

Whitepaper

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Setting up a Business Archive and automating it for the first time.

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Business Archives incorporating Records Management

Cloud Business Archive Solutions promote efficiency and support business goals

Cloud Information System solutions provided by Soutron Global are designed specifically to manage corporate archives and libraries whose regulatory environment and need for good governance demand comprising physical and digital assets that are efficiently managed to meet in support of business goals.

Database technology combined with digital and web technologies are flexibly applied to meet the archival needs of all types of organisations.

Capturing corporate memories is an important means of transferring knowledge throughout an organisation. Regulatory requirements demand best practice is applied in the management of company records and protection of personal data.

A Cloud Business Archive Service supports business growth in the certainty that data and information is protected. Long term storage of confidential and vital information protects the organisation and its partners.



This paper explores how an automated system makes rapid retrieval of evidence possible to support decision making, validate organisational values, and promote corporate achievements, culture and purpose.



Overview of Soutron

Soutron was founded in the heartland of the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, in the United Kingdom. Derby, is the geographic centre of England and is reputed to have more industrial artefacts than any other city in Britain, with businesses that created the machines and engines that powered industrial development in the 18th and 19th centuries. British businesses have been responsible for the development of economic, political, legal and social mores adopted in many countries around the world. Soutron was created in 1989 to help business manage information more efficiently using library concepts and database technology. In 29 years over 1600 businesses have benefited from Soutron's expertise.

In 2010 our first Global Information Solution was introduced, all new code, designed for Cloud deployment. Designed to manage archive information of all types across the enterprise. Our first client being a European Agency responsible for safety and control of standards Europe wide.

In 2015, when creating the next generation of our Library system software, we chose to incorporate facilities to manage Corporate Archives as well as Corporate Libraries. This initiative has led to a growth of interest amongst clients and firms who want to invest in a solution that provides for management of all types of information assets – both digital and physical.

We are excited to be at the forefront of this combined multi-use information database and are encouraged by the initiatives being taken by clients to develop their knowledge and retain expertise and knowledge in both archives and libraries.

Our customer focus is single minded and disciplined. Continuous development of the software means constant refinement and improvement, taking the feedback of clients as the prime indicator for new enhancements and development. In 2017 a new engineering development program was introduced to keep the technology fully up to date with new HTML 5 web standards and mobile browser changes.

The corporate archive and library function might include business records, heritage items and library materials. The Archive function may sit within or separate to a Library or Knowledge Centre. Some prefer separate databases but Soutron can meet all needs in a single Soutron database solution, using security access permissions and separate Search Portals.

Our approach saves costs and makes discovery easier and more efficient for end users.

Introduction

Looking back, in 2009 a national strategy for Business Archives in the United Kingdom was created to promote, manage and make use of the archival legacy of British business. It stated that when used effectively, archives are a powerful business tool. They are a source of:

- new product innovation, corporate culture and brand identity
- management information and evidence to protect against litigation, trademark infringement, or assault on reputation

This is true for any business and any nation, not solely restricted to the United Kingdom. As knowledge and expertise across industries develop and increase exponentially the case for a business archive for any corporation with longevity in its focus, becomes more of an imperative.

We would add that the Archive also provides a corporate entity with the means to produce evidence to meet regulator demands, to reassure third parties that their interests are protected.

Workforce changes impact corporate memories. Knowledge can be easily lost or misplaced when records are inadequately stored and protected. A Business Archive provides the necessary oversight of corporate memory, assuring senior management that their duty of care to staff and customers is professionally managed by the archivist or records manager.



**Our approach
saves costs and
makes discovery
easier**



Physical documents and files dominate the format for records in business. Electronic files are widely used but the paper record remains an important and vital part of the business record. Photographs and digital images of documents are also part of the information landscape, mixed with physical records. Digitisation of financial records (invoices etc.) is common.

Storage locations vary. Local filing cabinets to shelved warehousing. Search and request is an important part of the process of managing records. Fast transfer of files and documents to and from an individual or department requires accurate identification and tracking.



The Importance of a Business Archive

This document informs management why implementing Archive (and Library) systems is important. As workforces change and younger generations take over from the older workers, knowledge is often lost or goes missing, leading to a reduction in corporate memory. This is a serious problem for industries that have relied on a cortège of workers who intuitively have grown up with a business and have a culture that has been quietly nurtured for many years. The use of a Business Archive can assist in the transfer of knowledge, the definition of values and cultural norms and paint the picture showing how growth was achieved. It presents a celebration of the organisation's successes that can be used to consolidate market positions and develop customer loyalty.

Where a business archive may have been preserved as a set of documents or photographs in paper format, the collection that survives is often inaccessible because the materials may be locked away, stored in filing cabinets or cupboards, rarely seen or even known about. The items and assets might be located distant from the offices, manufacturing plants or warehouses where many of their staff and potential users are located. The very fact that items are physically distanced from staff and that the physical location of items is not organised will make it difficult for users to see relationships between items that could or should be explored. When companies are acquired and sold, valuable materials may disappear without knowledge of the existence of such content and value.

Each new generation, that comes into the business, may have no awareness of the corporate history of a business except for what appears in the latest annual report. A Business Archive nurtures, preserves and gives insights into the way a business has grown, how ideas have been formulated and decisions taken that do not appear anywhere else except within the business.

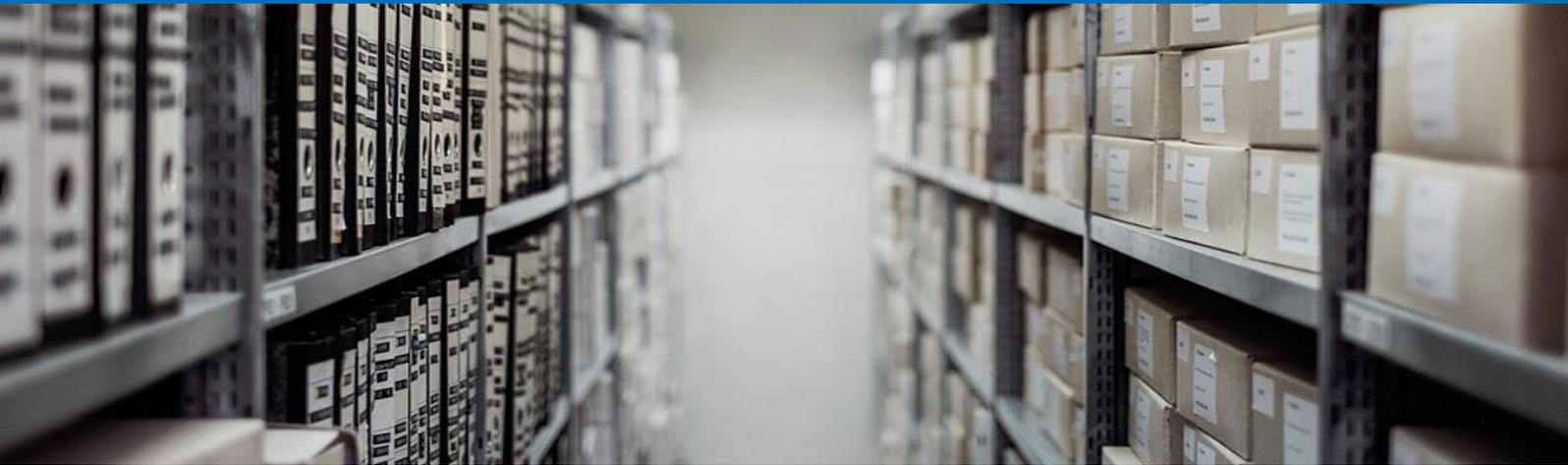
A document produced by the National Archive on Corporate Memory, the then Governor of the Bank of England, Professor Mervyn King, is quoted:



Very few events are truly unprecedented. To confine one's perspective to a limited data series, for example, squanders the opportunity to benefit from information and knowledge accumulated over the whole sweep of history. It is only by having reliable archives that we can learn from, and fully exploit, the experience of earlier generations.

Source: BA/2009/01 July 2009 nationalarchives.gov.uk





What are the characteristics of a Business Archive?

Archives have been in place in societies for centuries. All advanced civilisations have used archives as a means to store memories, history, truths, cultures and values which human beings have used to pass on knowledge and traditions from one generation to the next. Archives often sit alongside libraries and are used to record the heritage of a society, an institution, a building, a family sharing accumulated knowledge and wisdom.

In business, the archive is often a distinct activity charged with gathering together records of business activities and transactions involving different parties: items and evidence of the organisation's achievements, purpose, history, the people who have worked there and their individual contributions.

The organisation may introduce policies that require departments to submit materials to the Archive, which then determines destruction criteria.

The Records Manager

The archive is a special function in any organisation. As such it requires a person, adequately prepared and equipped, to manage the processes and to recognise what is valued and what is not.

This person may or may not have an information science background but they will be knowledgeable about the organisation and how it operates and can determine how to organise, classify and categorise materials to make search and retrieval simple. This person may be an Archivist or Records Manager, full-time, part time or temporary.



Location

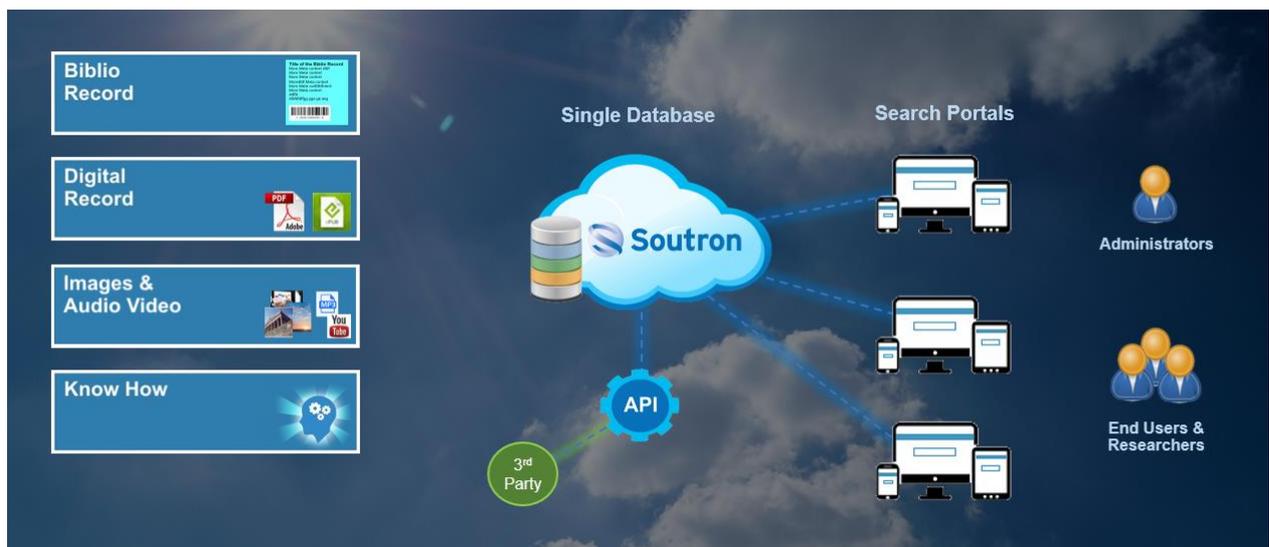
An archive needs a physical location with sufficient space to be able to store and preserve materials. The majority of materials are likely to be in physical format and as such need the means to layout and examine, compile and store items.

The type of material stored in the archive will be dependent on the nature of the business. Engineering businesses will likely have in their possession past products, design documents and photographs of products in use. Such items may be very large and require space to store and exhibit. Most businesses will have brand identities and marketing literature presenting graphically ideas and marketing techniques applied across decades, papers providing evidence of how the business started and the challenges it has overcome or its contributions to society over the years.

Electronic records are likely to be in folders and office documents. The electronic document may be created from paper records as a means of providing secure access and preserving materials.

Technology

The Business Archive is a place where the latest technology is needed to release the value of the items under its care. Information is the lifeblood of business and societies. In the enterprise great attention is given to the research, development and management of intellectual property. In the archive we would expect to see the historical achievements, secrets and know how encapsulated in documentary evidence, artefacts, experiences, pictures, videos and audio files.



There is no need for the use of in-house servers and the direct support of an internal IT function today. This produces significant cost savings and possibilities for a more flexible service to be introduced, where access can be made to the archive from any location. Implementing Cloud technology does not in any way diminish the levels of security and control, indeed some might say that it increases the potential for security of confidential data since internal IT staff themselves do not have access to valuable data.

There are four technologies that are essential to any archive:

- **Web technologies:** making access via the internet from any location fast and immediate by staff and users needing information.
- **Database technologies:** relational structures make data easy to cross reference and access.
- **Bar Codes technologies:** efficiently track and process records, files and boxes within the archive function. Bar code readers are cheap and accurate and simplify the processing of data.
- **Digitisation technologies:** essential components of any solution, making their mark felt by the use of digitisation to capture records in electronic format. Scanning of documents and photos need not be an in-house activity, often an outsourced service is a better and more efficient solution, especially where high volumes and skills are needed.

Technology standards ensure that data can be transferred to third party applications, from one system to another system or later technology generation. The use of XML to record data provides the lingua franca to facilitate easy and accurate data exchange and transfer.

Evidence of the past is what distinguishes a company. It is what makes it different and unique. The business archive provides guiding markers which, when used adroitly, can give advantage to current practices and business development. The archive, therefore, needs to harness web and database technologies to provide fast, immediate access by decision makers and creatives involved in communications and marketing functions, brand development, packaging design, product design, business development and more. Functions charged with forging new markets and protecting the organisation from obsolescence.

In some markets the business archive becomes an asset for educating incoming generations as part of a series of academic studies by anyone entering that business sector.



Evidence of the past is what distinguishes a company.





To Protect and Preserve

In an era of cost cutting the business archive may have suffered from under-funding or a lack of attention by senior management, whose preoccupation with survival in hostile and fast changing economic times directs business priorities. Some organisations have signed over their archives to academic institutions, either to avoid having to invest in their upkeep and management or to be certain of having the expertise, that otherwise would not be available, to protect and preserve collections. This is a strategy that relies upon an academic institution seeing value in using the archive as a teaching aid. Care must be taken not to hand over materials that reveal aspects of a business that are highly significant to its way of doing business or may even give competitors an advantage and access to secrets that have been hard won over many years.

Not all company records are appropriate for retention in a business archive and it is important to have someone who is professionally trained in archival management or library management to prepare a strategy and to manage the implementation of the business archive. Others can then be included in the day to day operation and recording of items, protecting the archive assets and arranging for their loan to events etc.

Content

The content to be included in a business archive depends very much on the organisation and what it deems significant. Business records and historical records of the business, artefacts and the heritage of the business or industry can include:

- the founding of the business, including pictures and documents that depict its creation
- the corporate structure of the business as it has evolved over the years
- mergers and acquisitions that may have taken place
- the financial structure and financial performance of the business
- the managers of the business and their achievements
- the public image and advertising that the company has pursued
- trademarks, intellectual property, logos, branding
- innovative product development, manufacturing techniques and product design

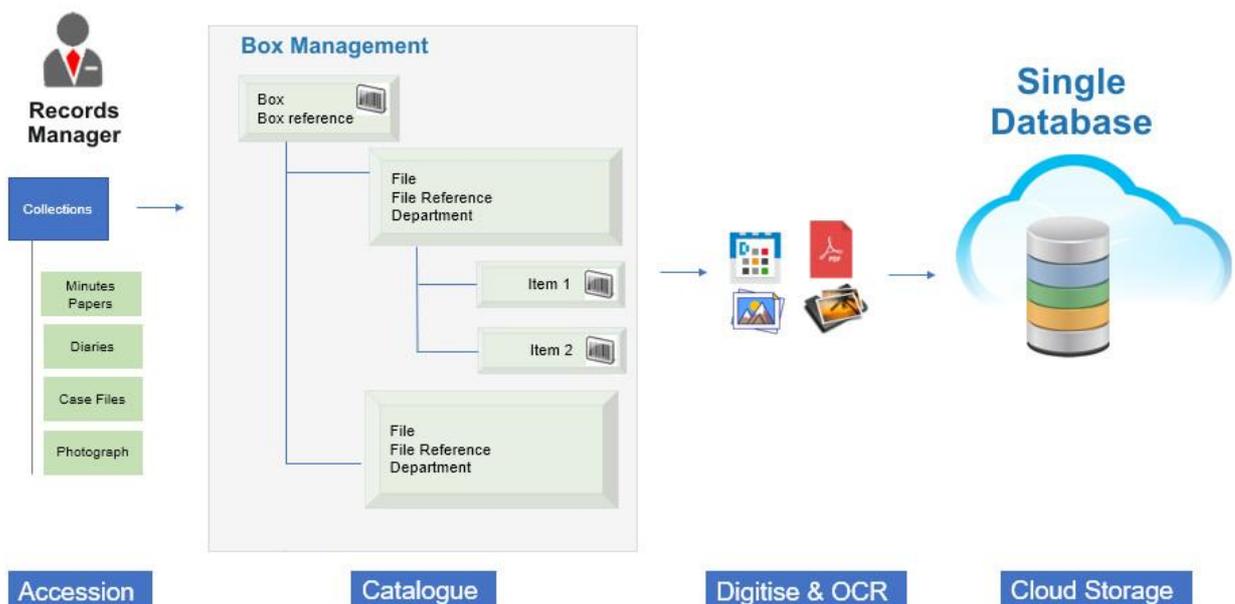
Archives include a record of the business and its achievements (and failures). It may include items that are not recognised as belonging to the business as it exists today but are valuable nevertheless as a collection in their own right. There may be periods in history when the activities of staff working in the business performed a national service or supported a unique event.

An archive can be used as a safe place for the storage of records, where the professional archivist provides the company the service of determining that which is worth keeping. Some records may be essential for the accurate record keeping laid down by regulatory bodies. There is a thin dividing line between Records Management and Archival Management – the distinction being where a business is regulated there is a requirement to retain records for a period of time to support business audit. Such records as laboratory notebooks might fall into this category and may indeed become part of the archive as time passes and their need for audit purposes passes by.

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Future generations may find the information contained in such notebooks informative when devising a new process or product formulation, information that cannot be gained from any other source of material.

Physical Records Storage



Information contained within archives can be exploited for a variety of purposes depending on the type of business and the history that they have enjoyed. A particular industry or sector may find that the archive provides insights and experiences that can be used to support new marketing initiatives. This has been particularly true in banking, FMCG, and automotive industries where the history of the company is used as a basis for promoting brand loyalty or appealing to values that were embodied in years past. Such initiatives can provide evidence and proof of a company's pedigree and be appealing to new customers.



the history of the company is used as a basis for promoting brand loyalty...

The archive might be applied to a variety of purposes and comprise:

- **Business activities and events:** customers are invited to be associated with the company using the corporate history as a lever to introduce different activities and events. Corporate events and product anniversary celebrations use artefacts and archive records to present the company in a positive light. The PR and marketing function often use the history of a company to build advertising campaigns and to promote a positive view of the company.
- **Archival documents and records** support the registration of trademarks helping to protect brand identities. Archive records are relied upon to support litigation to protect business assets. Logos and brand identity that are associated with packaging and advertising may be critical in such cases.
- **Policy development and evaluation** can call upon past events and records of campaigns or the way in which products or services have evolved. This may be helped by a photographic collection that can reveal aspects of past work that is not readily available in written documents. Photographs are also a powerful way of providing evidence in the areas described above.
- **Library bibliographic materials** can also be a necessary complement to the Archive and for many systems this poses a challenge. Cataloguing Library materials requires different field attributes and a different standard for cataloguing to that of an Archive. In Soutron this is uniquely addressed by a flexible database that provides for both requirements.
- **Social Knowledge Sharing** (Twitter) is a new field of communications but one that can be usefully incorporated into the Archive, providing a permanent record of what an organisation has broadcast to its followers.



Business Archive Users

A Business Archive will typically be reserved for use by staff via the corporate internal network. For some organisations the archive is made public and a search facility, with the option to request to view items is allowed. Users might be restricted to their own functional area or particular categories of documents or information. Certain materials may be downloaded, others might need to be formally requested before being provided.

It is made available to facilitate research and users can access information remotely. Institutions exist with archives that are publicly funded through grants and awards and their collections will be made public as a condition. Many membership institutes, religious groups, charities and those with special collections invest in archives in order to advance learning and to protect historical records. The Archive exposes the organisation to a wider group of people and encourages active interest in their purpose and activities.

Search and access to content and collections should be capable of including functions for users to register an interest in a topic and request items, either for loan, for downloading or for viewing in a “Reading Room” or similar facility. The staff administering the system should be able to control such requests and easily issue and book items accordingly.

Together with search functions goes metrics on usage and access and the database should log all searches and results to provide management with indicators and statistics on usage. This aids decision making when adding content and defining the way in which the users can interact with the system.



The Archive exposes the organisation to a wider group of people...





Benefits

The major benefit of a business archive is the certainty that retaining a corporate memory brings to the organisation. It is a means of bringing staff and employees together to form a united and focused workforce with a clear defined *raison d'être* that promotes a sense of purpose and conveys the values by which the business makes its way in the world and takes decisions. The value of this is inestimable but it is without doubt a cornerstone on which many firms build their reputation and present their credentials to attract new staff. Retaining customers and attracting new customers, depending on the business, may depend on the ability to refer back to past times and historical company events and achievements.

For organisations, subject to external scrutiny and regulation, the certainty of an archive, properly managed and organised, is essential to maintain accreditation. Directors of the business have a duty of care to a variety of actors on the corporate stage and for them to perform their duties an archive is a proven way of demonstrating competence.

The third most important benefit is the ability for staff to easily consult the archives to determine if there is information to support an area of decision making / product development / marketing / design that has previously been addressed and information is stored in past documents, photographs etc. This is useful when new products are being introduced or marketing campaigns are being devised. The existence of the archive saves time and effort for those seeking accurate information to support a business activity.

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Archive Budgets and Cost Benefits

The costs associated with an archive will include the following:

- Space for the archive to exist and store records, documents, machines, products, images, etc.
- Staff employed to administer the archive and transfer materials to and from the Archive
- Operation costs - lighting, heating, electricity etc. desks, computers, filing systems etc.
- Systems to support the archive and digitisation of materials: archive management; scanning and digitisation
- Preservation and restoration of items and materials to allow this to be performed e.g. boxes, special handling tools etc.

Assumptions

- Staff time is valued at £80 per hour
- 2 hours are saved each time a need arises to consult the archive (£160)
- 100 consultations are made to the archive each year

Potential staff time cost saving by using an automated system to consult the archive estimates to be at least £16,000 in any one year

Payback is measured in terms of time saved searching for materials; support for decision making; evidence assets to support case audits, investigation of policy formulation, statistical analysis, marketing events; education and instruction of staff.

Compliance with the rules laid down by an external regulatory body may be sufficient justification for the use of an automated solution.

If a company event is being arranged or a new marketing initiative or product design or a product development initiative is being investigated, the archive is a useful starting point to help formulate ideas and obtain a historical perspective that can bring forward ideas. By being able to consult and access historical records, past events and marketing literature from the desk, staff time is saved as well as causing a creative pivot point. The payback might be very small in monetary terms but very significant in terms of PR benefits, compared to the cost of managing the archive year on year.



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Digitisation

Digitisation of archive records and photographs is increasingly being seen as a valuable resource to support activities in the business. In this case the item is digitised and an image is created that can be easily consulted on any type of device (PC, tablet, smartphone). The digitised image can be stored in the Cloud and can be accessed multiple times by multiple people at once, allowing copies to be downloaded and used for presentations, corporate literature etc.

Additional savings when using a single image repository

There can be a considerable saving in disc storage space when compared to each departmental user, storing their own copies embedded in the file system which becomes bloated and duplicated. The costs of this type of usage are difficult to estimate and will vary, but, a single central repository ensures that usage is known and that correct formats and duly licenced images are distributed, ensuring accuracy when representing the company branding and identity.

When the turnover of the organisation is measured against the costs of maintaining the Archive (assume the £100,000 per annum) less than 1% on a turnover of £10 million. Organisations in industry will see this percentage in fractions of a percentage point given the much higher turnover figures.

As a general rule of thumb, the longer an organisation exists the more likely that an archive will be in place to record and protect the historical assets of the business.



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The process of document scanning

During the course of creating the Archive it will become highly likely that documents and images will need to be captured in electronic format. Soutron Archive Management system can accommodate and store digital assets (including PDFs, images, photographs, Office documents, sound files, videos) and hold them either in the database with the records or linked to an external file store.

The scanning and digitisation process can be set up to meet low level volumes or very high volumes depending on the nature of the work required. Low level scanning volumes can be undertaken in-house but high volumes are best outsourced to a suitable bureau where the equipment and expert staff are on hand to process materials.

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Soutron has routines to import images and metadata automatically...
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Soutron has routines to import images and metadata automatically into the database to save manual data entry and can advise on the types of scanning services to deploy.

For in-house scanning to capture images of documents we recommend the use of Fujitsu Scanners. These can be purchased or leased according to the type and scale of activity that is needed. Different tasks require different capabilities and we have used Fujitsu scanners over many years with good effect.



Visit www.fujitsu.com for details.

Where an outsourced service is deemed appropriate we work with a company that is skilled in handling documents to produce digital images that can be loaded into our database, saving time and effort. We can provide a detailed quotation, following analysis of needs, using a third-party contractor with the skills and expertise to deliver a quality service.



Cost considerations when setting up a Business Archive

The budget required to invest in a new archive management system needs to address three areas:

1. Analysis of requirements including volumes, classification schema and processes
2. Selection of service provider for software, database hosting and support
3. Training of staff and introduction of change to business processes

Successful implementation of any new system requires careful planning and preparation. Soutron engages pre-contract as part of the sales process to consult and determine needs. This forms the basis of a detailed proposal for management to consider.

Once approval to proceed is received, we assign a Project Manager who is responsible for the entire system implementation. This person draws up the detailed project plan in conjunction with whoever is coordinating the project for the client. The plan is likely to be made up of a number of work packages that focus on different aspects and may involve different people at different stages. It is helpful to use test and prototype systems to measure effect and confirm before moving to a Live Production system.



Soutron is used by organisations such as the Met Office, Welsh Government, MITIE, Commonwealth Secretariat...



Much more attention is likely to be needed when changing cultural norms that may exist and preparing staff for changes as the setup of the computer database and software systems take place.

Soutron's Library and Archive application is a proven off the shelf application that can be customised very easily without any programming to suit different needs. Soutron is used by organisations such as the Met Office, Welsh Government, Commonwealth Secretariat, Chatham House, Essex County Council and many others. The software is designed, developed and supported by Soutron Global.

Analysis

Our recommendation is that requirements are first gathered and analysed to produce a detailed Requirements Specification. This examines all aspects such as:

- Volumes – throughput - priorities
- Storage locations
- Departmental and Organisational Structures
- Classification schema to be used to record items
- Indexing
- Retention Schedule
- Request management
- Movement requests
- Bar coding
- Audit - Reporting
- Search Portal(s): search criteria
- Security classifications and access permissions
- User authentication mechanisms (SSO)
- Training needs analysis

As part of this analysis there should be a determination of where in the organisation a pilot might be welcomed. Is there a department that is close at hand, easy to communicate with, who has the attitude to embrace change and to adopt new practices?

Implementation Streams

There could also be two streams of activity when implementing a system and automating for the first time.

Historical: There is the inevitable backlog of what has built up from past years that needs to be analysed and brought into the system

Current: Once the pilot study has ironed out the processes and overcome any problems, materials which are identified as suitable for the archive should be put through the new process rather than have the materials added to the backlog.

Rather than be prescriptive about the implementation plan, this can be analysed and determined if it is appropriate for the organisation or if the workload is better handled in a different manner.

Implementation

Implementing a Soutron Cloud Information Service is simple and straightforward. There are three aspects to consider and which attract costs:

- a) A fee for the use of the Soutron software and the maintenance, support and hosting services that are required for operational use. This is payable 12 months in advance and encompasses all “running” costs for the software solution. Soutron is licenced for use by an unlimited number of users and any number of records. The only variable in cost terms is for the Online Storage. Any volume of data storage needed can be quoted for and supplied during the course of the contract. Data storage is rapidly consumed when large image files are loaded into the database.
- b) Implementation Services, essentially time and materials to put the system in place, addressing:
 - i. Analysing requirements and devising prototypes to validate assumptions
 - ii. Data migration (where an existing system has data or data exists in Excel files that may need to be transferred into the new system)
 - iii. Configuration of the system software
 - iv. Training of staff

Service costs are based on an hourly rate for remote services i.e. where we can provide services from our offices without the need to travel. On site visits away from our office also incur an hourly rate plus expenses incurred in delivery of the service.

Fixed price quotations are provided where the scope of work is known in advance against a detailed requirements specification.

c) Document Scanning

During the course of creating the Archive it will become highly likely that documents and images will need to be captured in electronic format. Soutron Archive Management system can accommodate and store digital assets (including PDFs, images, photographs, Office documents, sound files, videos) and hold them either in the database with the records or linked to an external file store.

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Soutron has automated routines to import images and metadata automatically into the database to save manual data entry and can advise on the types of scanning services to deploy.

Here to help

Soutron are here to help, advise and provide assistance. Every organisation is different and unique. Let us know your experiences and needs so that we can continually improve systems for you and your users.

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