CUADRASTAR® SKCA

PROVIDING ACCESS
Preserving Arizona

Arizona State Library,
Archives and Public Records

CASE DETAILS

Arizona State Archives Challenges, SKCA Solutions

- Eliminate cataloging backlog; improve efficiency and accuracy
- Deliver centralized public access to all Arizona State Archives and Records
- Bring collections up to current archival standards

"We can present researchers with real time results of what is in our collections, because with SKCA we have made huge progress toward eliminating our backlog. In fact, Archives staff are now able to look at collections we never had time to focus on; I call this 'the rediscovery process,' where we find out long forgotten things about our own materials. With public access enabled by SKCA, our collections are much more visible—they are no longer hidden behind a curtain."

Laura Palma-Blandford,
Archivist, Archives and Records Management Branch

ARIZONA STATE LIBRARY, ARCHIVES AND PUBLIC RECORDS & CUADRASTAR SKCA

The Arizona State Archives collects, preserves and makes available to the public and all branches of government, permanent public records, historical manuscripts, photographs and other materials that contribute to the understanding of Arizona history. The Records Management Center administers the management of public records throughout state and local government in Arizona. With six professionals overseeing their many collections of government materials, private manuscript collections, oral histories and photos, documenting everything and making it accessible is a huge challenge.

Significant systems-based progress

Historically, there was no archives software system. Everything was done manually, so data was stored in multiple formats, and there were many legacy paper-based finding aids. Use of technology only extended to WordPerfect and some Microsoft applications. There was a huge volume of information which was almost impossible to track or update, spread across many different platforms—and with no ability to provide public access.

The State Archives moved into a new building, and once they were in, the extra space prompted many different agencies to send over their records, which really taxed existing procedures. They were ultimately able to purchase the STAR Knowledge Center for Archives (SKCA) and begin the process of putting their collections online and making them publicly accessible. Per Laura Palma-Blandford, Archivist, "We started out with the skeleton and began putting the meat on the bones." When they began implementing SKCA they had over 200 government collections and over 100 private manuscript collections and were able to catalog those. Now, an "all records" query within SKCA shows 188,000 records in 466 collections.

A new standard

With SKCA, the data entry workflow is streamlined and access to records is much improved. Archives staff no longer reproduce the data in three different repositories, and users can search in one place. Staff no longer need institutional knowledge of where data is and why; in fact, they are now able to look at collections they never had time to focus on. Ms. Palma-Blandford calls this "the rediscovery process," where they find out long forgotten things about their own collection. And SKCA allows them to bring their collections up to current archival standards, including administrative histories.

Varied collections

Their oral history collections are of particular interest; they include legislative oral histories documenting the work of legislators based on interviews conducted after they leave office, the recollections of people in Sun City, which was one of the first master-planned retirement communities, and a general collection that captures Arizona stories. There is an ongoing project to encourage local libraries to get involved in collecting community stories. The State Archives provided resources and training in how to conduct and produce oral histories, and is the official repository.

Photo credit: Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records

The vast majority of their collections focus on government records and are dominated by large agency records such as the Governor's office, the Secretary of State (and predecessor Secretary of the Territory), Court and County records, property deeds, tax assessments and so forth. These are complemented by their manuscript collections, which include politician records such as the Governor Evan Mecham recall effort, documents from women's groups like the Arizona Federation of Business and Professional Women, and various Arizona church records.

Fulfilling the mission to increase public access

The Arizona State Archives and Records is a department of the State Library. Increased public access to state materials is the general goal of the overall agency. Ms. Palma-Blandford, Dr. Dennis Preisler (Deputy State Director of Archives) and the State Archives team have increased the department's visibility within the agency: per Ms. Blandford, people think of archives as a "dark attic," so SKCA provides a portal for agency staff and leaders as well as the public to understand what is available and how collections are arranged ...and this increases usage of the materials. In addition to agency staff, there are three types of researchers who leverage the collections: other state government employees who need records for official state business; general academics who research policies or event/issue history and come from all over the world, and genealogists who are the primary users of county records—when putting together family histories, for example.

Just ASK

The online catalog of resources available in the Archival collections is called "ASK;" standing for "Arizona State Knowledge." Access to archival materials has expanded significantly; with Arizona State Archives' Web presence, patrons are now able to conduct searches from their homes—and SKCA functionality enables them to search across collections rather than go through each individual one.

Per Ms. Palma-Blandford, finding aids from all of the state universities and smaller historical societies make up a "one-stop archival shop," meaning that researchers don't have to go through all the individual organizations. Using the EAD export function in SKCA, the State Archives can generate initial files and batch upload them to Arizona Archives Online, further pulling back the curtain and continuing to fulfill the mission of public access to their invaluable materials.

ABOUT LUCIDEA

Lucidea is the premier knowledge management software company, helping people navigate the ever expanding universe of information, turning it into actionable knowledge. We achieve this by providing tools that accelerate access to knowledge resources, while simplifying their management.

To learn more about CuadraSTAR SKCA and how it can help solve your archives management challenges, visit www.lucidea.com/CuadraSTAR-skca.

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