organization

Problem:

Running out of space in the evidence storage areas

Objective:

To provide a space efficient storage solution that provides additional security for drugs and evidence.

Solution:

High Density System that increased capacity over 100% in the same room.

Benefits:

Added security for evidence within the mobile storage system, meets double lock security requirements, carriages are easy to move and operate. The county now has room to grow.



Unique Features:

- Locking Doors to secure drugs.
- Mechanical Assisted handles promote ease of carriage movement allowing for safe storage.
- Carriage Lock allows carriages with evidence to be locked down and secured. Then a separate area with a second lock was designed for drugs and guns.

The main storage room (above) has a unit that holds the evidence and drugs. The gun vault (below) is shelving designed for long guns, knives and handguns.

Article by Craig Crock of Southwest Solutions Group, Inc. of Addison, Texas

Understanding Essential Workflow in Business

Are you ever rushed, overwhelmed, always putting out fires? Seems like you can't get your normal work done? You're not alone. In fact, you're not alone in the same company!

Most of the time the reason for not getting your work done is because someone has asked you to do something else that has a higher priority. But many of the reasons for the higher priority are because someone higher up has given them a task that has also taken higher priority than their own work.

All of this "high priority" is usually because upper management has a new idea, new product, new hire, or new service that they want to implement right away. Companies always want to be on the leading edge, getting new products to market first, or providing a service they talked to a client about, and now have to perform.

But because of not informing the support staff of these changes, everything becomes a hot priority, and work flow is interrupted. This can relate to new products, services, new hires and even just paperwork. By informing the support staff of possible changes, additions, or deletions they can be ready and help the company implement them with efficiency.

In any company we have a work flow of many processes that gets us to the final result. If the work flow gets interrupted by just one of those processes, then the rest of the processes will not function. By the time the process is corrected, work is backed up and everything is a priority. Work flow is the essence of every company's success, whether your building cars, selling clothes, run a restaurant, or making beer. You can't put a bumper on a car if you don't have

bumpers, or you can't put a bumper on a car before you have a body.

If you look at each process in your company and find out how one effects another, you can reduce, if not eliminate any work flow interruptions. You might be surprised to find out that two or more processes needs to be completed before another process can be completed. Have each person in each one of the processes meet with each other and determine how each one effects the other and what happens if the information or item does not get to the next step. Together they will figure out how to reduce if not eliminate the work flow interruption and make you company fulfill its goals.

Article by Kevin Butler of Safe Business Systems.

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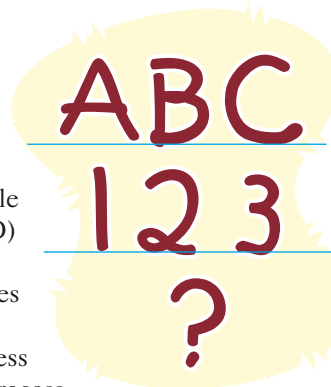
Alphabetical or Numeric?

The single most important thing to review before setting up a new file system or modifying the existing file system is to look at what information you know that starts the search process. For example let's say you are in a doctor's office. When you are asked to locate a file are you asked for that file by name? Most likely a call from a patient, doctor, hospital or insurance company and they trigger the search by knowing the patient by name. No one comes into a doctor's office and says "Hi I'm 1234567, here for my appointment".

Thus if the files are stored by number the searching person must first locate some type of cross index list to locate the file number before retrieving that file. On the surface then alphabetical makes the most sense as it removes a step of searching in a database first.

Once the file area reaches 10,000 files or more many experts will recommend a change to terminal digit filing storage.

The reason is that the added cross index step is over come by the savings in all remaining file steps. Terminal digit (TD) storage is a hybrid numerical system that uses space management and numerical groups to address the files. Thru this TD process file room time in motion tasks can be reduced in time saving processes. Pre-sorts reduce put away time and reduce the chance of misfiles. Assigning groups of numbers (files) to individual clerks can for the first time be done without worry of any one clerk getting more work than others. Supervision of the file clerks is improved by review of each person's assigned area. Those needing additional training to improve their work habits can be seen easily this way. When filing areas are shared you have no way of seeing which person is being sloppy versus which one is being neat. As most active records tend to be the



newer files, traffic jams of file clerks making retrievals and re-files and is avoided as files are spread through out the system.

More importantly then all is the ability to control records management.

When computer software with bar coding or RFID can not be implemented, then a good color code Terminal Digit System for large users is my recommendation. For the less than 10,000 file crowd get a strip label software printing system and stay with Alphabetical. Just do your best to spread the files out for growth. Don't forget almost 30% of all alphabetical files will end up in the B, M, or S areas. I bet you are thinking right now is that true? Look at your files and you will see. If your surname ends in B, M, or S you (we) are in that group.

Article by Mike Moll of MTM Business Systems