Knowledge Collaboration:
The University of Louisville utilizes Xerox technology to share knowledge and collaborate virtually.

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The University of Louisville works together to improve productivity, streamline workflow, and enhance knowledge sharing

PROCESS WORKFLOW

Spanning three campuses and over 450 acres, the University of Louisville is a state supported urban university located in Kentucky's largest metropolitan area. With a student population of over 22,000, the University of Louisville offers graduate, professional, baccalaureate, and associate degrees, as well as certificates, in over 170 fields of study through 12 schools and colleges.

Sometimes a problem isn't apparent until its solution is introduced. Such was the case with the way the administration at the University of Louisville shared documents—and the knowledge they contain. Until recently, if administrators wanted to collaborate on a specific document, they would distribute the electronic file as an e-mail attachment or upload the file to a shared directory on the University's Local Area Network. If they wanted to share a paper document, they had to use the campus mail system.

These methods were relatively effective, but there were problems:

- *E-mail attachments use disk space unnecessarily because everyone has a copy of the same document*
- *Sending files via e-mail to multiple recipients clogs the network*
- *Not everyone has access to shared directories on the LAN*
- *Hardcopy documents are at risk of being lost or damaged. There were also delays using the campus mail system.*
- *Collaborating on documents distributed in these manners is extremely difficult because there is no automatic version control*

Despite these challenges, however, Sandra Johnson-Byers, Director of Consulting Services at U of L explains, "We thought our system was fine. We didn't know there was a better way." It wasn't until Dr. Ron Moore, the University's CIO, saw a demonstration of Xerox DocuShare software, that he realized the school's methods of sharing and collaborating on documents could be drastically improved. DocuShare is a Web-based, community-maintained knowledge sharing solution that Moore initially saw as an opportunity to facilitate a Chinese Distance Learning initiative. After learning more about DocuShare, Moore recognized the software could alleviate many of the knowledge sharing and collaboration pains the University faced.

> *" Docushare's ease of use allows virtually any end-user to become a web publisher."*
>
> *Dr. Ronald Moore, CIO, University of Louisville*

Testing the waters

Upon returning from the conference, Dr. Moore decided to take DocuShare out for a "test drive" to see what it could really do. A pilot program began on campus with about 20 users, and the results were all he expected and more. Moore says, "the pilot clearly demonstrated how DocuShare could help us disseminate information quickly and collaborate on shared documents".

A 12-person U of L management was among the first to use DocuShare as a means to collaborate on a strategic planning initiative.
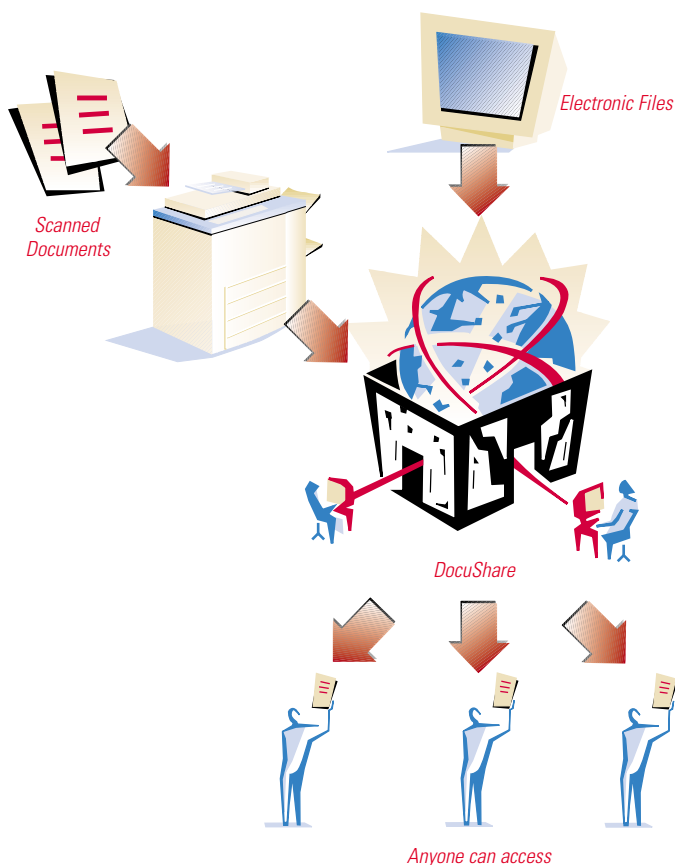
DocuShare organization

The team set up a project calendar and included their agendas in a single, common location for all team members to view. An e-folder was created to store the master document, and sub-folders were stored and organized reference documents.

DocuShare security

Because the documents included sensitive data, authorization was set so only team members could access and/or edit the files stored in this particular area of the University's DocuShare site. Once permissions were set, authorized team members could view any of the files at their convenience by simply navigating through the Web-based DocuShare collections or by searching the entire site using key words.

DocuShare versioning

"One of the nicest aspects of the software is the way it handles version control," Johnson-Byers says. When a team member wanted to revise the master document, s/he would "check it out" from the site, which would lock the file from other team members, so multiple changes could not occur simultaneously. When revisions were complete, the file would be uploaded back to the common area, where all team members could view and/or revise the new file. DocuShare also keeps a history of all previous versions, so if the team agrees the latest revision is unnecessary, it is simple to revert back to the last version. "With normal document collaboration, you continually have to save versions under different names. If you don't, the old is lost forever, and the new changes are permanent. With DocuShare, the software automatically saves the old version for you. That feature came in very handy with our strategic planning project. Without it, we would've totally lost a good amount of information"

Electronic Files

Scanned Documents

DocuShare

Anyone can access

The verdict is in

DocuShare's ease of use and streamlined workflow are readily apparent based on how the solution was embraced by the pilot team members. By the end of the pilot, the 20 users had over 1,000 files stored and organized in e-folders on the University's DocuShare site. Moore expects that once DocuShare is running University-wide, work processes are going to benefit greatly from the Xerox solution:

DocuShare improves collaboration:

- With version control, permissions setting, project calendars, and e-mail notification, projects U of L staff can collaborate on projects virtually. Enabling people to work on projects together—from different locations and at their own convenience—greatly enhances the collaboration process.

DocuShare reduces waste and improves productivity:

- The U of L can work toward a paperless office by scanning hardcopy documents on a Xerox Document Centre or other multifunction device and then uploading the newly created digital files to an appropriate e-folder in DocuShare. It is no longer necessary to duplicate paper documents and distribute them manually. DocuShare does it all.
- With DocuShare, documents travel at the speed of the Internet. Also, many different people can view a single document at the same time.

DocuShare improves knowledge sharing and document distribution:

- Bandwidth is no longer a problem because e-mail attachments can be eliminated. Authorized administrators can pull documents by viewing and printing them from the DocuShare folder, or they can push documents by e-mailing just the url of the folders where the files are stored.
- Unlike shared directories on the University's LAN, an unlimited number of guests of the system can view unrestricted documents. So now the community has a portal into the U of L and vice versa. But permissions can be set to ensure sensitive information is kept confidential. DocuShare system administrator(s) can give users read, read/write, or read/write/manage capabilities.
- Johnson-Byers says the University is planning on using DocuShare's subscription feature, which automatically sends an e-mail notification to pre-specified users when new content is added to the site.

The pilot was such a success that Moore has decided to market DocuShare to other areas of the University. Within one year , he expects 11 of the 20 areas of the University to have the solution up and running. He is such a firm believer in the software that he is also promoting DocuShare to other Kentucky schools. Moore explains he takes such a leadership role in marketing the Xerox solution because he understands the value of fast, easy information-sharing and collaboration. And with DocuShare's ease of use, he says, "virtually any end-user can become a web publisher."

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