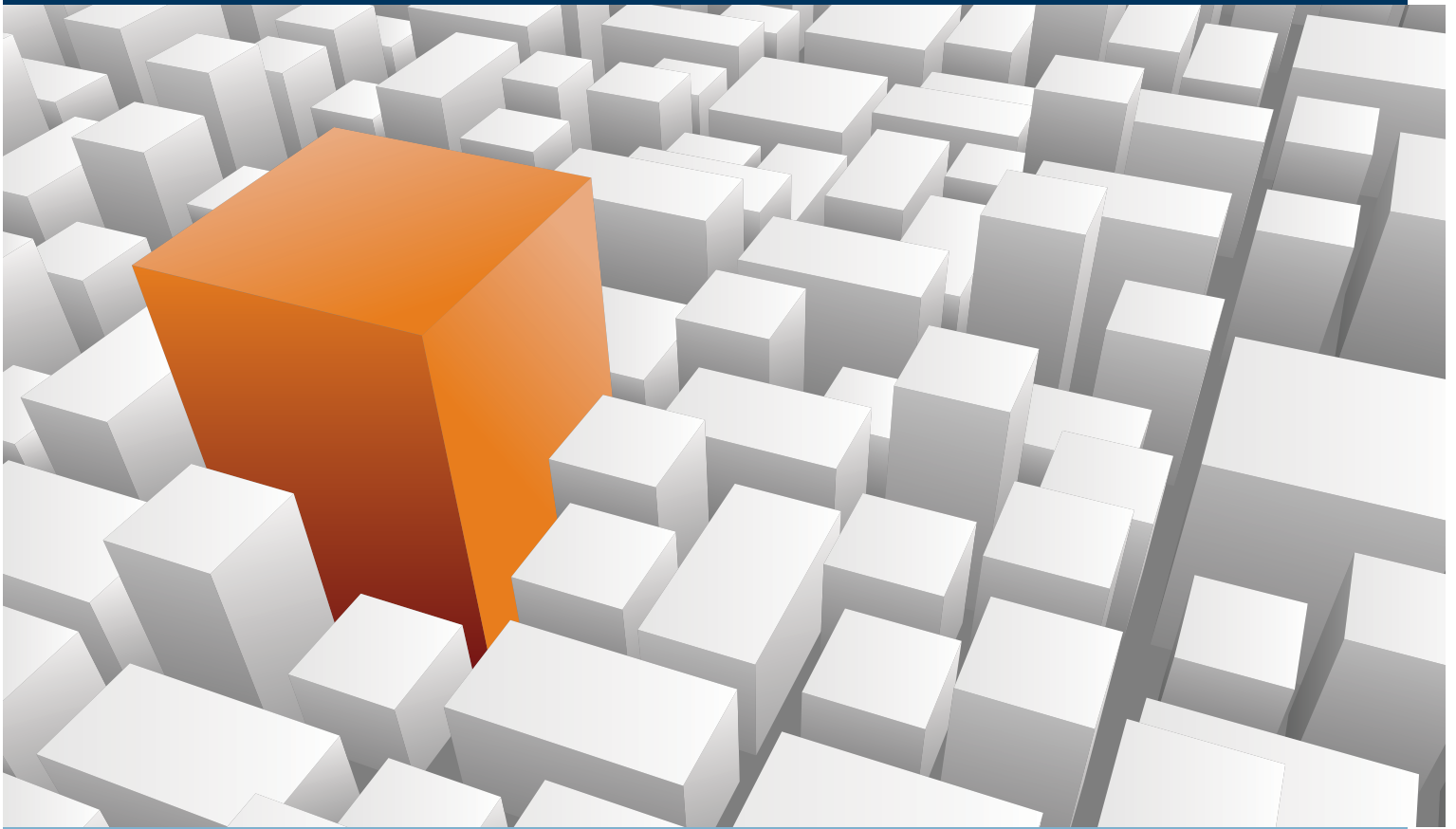# Government Focus

Enterprise Government Case Study

York County, Pennsylvania

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About York County

- **ORGANIZATION PROFILE**

  York County, PA, encompasses a large agricultural area of South Central Pennsylvania in the Susquehanna Valley. The York-Hanover Metropolitan Statistical Area is the fastest-growing metro area in the Northeast region, and is ranked 95th nationally among the fastest-growing metro areas in the nation, increasing 9.1 percent between 2000 and 2006.

- **SITUATION**

  With the County's rapid growth, by 2005, several departments had outgrown their paper filing systems. This was most acutely seen in the Clerk of Courts Office, where over 4 million pages of files were stored off site. Paperwork transport among the Courthouse, the Prison and off-site storage often led to hearing or booking delays. The Sheriff's Department needed to store documents so 19 Magisterial District Judges' offices located throughout the County could retrieve Central Booking information. And the County's Children and Youth Services department had to manage case files that could span over 21 years. Files also needed to be shared with fiscal staff, oversight managers, the courthouse and after-hours emergency.

- **SOLUTION**

  York County started with a Laserfiche pilot system to digitize board meeting minutes. Now, the Clerk of Courts Office uses Laserfiche to scan, store and share case files. The Sheriff's Department Central Booking uses custom forms and WebLink, along with its video arraignment system, to eliminate prisoner transport. And Children and Youth Services uses a custom integration to automate family case file management.

- **BENEFITS**

  - Immediate access to over 13,000 case files annually to judges, attorneys and staff.
  - More comprehensive and cost-effective service to taxpayers.
  - Faster booking processes that eliminate transportation costs.
  - Improved cross-departmental communication.
  - Eliminated data duplication.

- **BUSINESS PROCESSES**

  - Case File Management
  - Continuity of Operations
  - Database Integration
  - Front-End Scanning
  - Mainframe Integration
  - Online Case File Access
  - Video Arraignment Management
  - Work Process Automation

- **LASERFICHE COMPONENTS**

Laserfiche Server	Quick Fields Bar Code Plug-In™	Quick Fields Scan Connect™
Advanced Audit Trail™	Quick Fields Optical Mark Recognition™	Quick Fields Zone OCR™
Toolkit™	Quick Fields Pattern Matching™	WebLink Enterprise™
Laserfiche Plus™	Quick Fields Real Time Look-Up™	

York County, PA has a long, illustrious history of revolutionizing the way things get done. Nestled strategically across the Susquehanna River from a British stronghold in Philadelphia, York headquartered America's Revolutionary War effort. It was home to the Second Continental Congress in 1777. These days, the big news in York County is its new minor league baseball team—The Revolution, naturally.

Over the past four years, York County's been home to another revolution—a document automation revolution. Since Executive Director of Information Technology Al Raniero had the simple idea of scanning the minutes of the County Commissioners' meetings to make them more publicly available in 2002, Laserfiche has become the catalyst for a county-wide initiative that's revolutionizing the way York County does business, department by department and process by process.

What started in the Clerk of Courts office in 2005 has become an enterprise-wide phenomenon in York County, with the Sheriff's Department, Children and Youth Services, Divorce Masters and now its Treasurer's Department adopting and adapting Laserfiche to their respective needs. And these departments won't be the last, because, as Information Systems Department Senior Project Administrator Mary Jane McCluskey says, "Our project list extends out until 2011 and more departments are asking to be on our list."

Clerks of Courts Office

After a successful pilot project focused on digitizing minutes from board meetings, and then another small project in Human Resources, the County began digitizing court files in 2005. When the project started in Clerk of Courts Don O'Shell's office, the intent was to use Laserfiche to manage the criminal court records for the York County Court of Common Pleas, whose records are used by 25 other County departments. With over 13,000 cases processed annually and more than $9 million collected in costs, fines and restitution, managing court records is a big job—and often a slow one. Using paper files meant sometimes the paperwork necessary to process an inmate in or out of jail wouldn't show up in time, stalling the whole process.

The first step was to identify major categories or topics of filings, such as "motion-petition-order" or "disposition-sentencing," which streamlined file organization in Laserfiche. "My staff put their institutional knowledge to work and developed 17 criteria, or file chapters, from the myriad filings we receive daily," says O'Shell. "Wendy Bossard, our judicial services manager, and Kathy Groff, our records unit manager, deserve tremendous credit for developing the basic building blocks of our electronic file structure in Laserfiche."

Next, staff worked with their Laserfiche reseller, DocuScan USA, to devise a series of batch-header folders using Quick Fields with Pattern Matching and Real Time Lookup that could pull the case number from the state database and create a pre-determined folder structure. And because Quick Fields also automatically sorts and files case documents, it minimizes staff training. "All we have to do is create batch header sheets with bar codes, and Quick Fields does the rest," says Front Counter Supervisor Garth Bambling.

O'Shell's goal was to have incoming files scanned within four hours of getting them or first thing the next day—before they were distributed to judges, deputies, DAs and defense attorneys. But as he soon discovered, justice is not only blind, it can sometimes be a little short-sighted, too: one judge who wanted his paper files first and scanning second threatened to hold O'Shell in contempt of court if he didn't have his paper files immediately available.

"It was a bit of a gamble on my part to trust my staff, trust our vendor DocuScan, trust Laserfiche and trust the overall process that all would go as planned and we would meet our four-hour or next-day turn around times," O'Shell admits. "It's always gut-check time facing the displeasure of the Court knowing that the judge has the authority to cite you for contempt and require you to pay a fine, send you to jail—or both!"

Once the judges saw what the new system could do, they were won over. "We worked very hard to accommodate the judges and their staff to give them hands-on training at their convenience, even if it meant doing it on their lunch hour, or one-on-one," McCluskey explains.

Now, thanks to Laserfiche, even the paper-first stalwarts are seeing the light at the end of the inbox. One judge who couldn't find a certain paper copy of a file was spotted logging into Laserfiche to retrieve a scanned copy. Now eight years' worth of old files—over four million pages—are stored in Laserfiche, so they are not just archived and searchable, but also disaster-proofed.

McCluskey chairs an initiative to develop a county-wide continuity of operations plan, of which Laserfiche is a key component. "This is a three-year project that moves far beyond disaster recovery," she says. "We focus not just on technology, but also people, process and location to identify vulnerability. With departments that only have paper files, like our public defender or our mental health department, what happens if they can't get back into their building for months? What happens if the files are gone entirely?"

In fall 2007, York County implemented a pilot program to give attorneys access to case files over the Web, and plans to extend the system even further. The Clerk's office is investigating electronic submission of Superior and Supreme Court appeals, as well as the installation of touch screens in the courtroom so clerks can enter and send information to Laserfiche even more quickly.

To O'Shell and his staff, the progress the county courts have made is impressive. "To us, the biggest change is that the judges who refused to give up paper—the same ones who were threatening us with contempt of court charges if we couldn't give them immediate access to case files—are now the system's biggest advocates," O'Shell says. "We even had one judge tell us the system was 'better than sliced bread.' "

Divorce Masters Office

In York County, the Divorce Masters Office is part of the Family Law Division of the Court of Common Pleas. A Divorce Master is an attorney with experience in family law who is appointed by the Court of Common Pleas to conduct the trial in a contested divorce action. The Divorce Master will meet with the attorneys and the parties before a trial is scheduled in order to identify contested issues, help them obtain the information necessary to resolve these issues and conduct the trial with respect to issues that cannot be resolved between the parties. After the trial, the Divorce Master writes a formal report to the Court, recommending a resolution for these issues.

The Office uses Laserfiche to compare the information submitted by each side in the case to identify specific areas of disagreement and eliminate duplicate trial exhibits. This not only makes for smoother divorce proceedings in general, it also streamlines the entire trial.

During the trial, the Master can cross-check witness testimony with the documents that support that testimony in real time. Then, if need be, the Master can clarify any ambiguities with the witness immediately, while they are there to explain, rather than addressing them once the trial is over. Also, Laserfiche makes it easier for the Master to cross-reference specific exhibits in his or her final report to the Court, eliminating arguments over whether the Master's findings are supported by the record.

Sheriff's Department-Central Booking

The York County Sheriff's Department uses Laserfiche as the foundation of a time-saving process in Central Booking. Police officers from 15 districts drop off suspects and, thanks to Laserfiche, are back out doing what they do best—policing York's communities—instead of filling out paperwork.

Specialists process and book arrestees using customized e-forms, take digital fingerprints and catalog the detainee's possessions. Automated e-forms save time and paperwork for staff— no more trying to read an officer's handwriting, no more having to drive another five miles to dig up a file when someone who's been released claims they didn't get their cell phone back— because all their information is stored safely in Laserfiche.

To speed the booking process even more, the County uses Laserfiche tools to enable a unique video arraignment process. With WebLink, arrest histories and outstanding warrants are available to the judge, who appears on a monitor in Central Booking's processing room for a video arraignment to set bail—which means no more unreadable faxes, extra manpower or transportation costs for the five-mile trip to the courthouse.

In York County, it's clear how Laserfiche adapts and responds to the unique needs of each department it serves, even as it shows just how different those needs are. In Central Booking, that means Laserfiche is part of the next-generation video arraignment technology. But in the Children and Youth Services Department (CYS), Laserfiche is revolutionizing work processes by simply complementing the department's existing database.

For over 20 years, the ZOC database has stored client information for CYS, but now Laserfiche provides access to the department's newer database of scanned documents. Staff can access documents stored in Laserfiche without leaving the mainframe database. Staff also worked with their Laserfiche reseller, John Evans of DocuScan, to customize seven batch-folder headings. The value of this is clear when you realize the staff manages files that need to be maintained for the family as a whole, as well as each child in the system. "Our batch headings can expand to manage up to 26 kids per family," McCluskey explains. "This may seem excessive, but we actually have one family with 23 kids. So by using this feature, we're saving hundreds of pages in overlapping documents—and that's just one family."

CYS in particular had specific document management challenges that they needed to solve. Case files could stay open for 21 years, acquiring additional documentation along the way. Internal reviews and oversight of cases were time-consuming and inefficient using paper. Shuffling files to the courthouse for court cases added another layer of duplication and cost. Fiscal managers needed access to files for funding requests, which caused, as CYS' CarrieAnn Frolio puts it, "a nightmare of back and forth exchanges."

Now, using Laserfiche to make secure case information instantly available for internal and external requests, CYS is enjoying a new and inspired level of efficiency and service. "The implementation of Laserfiche has proved to be invaluable in daily operations, particularly for the effective management and supervision of caseloads," says Frolio. This means that paper records that needed to be transferred and reviewed can be pulled from a single repository, while the instant access to files means off-hours emergency calls no longer require a night attendant to rifle through caseworkers' desks looking for documentation; instead, they can pull up the necessary information right from their desk.

The biggest relief for CYS has been in sending records to the Court for dependency cases. "In the past, paper copies were copied and re-created in a mock-file to retain in the office while the court reviewed the original file. Sometimes it was volumes of information to be copied and multiple children to maintain records on," explains Frolio. "Now, we simply ensure that the file is scanned and send the original to the Court. This is a tremendous time and cost saver for us."

One of the benefits of Laserfiche is also its most simple: making general office information more widely available. "Laserfiche is also being used as a tool to maintain important training information, state bulletins, supervisory meeting minutes and Megan's Law notices," says Frolio. "In the past, paper copies were kept in individual offices and weren't readily accessible to all staff."

The main reason for such across-the-board benefits is the across-the-board buy-in by staff. McCluskey says a big reason their Laserfiche system is so successful is that she was able to work with their Laserfiche reseller to set up test folders before going live. "A partnership with a reseller who has the skills to customize your system is really important," says McCluskey.

"With York County it wasn't a matter of doing anything too complicated, it was just a matter of making sure everyone understood the software and that the software understood the people," says Evans.

"Mary Jane McCluskey and her staff were very proactive in getting each department to really look at how they could best organize and work with the Laserfiche system individually," he adds. "Really, on the technical end, it's not that complex. We used Laserfiche and Quick Fields, and then we had a few custom integrations. Creating the system was just a matter of listening to each department and discovering what made the most sense to them as far as setting up batch-headings and filing criteria."

TIPS FOR SUCCESS FROM YORK COUNTY

1. **Start small to keep things manageable and realistic.** "We talk a lot about baby-steps. That's the way we implement every project."

2. **Work with your reseller to initiate pilot programs.** "A partnership with a reseller who has the ability to build customized integrations is really important. And whenever we could, we'd have our reseller mockup folders for us, so we could experiment."

3. **Educate.** "We worked very hard to work with clerks—and even judges—to offer hands-on training. We accommodated their schedule, even if it was on their lunch hour."

4. **Trust the process—and it is a process.** "Once you get a taste of how things are done in Laserfiche, it's 'How can we shave seconds off a process?' When you have 15,000 folders, time savings are exponential."

5. **Attract more than promote.** "Success builds on success."

The Future of Laserfiche in York County

Next up for York County is installing Laserfiche in its Treasurer's Department, which supports 172 tax collectors. "Again, we create mock-up folders so the staff can play around with the structure and search for documents. This lets them get comfortable with the system, and makes it easy for them to see what they need. That way, if we need to make changes to give them all the functionality they need before the system goes live, we can do so before we put it into production," McCluskey notes.

Seeing Laserfiche spread so organically and variously across York County's departments has given McCluskey some perspective on what leads to a successful enterprise deployment. "We talk a lot about baby steps. Once you get a taste for how something's done, it becomes a question of how to shave seconds off a process. When you have 15,000 folders, the time savings are exponential," she says.

"Success builds on success," McCluskey adds. "Other departments see what's already happened and now they're asking 'How quickly can you get to us?'"

Laserfiche®
Institute™

The Laserfiche Institute teaches staff, resellers, and current and prospective clients how to use Document and Records Management software most effectively. As part of this mission, the Institute conducts more than 500 Webinars each year, covering a variety of topics. The Institute also hosts an annual conference where members of the Laserfiche community attend presentations and network with each other to share ideas and learn best practices. Additionally, the Institute conducts a number of regional training events and provides resellers with content for over 100 user conferences each year.

The Institute also develops and distributes educational material through the Laserfiche Support Site. On this Website, clients can access training videos, participate in online forums and download technical papers and presentations that help them become even savvier EDMS users.

For more information, contact:

info@laserfiche.com

Laserfiche
3545 Long Beach Blvd.
Long Beach, CA 90807
United States

Phone: 562-988-1688
Toll-free: 800-985-8533 (within the U.S.)
Fax: 562-988-1886
Web: www.laserfiche.com