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**ELECTRONIC IMAGING AND ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS OF THE  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT, DISTRICT OF ARIZONA**

Over the past several years, the amount of information directed to the Office of the District Court Executive (DCE)/Clerk of Court has continued to increase. The District of Arizona is an administratively consolidated court and the DCE/Clerk is the designated liaison to the court for all administrative matters concerning the Clerk's Office, Probation, and Pretrial Services. Information regarding automation, budgeting, human resources, space & facilities, and many other areas is received and disseminated through the Office of the DCE/Clerk. The current method of managing these administrative records has become more inefficient with each passing year. In an effort to address the deficiencies of our manual system and move one step closer to a "paperless" environment, the DCE/Clerk appointed a project team to explore the benefits of implementing an electronic document management system to index, distribute, and store the records. After several on-site demonstrations, the team agreed that an electronic document management system offered many benefits in contrast to our current paper filing system.

The necessary attributes of the system selected were clearly defined from the inception of this project including, 1.) keyword indexing; 2.) simultaneous access to documents by multiple users; 3.) electronic distribution; 4.) full-text search capabilities, and 5) document archiving. The goal was to implement an electronic records management system that would address the deficiencies of our current paper system, and serve as a pilot for other federal courts considering similar implementations.

A survey was drafted and distributed via e-mail to the 94 United States District Court Clerks. It consisted of 12 multiple-choice questions which were intended to gather information regarding the respondents' current administrative filing procedures. Although there are probably several municipal and state courts which have implemented imaging systems to store the administrative records, there were two reasons we chose to survey only federal district courts: 1.) it was our intent to collect data directly related to comparably-situated courts; and, 2.) the data sample had to be manageable.

The responses to the federal court survey indicate that the administrative record-keeping issues faced in the District of Arizona, are the same problems faced by most federal courts. Automating the administrative filing system has taken a back seat to more pressing operational implementations. Although many courts currently image court pleadings to provide greater access to case-specific information, the imaging function has not crossed over from the operational side to the administrative side.

The implementation of the DOCS Open imaging system has allowed the District of Arizona to meet the goals initially defined in the planning stages of this project: 1.) documents are profiled and later retrieved with the use of keywords, 2.) multiple users can access documents simultaneously; 3.) documents are regularly distributed electronically; and 4.) profiled documents are full-text searchable. The time once expended searching for a document or preparing copies of a document is now used to perform other tasks. To date, the feedback received from the management team has been positive and users are excited about the new system, but it will take some time for everyone to become comfortable with the system and rely on it exclusively for necessary information.

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