

TIME FOR A NEW SET OF 'WHEELS'

Faster model replacing old, slow CARS

Moving records online gives employees speedier access to information

Accessing old records stored by the Indiana Document Capture department is getting faster. The information will be literally at your fingertips — just a few simple keystrokes away.

In June the department began full-scale conversion of more than 120 million document images stored on microfilm. Once the records are converted, employees will no longer have to request a printed copy from CARS (Computer Aided Retrieval System). Instead, employees can view the documents instantly through SWIS (Sallie Mae Workflow Imaging System) or by using IDM Search (Integrated Document Management) on the Internet.

Today, all incoming documentation is scanned and processed using SWIS. Up until 2002, however, microfilm was still being used to archive some business documents, including promissory notes and other borrower records that are frequently needed for servicing and claim processing for years after they were initially received. In Indiana, the images stored on microfilm are cataloged in the CARS system.

When someone needs a copy of one of these older documents, he or she accesses the CARS system and submits a request. The Indiana Document Capture department fulfills the CARS requests by retrieving the film from storage and using a special microfilm reader to print a copy to send to the requestor, a process that can take up to 48 hours to get the document in the hands of the person who needs it.

“At one time microfilm was an efficient way of storing important documents, and CARS provided cutting-edge request capability,” said **Michael Brown**, IDC supervisor. “Now, however, using CARS is like driving a Ford Model-T.”

Old jalopy expensive to maintain

Last year, IDC began investigating options for conversion because the CARS system was becoming difficult and expensive to maintain and use. The department wanted to reduce operational costs, eliminate the risk of a failure of the CARS system and potential loss of data, and improve efficiencies for those who needed access to the documents. After extensive research, the department chose Prescient Information Systems to do the work.

Prescient is converting all the Indiana files from microfilm to electronic images. In May, Prescient demonstrated how it would handle the job by converting thousands of images from

various microfilm cartridges, matching them to the index data for CARS, performing a quality check of the work and writing a special software program to help IDC double-check the work.

Starting in July, IDC began receiving monthly batches of converted images from Prescient to load onto the SWIS system. After matching up the documents with the CARS index and verifying that everything looks good, the SWIS IT team loads the images onto SWIS. The newest documents — from the past 10 years — are the first to be converted.

Conversion of all the documents is expected to be complete by June 2006.

New model classier, too

In the process of converting from microfilm to electronic format, Prescient is enhancing the images, some of which are more than 30 years old.

“Some of the images on the microfilm cartridges are not as good as they once were, and Prescient is making them as crisp and clear as they can be,” said **Mike Young**, IDC business systems associate.

“The images will be better than the prints we can make from microfilm,” he said, noting that some of the poorer images were made from carbon copies years ago.

In addition to enhanced images and instant access to documents, Young said the project benefits Sallie Mae by:

- Allowing the company to retire the out-of-date CARS system.
- Putting all documents into an automated, paperless process.
- Having a single retrieval system for employees to access documents.

“Employees should start getting into the habit of checking IDM first when they need documents,” Young said. “If the images are converted, they are wasting their time going through the CARS system. Eventually IDM will be the only place they need to go for these records.”

By then, CARS will be headed for the junkyard. ■