

City of St. Louis Case Study



City of St. Louis Accounting Services, St. Louis, Missouri

25 DataFlow users

\$400 million general operating fund

Responsible for accounting services, fiscal strategies, finance, reporting, contracts and assets for a city of 350,000 residents

Problem: Needed to find a data management system and reduce the amount of paper in storage

Solution: DataFlow Manager, Engine, Scan, Index, Web Retrieve and several custom applications

- Reduced space needed for storage
- Improved accessibility to information
- Extended to accommodate other document types and processes

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The Challenge

The Accounting Services division of The City of St. Louis handled so many paper documents that it was filling an entire file drawer every week. “We were drowning in paper,” says Thom Bozzo, Deputy Comptroller. “With our accounts payable vouchers and invoices, we wanted the information to be available for long periods of time, but we didn’t want to store paper.”

The paper documents were filling up City Hall, a 115-year-old building where space was already at a premium. “We had been using microfilm long before that, and that solution really was not satisfactory. We got rid of cameras that were old and had stopped working. We just cleaned up the office.”

The Solution

To clean up the data management problems, the City accepted proposals from several vendors, and then chose NuParadigm DataFlow. NuParadigm arranged a site visit with another St. Louis-area client that used the system similarly to the City’s accounting services needs. “We saw it in action and thought the Accounts Payable functions matched our situation,” Bozzo explains.

NuParadigm installed DataFlow for the City of St. Louis in August 2003. The system scans, indexes and retrieves payment vouchers. DataFlow integrated with their existing GEAC general ledger system to load general ledger data into the DataFlow repository. “From the Accounts Payable and Accounts Receivable side, it was pretty seamless. The IT department had more difficulty. They needed to upgrade the server and storage capabilities, but from the AP side, we made a small change in our process to verify that everything had been scanned, and that was it.” On the IT front, the City had to replace an older server to meet DataFlow’s software requirements.

Soon after implementation, the City was able to start transitioning their manual filing system to the new electronic-based system – and free up some office space in the process.

At City Hall, Accounting Services began back-scanning stored documents that dated back a decade. Rather than outsource the back-scanning effort at additional cost, city employees do the work internally. All scans go into the Dataflow repository and become accessible immediately by web browser for retrieval.

With so many documents being scanned, however, the process needed an adjustment. “We asked for additional help when our scanning was getting ahead of our verification, and NuParadigm helped with that,” Bozzo says. “Our hands were held throughout the process.”

NuParadigm developed a report to verify scans without viewing each scanned image. After individual invoice numbers within a range are verified, the corresponding paper invoice is shredded and recycled. The process ensures that no invoices are missing from the repository before the paper document is destroyed.

Positive Results

“The customer service has been excellent. We are very happy with the service from NuParadigm,” Bozzo says. In addition to the verification report, the City asked NuParadigm to develop additional custom applications to extend the City’s imaging, indexing and retrieval process to include checks, arrest warrants and contracts.

The city has taken advantage of four DataFlow upgrades and releases since 2003. Bozzo says the process must be seamless because he wasn’t even aware of them. Other upgrades, according to NuParadigm Implementation Manager Tena Combs, have provided the City with the ability to enhance indexing and scan large batches without getting errors from their scanning system.

Outside the Accounting Services department, another division of the City implemented DataFlow to eliminate the bulk of hundreds of thousands of permits that were stacked in boxes from floor to ceiling. NuParadigm coordinated a back scanning project, and at last count, 160,000 pages of permits were now available for fast and easy electronic retrieval and routing through DataFlow.

Summary

Overall the DataFlow solution has reduced paper, made information readily available by computer, eliminated the need for microfilm capture and automated manual processes for the City of St. Louis. “DataFlow has met our needs. We are expanding into contracts. We would like to get to the point where a contract could be available to be viewed online,” Bozzo says. “We are anxious to expand the process and get it moving in other areas as soon as we can get the okay.”