

Chapter 6 - Computer Concepts and Legal Applications

Document and Record Management System

If you say word document and record management to 10 different people, you will get 10 different definitions. The reason for this is that the words have come to hold many different meanings as we attempt to control physical and electronic documents in the workplace. Also, many vendors define their software as document and record management software, even though they may only offer a few of the modules for a “comprehensive” management system.

Suffice it to say that the whole industry of document and record management is in a state of change. Additional features and pricing changes sometimes occur on a daily or ad hoc basis, as vendors and customers try to figure out the best product solution and cost structure. Some of the common characteristics of a “comprehensive” document and record a management system will include:

- Storage of different document formats in a central depository (computer files, imaging, faxes, audio, video, e-mail, etc.);
- A Windows and web based interface;
- Controlling computer files, such as word processing, etc.;
- Controlling access to documents through security passwords, etc.;
- Maintaining a history of changes;
- Retention schedule;
- Archiving of old documents and restoration of documents as one needs them;
- Searching for documents by document profiles or other indexing and through full text searching;
- Labeling for paper files;
- Scanning and viewing of images of paper documents;
- Receiving, sending, and indexing faxes;
- Accessing documents through a LAN, WAN, or Internet;
- Providing for a customizable database, such as SQL, or Microsoft Access as a front end;
- Bar code tracking of paper files and documents;
- Sorting profile data of documents, such as author, client, etc.;
- Publishing documents to an Extranet or Intranet for consumption by hundreds of workers;
- Routing documents through workflow systems;
- Marking up documents;
- Three-tiered systems.

The reality of case and record management is that you will generally be controlling both paper

and “paperless” information in your case. Much has been written of moving from a “paper” to a “paperless” office and litigation system, and in spite of slow progress, many firms hold to the goal. Part of the reason for the slow growth is that most software packages focus on control of the electronic information, but pay no attention to controlling and indexing the paper in your cases that is not converted to a digital format. The documents in the law office of today are a mix of media, such as paper, images, microfiche, etc. To solve this problem, integrated document record systems that control the paper and paperless information in your case needs to be used.

Modules for document management software may include:

- *Imaging.* Imaging is typically used for litigation documents, correspondence, internal documents and any other law firm or court documents that need to be available on-line. After scanning the indexed document users can search for documents using Librarian; once a document is identified, users select the record and engage the document viewer.
- *Fax Manager.* It receives, stores, and displays faxes, then can index and route the document to the end user. This allows users to filter out non-record material prior to inclusion in the document system. Fax Manager also allows users to fax document images directly from Librarian with the click of a mouse.
- *Bar Code Tracking.* It provides tools for efficiently managing the storage and use of hard copy documents (paper and microfilm) in law firms and in courts. It also can be used for inventory control. Using bar code technology allows users to quickly perform check-in/check-out functions in record centers and libraries. No more lost or misplaced files. The current location of a document can be easily determined, and the document transaction history is displayed on the same screen.
- *On-Demand Coded Labels.* Some systems provide the ability to produce color or black and white labels that match the database record exactly. This module is ideal for creating customizable case file labels for case record centers, central file areas, or by the attorney’s support staff. It can be used to create new labels or match labels already in use. Labels can include readable text, bar codes, and color-coded indexing bands.
- *Work Product.* This allows users to index and retrieve documents created on a PC in the document management system. The work product of lawyers can be shared or retrieved instantly.
- *Workflow* automates paper and paperless workflow in an office or court. The workflow of most cases is predictable and can result in significant timesaving if cases are not bottlenecked at some person’s desk.
- *Archive Manager* selectively archives electronic case files and other storage materials based on retention schedules.

Controlling Workproduct and other Computer Files.

One of the key assets of a firm is its legal work product. However, the amount of documents produced by a firm is immense and a particular challenge exists as to easily saving and categorizing these documents in order to retrieve them with little effort. Once this is solved, legal professionals are better able to serve their clients in a timely and efficient manner.

There are generally three methods of managing work product on your computer:

1. Directory and filename structure - If you have a word processor, set up simple directory names and label documents in a meaningful way. Documents and their locations can be controlled using a carefully designed, logical, and consistent directory structure, and matter and document naming conventions. This way, if you wish to locate the contract in the Groenen case, it should be in a subdirectory named /Groenen and the filename, if limited to 8 characters, can be Contract.fin standing for "final contract". Windows supports long file names, so one could label the document as "Final contract on the Groenen case". The important thing is to establish a consistent, uniform, and easily understood classification method for all members of the office to easily use to label and locate documents. Classification methods can be based on the case, chronology, and/or categories, such as contracts, forms, legal research, etc. In the new word processing programs, built in document management features have made managing documents much easier. These management features, called summary fields or properties of documents, are similar to a card catalog system. After entering information about a specific document, these properties or summaries can be searched to locate that particular document. Coupled with a well thought out directory and filename structure, this can be a viable solution to controlling work product.

2. The second option is to use a full text retrieval package to locate your documents. A full text package is able to search for the specific words in a document and bring back "hits" on where the document is located. The section on *Full Text Search and Retrieval* covers this topic extensively. You should also be aware that Windows provides for the capability to full text search your entire hard drive or specific directories for

specific words. Under the Start menu, click on FIND, and you could search for the word Groenen and all documents containing that word would be listed for further review. However, this is generally slow unless the content on the computer has been indexed.

3. The third option is to invest in specific products designed for document management. There are a number of products that are “integrated” and provide document management, imaging, full text and other record management capabilities. However, the “robustness” of the individual components will depend upon the particular suite of products integrated. These document management systems typically create a library type index card for each document. Name, date, author, topic, and version database fields make up an index card. Searches can then be performed on the index card. These products can also launch documents, implement record retention policies, and secure access to certain documents.

Features & Products. Some of the document management features to consider include:

- Version control;
- Archiving and restoration;
- Extent documents can be integrated with word processor;
- Full text searching capability across a host of documents in different locations;
- Access limiting capability;
- Check in and check out of documents;
- Ease of use;
- Grouping documents;
- Ease of installation and maintenance;
- Management of word processing, spreadsheets, images, and e-mail formats;
- Groupware integration;
- Automatic document creation;
- Networked based;
- Web based;

- Database can collect information such as document profile, author, long document name, client, matter, typist, dates, comments, etc.;
- Indexing of the full text of the document;
- Search capability by client matter, author, Boolean, keyword, and full text searches