A new game plan for University Sports Centre

Xerox software solution helps stem paper tide

Established in 1853, the University of Melbourne is recognised nationally as a leader in higher education with highly regarded schools of medicine, business, architecture and law among other disciplines. Not long ago the institution, Australia's second oldest, was voted the country's University of the Year.

A major contributor to the campus experience, Melbourne University Sport is the business unit which, provides sport and recreational opportunities for the 35,000 students and more than 5,000 staff at the University. It is here where people, needing a break from their books or lectures, work out with dance classes, aerobics, weights, martial arts and racquet sports among the many options. There are 47 different clubs and many intramural college or university leagues. Well-known athletes such as Olympians Nova Peris-Kneebone and Kathy Watt are a familiar sight.

Behind its well organised and gleaming reception area, Melbourne University Sport's administrative area bulges with 20 four-drawer filing cabinets stuffed with documents pertaining to its business. These include agendas and minutes of club meetings, accounting information, student insurance records, eligibility documents, event information and thousands of sports-related photographs. In addition to Departmental administration, the various clubs also have filing cabinets crammed with documents relating to their own activities.

"The documents have been piling up over the years. Paper goes on and on," said Julie Caundle, Director's Assistant of the Melbourne University Sport. "We have documents that go back to the 1850s, when the university was first founded."

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In recent years, the lack of storage space has become problematic for both the Department and its clubs. Many papers are mouldering in boxes because there is no room for them in the filing cabinets, and still papers keep coming. "People find things in their departments and bring them over saying, hey, you'd probably like this for your files," Caundle grinned.

She was worried that some valuable sports heritage and useful information might be lost forever if something wasn't done. "Basically, we needed to get these papers and photos out of the drawers and archived in a modern way, be it on microfiche or scanned and put into an electronic repository of some kind."

In addition, the process of looking for documents had become cumbersome and tedious for the Department's 17 staff. "It was non-productive. I would spend hours looking for an item when all I wanted to do was flick my fingers on a keyboard and find it," said Caundle, a multi-task administrator with an IT background who is often called upon to seek out files by various sporting stakeholders and, more recently, by the University's Department of History, which is compiling a book about sport at the University. "I knew there had to be a better way."

Charged with easing the burden on Melbourne University Sport staff, Caundle decided to find a way for Departmental records to be stored electronically and easily accessed in a simple-to-use repository. She looked at one system and didn't like it. Nor was she impressed with the firm who wanted to charge her a consultancy fee before creating a strategic plan for the Department. Not long after, she heard from a contact at Monash University that Fuji Xerox had a document management software solution that could help address her needs.
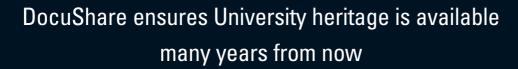
"No more walking to filing cabinets and trying to guess where something is. We can just click a few buttons on the keyboard to find the item. It will be a welcome change for all staff at the sports centre."

DocuShare ensures University heritage is available many years from now

University of Melbourne

Fuji Xerox Account Manager Michael Tea came to Caundle's office and showed her three products he thought would serve as the solution. He demonstrated the Xerox Document Centre 250, a networked, monochrome/multifunction digital scanner, printer, copier and fax machine. With the capability of scanning at 25 pages per minute, the DC250 would quickly help Caundle begin the process of stemming the Melbourne University Sport's paper tide. Later, once staff were trained to run the machine, they would also be able to fax and print directly from their PCs, which would also increase overall office efficiency.

Next, Tea demonstrated FlowPort, a document capture, distribution and transformation server software, which would work along with the DC250 to merge the paper documents into digital electronic format. The software would then upload the newly digitised documents directly to the Department's DocuShare website. This would be the repository where all documents could be held and accessed as necessary.

"DocuShare allows all manner of files to be shared across platforms and sites, using a secure, controlled environment. Users can post, change, search for and retrieve information at the touch of a button without the intervention of a webmaster or site administrator. It was ideal for Julie and her team," explained Tea.

"Best of all the Fuji Xerox solution was easy to implement and would require only a short learning curve on the part of staff," said Tea.

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In late 2001, phase one of the project began. Caundle had the Department's servers upgraded, designed (and then redesigned) an online file structure and began scanning some of the documents on the DC250. Once they were scanned and converted to an easily viewable digital format, the documents were uploaded to the Melbourne University Sport web server and stored on DocuShare. Once uploaded, the files were automatically linked together in a unique password-protected collection of folders.

So far, Caundle has created 50 folders of documents and sub-directories and is pleased with the results to date. "I'm impressed with how easy it is to manage and track documents electronically," she said.

Over the next few months, Caundle will ensure all of the Department's documents are scanned and put on to DocuShare. A new employee will be brought in shortly to manage the scanning process, as Caundle's energy is required in so many other directions.

While most of the documents will be scanned, some deemed of heritage value will be archived for posterity – as Caundle believes there will always be a need for certain hard copy documents. Others will go on microfiche to "cover all bases" and ensure nothing valuable is lost. "There is always the fear that someone will come looking for something and we will think, oh no, we just threw that out," said Caundle.

The best part though, is watching the clutter slowly disappearing from the filing cabinets and boxes. "The DC250, FlowPort and DocuShare are powerful tools that will help us contain the clutter and keep valuable records intact. We can also be more efficient in how we go looking for files in the future. No more walking to filing cabinets and trying to guess where something is. We can just click a few buttons on the keyboard to find the item. It will be a welcome change for all staff at the Melbourne University Sport," said Caundle.

Once all the Department's documents are catalogued on DocuShare, phase two of the project can begin. This project element involves getting all sports club documents scanned and organised into DocuShare – no small task in itself when 47 different organisations are involved!

And once everything is in the new system? "A visit to the recycling bin is in order," grinned Caundle.

Further Information

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