



Laserfiche ECM Blogs

Building Out the IT Infrastructure with ECM

Written by Meghann Wooster



There's little in life that's more elemental than water. And yet, in most developed countries, it's easy to take access to safe water and sanitation for granted.

Prior to the creation of the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (CCCSD) in 1946, however, Contra Costa County—located east of San Francisco, CA—was in crisis. A post-war building boom had brought an influx of new residents, most of them relying on septic systems that didn't take well to the area's heavy adobe clay soil. With septic tanks overflowing and waterborne diseases such as typhoid becoming a potential threat, health authorities considered the polluted conditions in the county to be among the worst in California.

As a result, the CCCSD was formed as a special district, a sewer system and treatment plants were put in place, and the public received much-needed access to safe water and sanitation.

By 2002, CCCSD had expanded to meet the needs of 450,000 people by maintaining 1,500 miles of sewer lines and treating an average of 45 million gallons of wastewater per day. But with 56 years of service came 56 years of records—including permits, construction plans and Board documents. Storage space was at a premium, gaining access to information was difficult and time-consuming, and the district wanted to strengthen its disaster recovery plans.

“Over the years, CCCSD has created a reliable and efficient infrastructure to handle the wastewater needs of thousands of Central Contra Costa residents,” says John Phillips, IT systems analyst for CCCSD. “Laserfiche is helping to add similar efficiency and reliability to our IT infrastructure, allowing us to provide our staff with faster access to the content they need to do their jobs.”

Implementing ECM

The special district enlisted Laserfiche reseller ECS Imaging to build out its information management infrastructure with Laserfiche enterprise content management (ECM).

The first department to implement Laserfiche was the Secretary of the District, which converted critical Board documents from CCCSD's inception in 1946 through the present into an easily accessible, digital form. The Permits operation was next, with a much larger and more complicated filing backlog of permits and record drawings. This conversion process is still underway today.

"It was important for us to select a system that could handle many different forms of content," says Phillips. "Documents are simple. Maps and drawings are where things get more complex."

Today, permit job files (including maps and drawings) are scanned into Laserfiche offsite by ECS Imaging. This practice centralizes content management, reduces the need for physical storage space, minimizes wear and tear on the originals and enables convenient access to them by CCCSD employees.

Since 2002, many other departments have begun using Laserfiche to manage a wide variety of content, including:

- Maps and drawings (Engineering Support)
- Right of Way agreement files (Right of Way)
- Employee and retiree files (Human Resources)
- Standard operating procedures (Lab)
- Discharge permit documentation (Plant Operations)

Expanding ECM by Integrating GIS

To further improve information access, the special district expanded its use of Laserfiche by integrating it with CCCSD's GIS system, AutoDesk MapGuide. The in-house integration grants engineers, permit counter staff and field maintenance crews instantaneous access to scanned permits and record drawings. This is particularly important for CCCSD's field crews, which operate out of a separate facility without convenient access to paper records.

"Prior to the integration of Laserfiche and the GIS system, field crews were unable to access any of these records directly," explains Carl Von Stetten, information systems analyst, Engineering Support, CCCSD. "They had to take the time to retrieve copies from a variety of filing rooms."

To access scanned permits and record drawings, users simply double-click on a parcel or pipeline within a map, and then follow the links in the subsequent reports to content stored in the Laserfiche repository. According to Von Stetten, “This has eliminated time spent looking up hard copy permits and drawings and enabled our crews to be more productive in the field.”

Business Benefits

“Our deployment has focused on achieving specific business goals rather than on technical bells and whistles,” explains Phillips, “which is why we’ve had so much success.”

The key benefits CCCSD has realized as a result of implementing Laserfiche include:

- **Increased efficiency.** Today, all employees have easy online access to current and historical records, which are centralized in the Laserfiche repository. Access to additional content such as permits, HR files and operating procedures is granted to authorized users based on Laserfiche security protocol. Laserfiche search tools enable staff to locate information quickly, so time is no longer wasted on finding, copying and distributing content. The system has also reduced CCCSD’s need for storage space.
- **Easy integration with GIS.** By linking Laserfiche to its GIS system, CCCSD engineers, permit counter staff, and field maintenance crews can instantly access scanned permits and record drawings. This is a particular timesaver for CCCSD’s field crews, which operate out of a separate facility without convenient access to paper records.
- **Improved disaster recovery.** In the past, disaster protection focused on preserving and protecting vulnerable paper copies. The installation of Laserfiche, with redundant off-site storage, has greatly improved the district’s ability to protect historical and vital records. “We hope we never face an emergency that will demonstrate the benefits of having Laserfiche,” says Phillips, “but we have to be prepared.”

“My best advice for companies that want to extend their information management infrastructure with ECM is to talk to other users who’ve done what you’re trying to do,” concludes Phillips. “Leverage their experience to ease your implementation and achieve your goals.”



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