How Wichita Falls, TX, Manages Municipal Court Files with Laserfiche

Patrick Gray, Business Systems Application Analyst, describes how Wichita Falls, TX, uses Laserfiche to manage municipal court files with Laserfiche Mobile for iPad.
Contributed by:Patrick Gray, Business Systems Application Analyst, Wichita Falls

In the Wichita Falls municipal court, we work with Class C misdemeanor offenses such as traffic tickets and violations of city code. Managing these court case files through their records lifecycle used to be a time consuming, error prone and paper-heavy process. Here is how Laserfiche Records Management Edition and Laserfiche Mobile for iPad simplified this process, while allowing us to adhere to the Texas State Library records retention rules.

From capture to records retention

Court clerks import case documents into the "Z-Quality Control" folder in Laserfiche directly from within the Infosol court management system with the help of Affinity, a screen scraping tool that serves as the bridge between Laserfiche and Infosol. Once a clerk clicks the Affinity button inside the court system, the documents are sent to Laserfiche, a template is applied and all of the fields except for "Active File Date" and "Dead File Date" are automatically populated.

Metadata - 2011026606 - Case Papers - HALE

Fields | Tags | Links | Versions

Template: Courts - Case Files
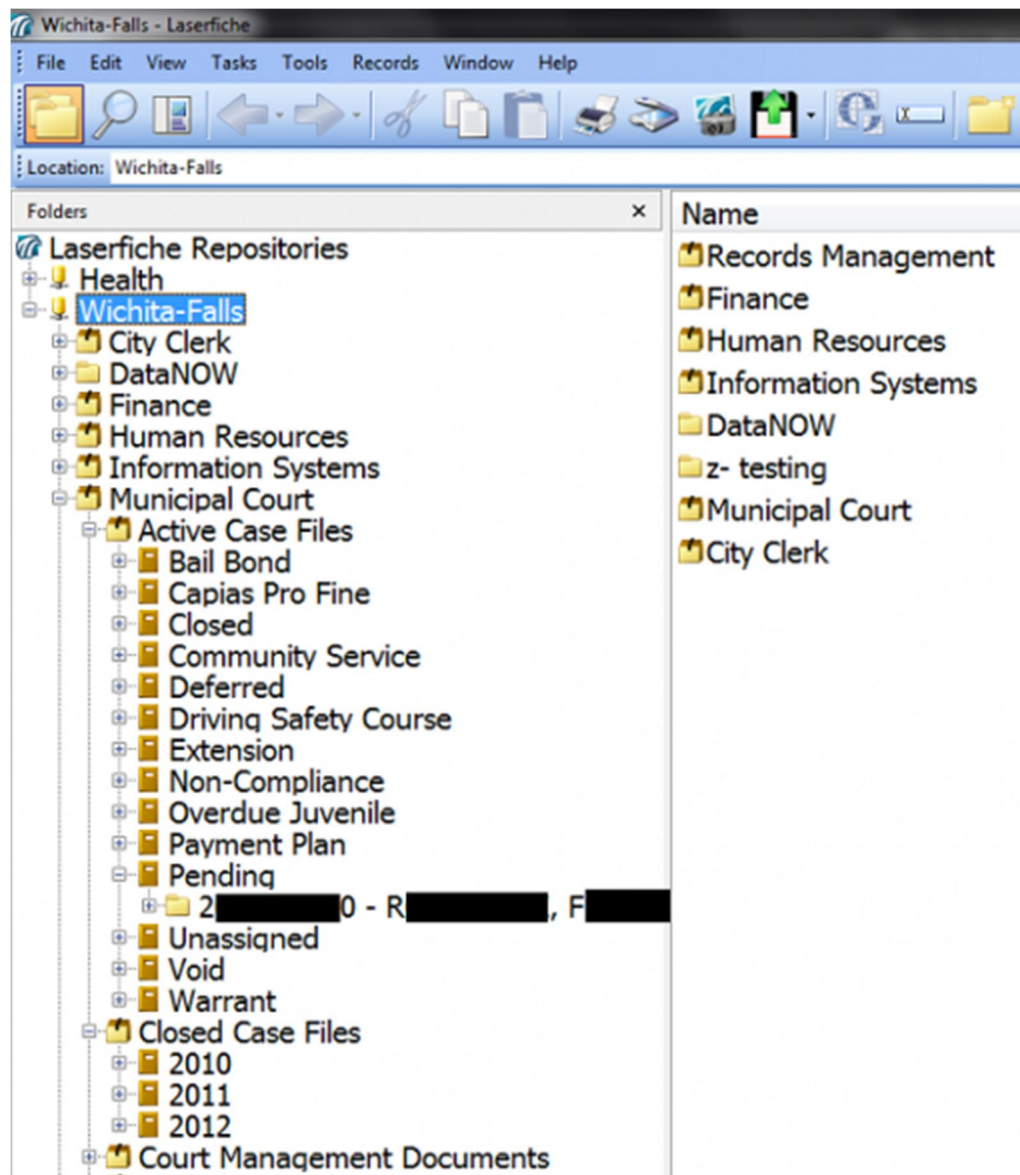
Active File Date
05/23/2012

Cause Number (required)
2011026606

Courts - Document Type (required)
Case Papers

Case Status
Community Service

First Name
ROBERT DEWAYNE

MI

Last Name
HALE

Date
11/28/2011

Dead File Date
/ /

Add/Remove Fields...

OK | Cancel | Help

The "Case Status" is set as "Pending" and the file is automatically routed into the "Municipal Court" – "Active Case Files" – "Pending" folder in Laserfiche.
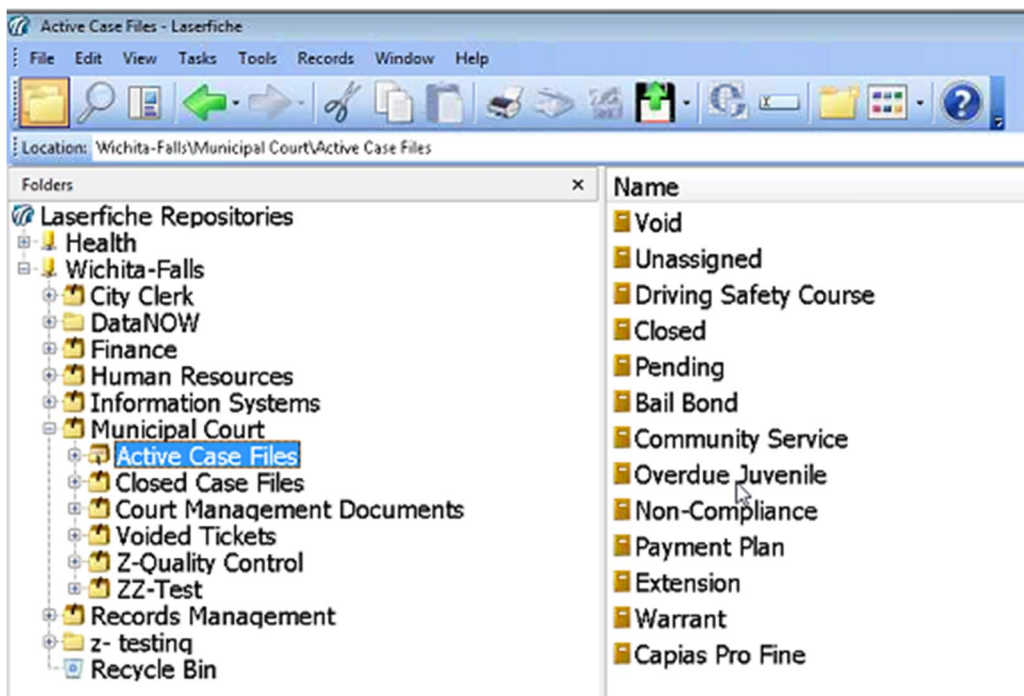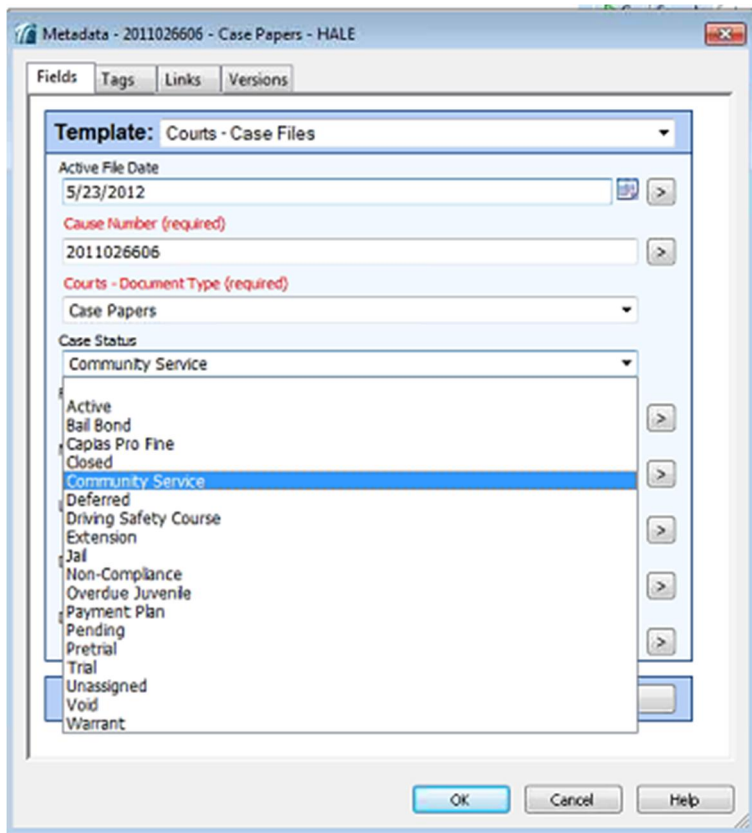
A folder is then created based on the "Cause Number" and "Name" of the defendant where the related documents are stored.

Because these records are active, there is no retention applied to them.

When the case is in court, the judge logs into the Laserfiche Mobile for iPad app directly from the bench and opens up the defendant's case file. After making a judgment, he simply changes the value of the "Case Status" field to whatever he deems necessary and Laserfiche Workflow routes all of the case documents into the appropriate folder within the "Active Case Files" records series.

Fields →|

2011025905

Courts - Document Type *

Case Papers

Case Status

Warrant

First Name

REBECCA RIOS

MI

Last Name

JOHNSON

Date

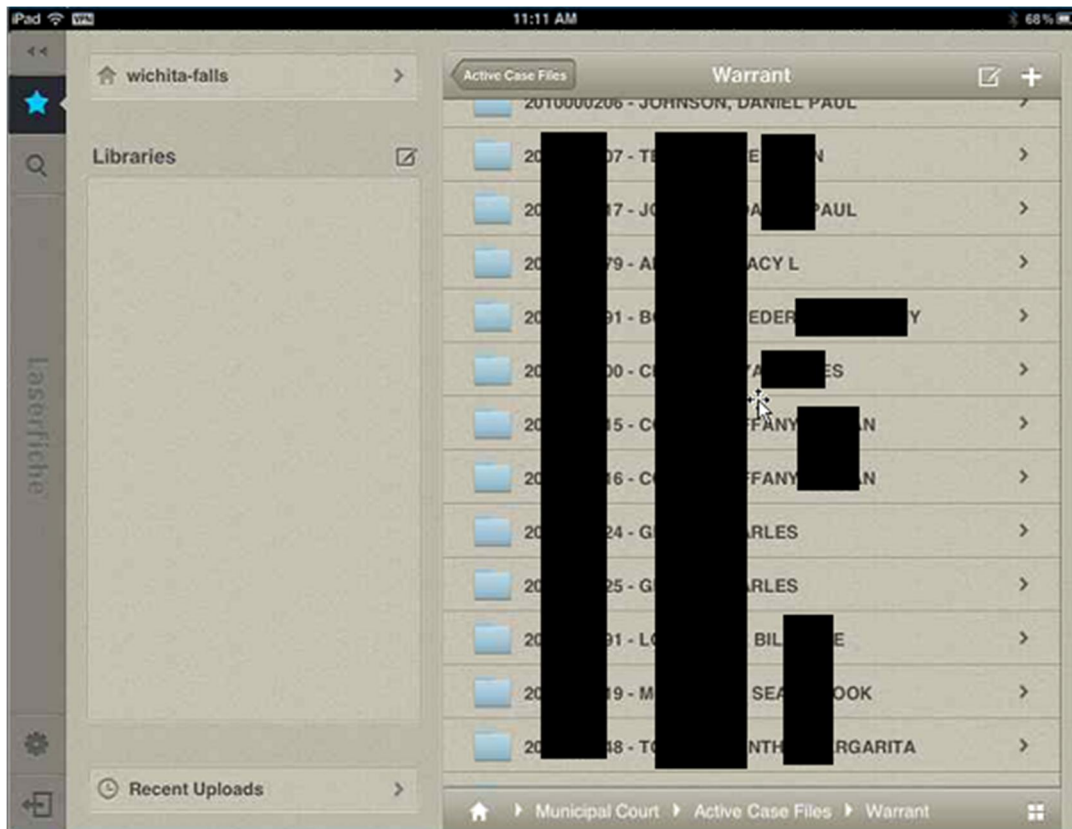November 18, 2011

Dead File Date

✚ **Add/Remove Fields** >

Creation Date

Jan 13, 2012 10:36:29 AM

Last Modified

For example, if the judge wants to issue a warrant for the defendant, he updates the "Case Status" to "Warrant" and the case file is automatically moved to the "Warrant" folder in the repository.

If a case file is dismissed, the judge fills in the "Dead File Date" in the case file template. This triggers Laserfiche Workflow to:

- Add this date to the metadata of all of the documents in the case file.
- Route the entire file to the "Closed Case Files" records series.
- File it by year and month for easy retrieval at a later time if necessary.
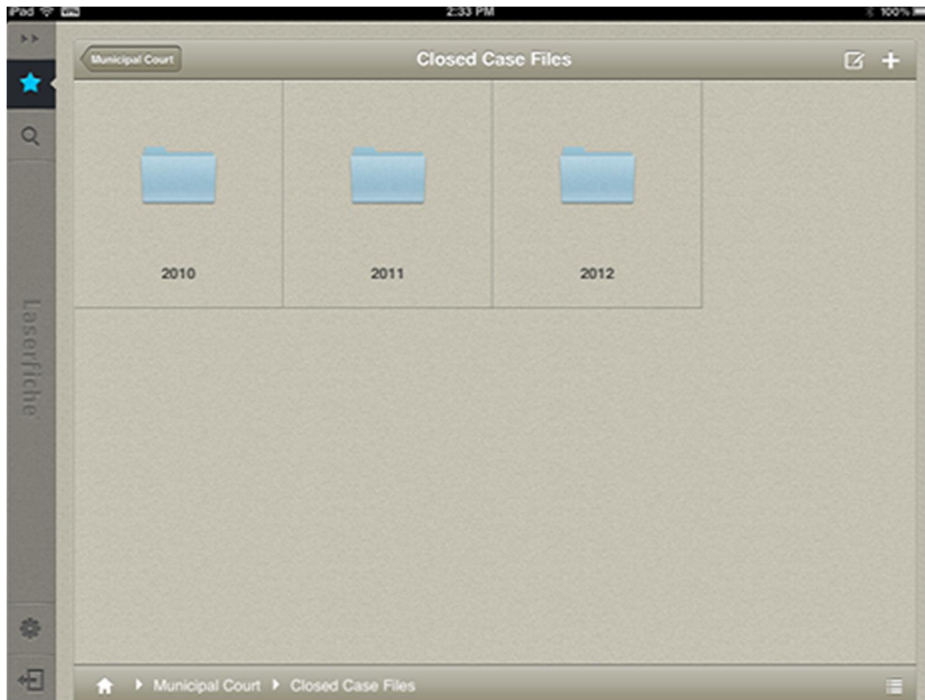
Once the file is moved to "Closed Case Files", retention rules are automatically applied. According to the Texas State Library Record Retention Rules, we have to keep all files for five years before destroying them. We use a time-based cutoff instruction where records are destroyed on a yearly basis. They are eligible for cutoff in January following

their "Dead File Date" and eligible for destruction by the Records Manager five years from then.


What happens behind the scenes

The entire municipal case management process is powered by Laserfiche Workflow. Different workflows run behind the scenes, routing files to various locations within the repository.

This workflow routes the case file to a different folder within the "Active Case Files" records series based on the updated value of the "Case Status" field:
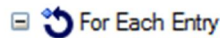
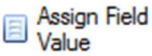Puts active case file in appropriopriate status folder based on the status field in the document's template.
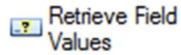
Retrieve Field Values
Get The new case status from the starting document.

Find Entries
Find all documents in the starting document's case folder.

For Each Entry
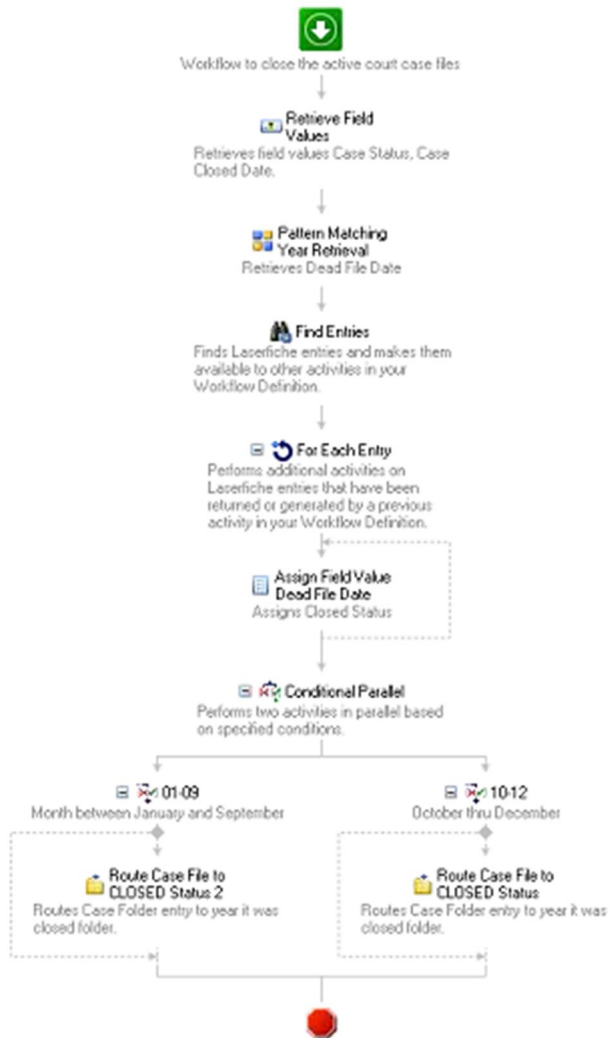For each document in the starting document's case folder:

Assign Field Value
Give the document the new case status.

Route Case File to New Folder
Move the starting document's case folder to the new case status folder.

This workflow looks for a "Dead File Date" and routes the case file to the "Closed Case Files" records series where it is stored by year and month:

Workflow to close the active court case files

Retrieve Field Values
Retrieves field values Case Status, Case Closed Date.

Pattern Matching Year Retrieval
Retrieves Dead File Date

Find Entries
Finds Laserfiche entries and makes them available to other activities in your Workflow Definition.

For Each Entry
Performs additional activities on Laserfiche entries that have been returned or generated by a previous activity in your Workflow Definition.

Assign Field Value Dead File Date
Assigns Closed Status

Conditional Parallel
Performs two activities in parallel based on specified conditions.

01-09
Month between January and September

10-12
October thru December

Route Case File to CLOSED Status 2
Routes Case Folder entry to year it was closed folder.

Route Case File to CLOSED Status
Routes Case Folder entry to year it was closed folder.

Laserfiche Mobile and security

"Let your business process drive your security needs."
Security and privacy are extremely important at the Wichita Falls municipal court. We have taken the following precautions to make sure that we maintain optimal security of our Laserfiche system at all times.

- Security is granted to all of our Laserfiche users based on group membership. For example, court clerks who need administrative access have different permissions than court clerks who only need view access to documents. While the first group is allowed to perform any action including deleting and modifying documents, the second group can only view and print.

- We have set up VPN on the iPads that we've distributed to our judge and clerks so that they are able to access Laserfiche from any wireless access point within the court.
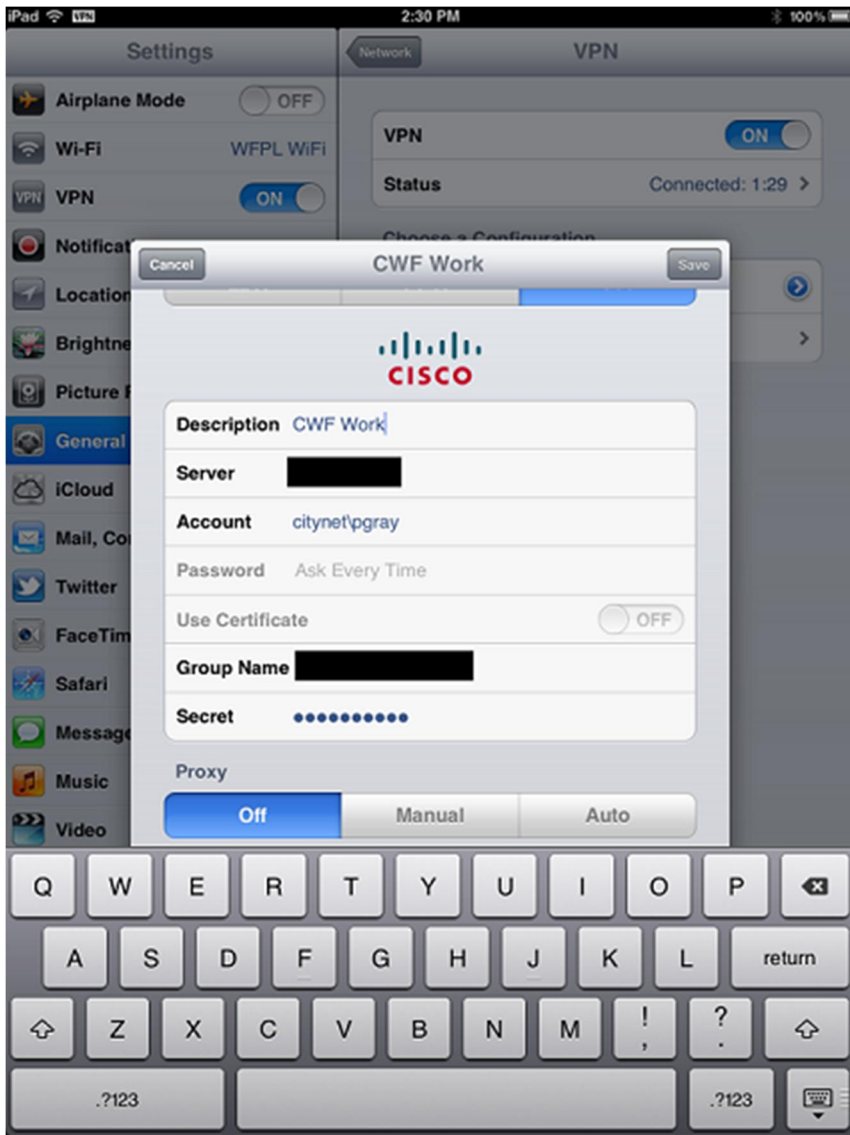
- The iPads are configured to connect to a wireless network only from within the confines of the court building. We have also set up an HTTP proxy to monitor the internet traffic and prevent certain internet activity such as streaming media.

- The wireless network within our courts is available only to municipal court-enabled devices. Users must have specific permission and be integrated with our Active Directory to be able to connect.

Benefits of Laserfiche

With Laserfiche, Wichita Falls has seen the following benefits:

- More space due to a reduction from 14 filing cabinets to a mere two drawers in a single cabinet.
- Enhanced employee productivity by automating review and approval processes.
- Complete adherence to the Texas State Library records retention rules.