UF Digital Imaging Project Reduces Office Paper

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The long-promised paperless office is closer. Turning paperwork into digital images for easier distribution and storage is the goal of the digital imaging project on campus.

Several departments on campus participate in the project, scanning in paper documents that are stored on a central server housed at NERDC. Then the documents are accessible as digital images to anyone who has a connection to the Internet (restricted by appropriate security and access control). This eliminates the need for distributing paper, eases storage issues such as chock-full filing cabinets, and provides backup capabilities.

According to Barb Sedesse, coordinator of computer systems control and technical support for the imaging project, some campus departments have been using the digital imaging project for years now: Student Financial Aid, the Office of the University Registrar, Disbursement Services and University Financial Services. The newest phase of the project brings Contracts and Grants, Division of Sponsored Research, Office of Engineering Research, and Engineering Contracts and Grants onboard. Future departments that plan on joining the project include IFAS Research and IFAS Contracts and Grants.

"The project involves scanning and indexing all documents involved in these areas from the proposals on through to the actual accounting documents from the Contracts and Grants offices," Sedesse said.

Sedesse is in charge of the project's design and implementation along with Eric Carey, coordinator of computer applications and imaging project coordinator. While Carey works for Academic Affairs, Sedesse works for NERDC and together they head the digital imaging project on campus. Carey is in charge of customizing the scanning and indexing process for each department. He also writes manuals and trains the users.

Sedesse said, "We have been meeting with the offices involved since January to gather the requirements for the project, which includes reviewing their current forms and trying to bring everyone together on the same page. Once we have the system design defined, I create all the definitions and security on the servers that are used for long-term storage of the documents."

Carey agrees that the project is beneficial for UF. "It costs more to store cabinets full of paper than to store digitized data. Paper also takes up more room that could be used for other things: computers, people, etc. The university has shown that it's interested in this project by purchasing many site licenses for groups on campus to make use of this imaging project," he said.

The goal of the project, says Sedesse, is a paperless environment. "One important incentive is saving space. Once the documents are imaged, compliance with retention requirements is a lot quicker and filing cabinets can be done away with," she said.

"Another bonus is access to the documents. You don't have to pass paper around anymore. Once it is stored, it is available to anyone with an Internet connection," she continued. Carey said that the indexing of information can be done automatically if the information is stored in DB2 tables. This automation accelerates and improves the accuracy of the indexing process.

The Provost's Office funds the project and NERDC provides support, both in personnel and in
the server storage needed to house the imaged documents.

To learn more about the imaging project or find out how to get your department involved, please see [http://www.it.ufl.edu/projects/imaging/](http://www.it.ufl.edu/projects/imaging/)

Your Comments are Welcome

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