

Success Story

Jefferson County Relies on Livelink ECM™ to Gain Better Control over Information Assets and Improve Business Processes

Livelink ECM – Records Management ensures that all records, regardless of format, are easy to find and manage according to the county’s retention scheduling processes

Once an agricultural and mining area, Jefferson County, Colorado is now a thriving suburban, business, industrial and residential community. It is the second largest county in Colorado, with a population estimated at 535,837. In 2001, as part of its strategy to improve business processes and reduce the risks related to information mismanagement, Jefferson County’s Archives and Records Management (A&RM) decided to replace the outdated system it used for managing and tracking the county’s physical records. This was spurred by internal and external governing requirements for more transparent business practices, improved access to documentation, and cost containment, with the objective of improving responsiveness and overall quality of service to its 3,000 employees.

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*Michael Schink,
Livelink Application System Administrator,
Jefferson County, CO*

consistently and according to their official retention policies. With Livelink RM, the county has been able to automate key processes, ensure records are easily accessed and retrieved and kept as long as legally required, and significantly reduced the amount of time employees spend on document related activities which has resulted in savings in manpower costs.

One of the key reasons that the county selected Livelink RM was for its overall records management functionality. “Our strategy is to eliminate our personal and shared network drives and just utilize Livelink,” explains Karen Hughes, Supervisor of Archives and Records Management, “The county has been working towards projects on various levels, with many departments, to implement Livelink as the overall repository for information for the county.”

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Business Challenges

- Outdated and inefficient system for managing and accessing information
- Large volume of paper documents, forms and applications taking up storage space
- Improve responsiveness and quality of service to employees

Business Solution

- Livelink ECM—Records Management
- Livelink ECM—Object Importer™

Business Benefits

- Digitized electronic assets
- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Enhanced employee satisfaction
- Reduced storage space
- Savings of cost and time by eliminating manual processes
- Automated processes across departments

Livelink RM is used across several departments to store and manage both physical objects and electronic documentation. The county stores a broad range of documents in the system including Word documents, images, zoning violations, building permits, hearing notes and minutes from commissioners meetings. Historic audio tapes that were on cassettes, but had reached their life expectancy, are being digitized into a format that can be stored in Livelink. The county is also digitizing information that had initially been scanned to microfilm and storing this information into Livelink for easier access.

Managing and Preserving Physical Content

Jefferson County's A&RM maintains two different storage facilities on campus where over 18,000 boxes of physical objects need to be managed for the county. Before purchasing Livelink RM, A&RM was using an Access® database as its inventory system. The system, developed in-house in the 1990s, had several limitations. Hughes explains, "One problem was that only a very small group of people were able to use the database, so it was limited to the archives records management staff. This meant that most people in the 55 departments that store physical records could not see how the county was tracking their boxes, where their boxes were, or what records had been checked out. This was one of the primary limitations. The other aspect is that the county has in the range of 1.8 million electronic documents stored in Livelink. When people conduct searches, they want to know where all the records are, not: is it electronic or is it paper. Our policy has always been 'regardless of media,' so we wanted to integrate both the paper-based system and the electronic system so when users searched on key words, it would pull up the boxes of physical documents as well as electronic records, and they could easily check them out."

Previously, when someone wanted to move a box to inactive storage, they would fill out a form that indicated the contents of the box. This was a manual process. A&RM would enter this information in the Access database and then move the box to the storage facility. If someone wanted a box retrieved from storage, they would send in their request via a phone call, facsimile, or email. When the request came in, the records staff would open the Access database, select the appropriate department tab and locate the folder that held the current list of records in storage.

Now, A&RM handles these tasks using Livelink, having completed phase one of their system rollout. "Phase one was to convert all of our information out of Access and get our daily operations up, working and functioning. Primarily to be able to do retrievals on a daily basis, which is where we are today," says Hughes. "We purchased Livelink Object Importer™ so we could import the data, and we used in-house conversion of that data so that the Object Importer can export it into the correct fields in Livelink. The next step is to get the reporting online so I can do my monthly and annual reports. After that, I hope to address our active file rooms and get those online so it'll be easier to transition those documents."



The paper records for active files are generally managed in the individual departments. There are seven departments at the county that maintain large active file rooms—including the District Attorney's office, the County Attorney's office, the Sheriff's office, Planning & Zoning, Highways & Transportation, Building Safety, and Human Services which provides multiple programs through the county including child support, emergency assistance, food stamps, medical assistance, and so forth. Each active file room houses in excess of 15,000 files.

In phase two, A&RM plans to implement e-forms so the departments can easily fill out the information within Livelink and be able to access the information by searching online, check off the box they need, and request it to be delivered to them. However, A&RM first needs to apply appropriate permissions for who can see the information because some of the organizations need their information kept confidential. "For example, Human Services works on files with social security numbers and information about children that can't be disclosed to other departments," says Hughes. As part of phase two, the county also plans to support the use of XML-based color labels and barcode labels for physical records such as folders, boxes and shelves, directly from within the Livelink RM interface.

Retention Schedules Meet Legal Requirements

Archives and Records Management works closely with each department to compile their records retention schedule, a listing of records that specifies the minimum length of time those records must be retained to meet all administrative, fiscal, legal and historical requirements. The county is currently in the process of revamping its retention schedules and is moving from departmental schedules to functional schedules. “In our retention schedules, there is a transition procedure. For example, if a department keeps three years of accounts payable material in the office, year four goes to inactive records. All of that has been very well defined through the retention scheduling process,” says Hughes. Once approved, a records retention schedule provides the legal authority necessary to destroy public records.

Moving files from active to inactive status is event-based. “For example, personnel files in Human Resources,” says Hughes. “If an employee terminates, they are reclassified as terminated, which is one of our event triggers to apply retention. It is a long-term retention period. For the county, it is 60 years.”

Jefferson County uses Livelink RM for legal holds if required when an employee has been terminated. “Primarily the legal holds that we have are employee-related so when an employee leaves or is terminated for some reason and there is potential litigation, the law department will notify us with specific keywords they want us to search,” explains Hughes. “And based on those keywords, we place the records on hold. That’s the way the legal hold works. It’s very simple and easy to use.”

“We have a lot of documents in Livelink that would not be related to the exact personnel file such as emails, working documents, time sheets, and a lot of different documents for that employee including correspondence or memos that might impact an employee’s status,” adds Michael Schink, Livelink Application System Administrator at Jefferson County. “And for many of the employee cases, if it’s a termination and they’re doing litigation, primarily it goes back to their work product. If the employee was in a work group that was actively using Livelink, it’s very easy to find all of the documents that they put into Livelink, how often they used Livelink... the whole audit trail is important. So anything associated with their login is pretty much put on legal hold.”

Livelink Reports

The county takes advantage of many useful Reports in Livelink. The Request Listing Report details the physical items that have been requested, by whom and when. The Return Listing Report details the physical items that have been borrowed or are overdue, the number of days out and the number of days overdue. Hughes also runs Capacity Reports. “We have two different facilities for records management where we manage physical objects,” she explains. “A Capacity Report will let us know where we have space and what our growth rate is so we can manage our space better. Then in terms of usage, we bill back our internal customers based on the amount of space they use, and also for their retrievals which we do on a monthly basis. For example,

the District Attorney’s office has the most boxes in storage and we need to know what percentage of those boxes they store to be able to bill back to them.” The county is also able to report the monthly and annual retrieval statistics.

The Livelink reports were particularly beneficial over the 2008 July 4th weekend when Jefferson County had a water main break two floors above their records storage facility on the Court side of their building at 4:00 a.m. “I worked that weekend to develop a LiveReport that helped identify what records we stored in the affected area,” says Schink. “I had a draft report ready for the records managers by Monday morning. Then we refined the data based on what the Disaster Recovery Contractor recorded that they moved and from where into cold storage. By using the Livelink report, we were able identify the extent of the damage – less than 400 boxes affected – because we knew what content was stored there.”

Cutting Clutter to Lighten the Load

Several departments at Jefferson County plan to go completely electronic, eliminating paper records altogether. The county wrote custom processes using a third party tool to capture the information, transform it into digital content, and deliver it directly into Livelink. This completely eliminates manual data entry and boosts productivity. “Our scanning process was really what gave us the foot in the door for the Livelink system,” explains Schink. The county has the capability of OCRing PDF documents into the system to make them fully text-searchable. This will improve the county’s ability to locate important information in the future.

Once documents are scanned into the system, the paper copies are destroyed, which is the county policy. “In terms of state statute, the state accepts all documents electronically so that facilitates our ability to do this. There is however, a small subset of documents that have historically significant value, so even though we have scanned them to make them accessible and easy for departments to use, we keep them and they’re moved to the archives for historical preservation,” says Hughes.

The key advantages of converting paper records into electronic form is reduced storage requirements and providing end users with one convenient and secure location to manage all of their information. “Building Safety is in the process now of scanning in all of the building plans for building permits. In fact, all new building plans are scanned immediately into Livelink and they’re going to eliminate hard paper copies in that department,” says Hughes. “Our child support enforcement group in Human Services has gone to a paperless office with a return on investment of five full-time employees (FTEs) after about a year and a half of scanning everything in, based on the fact that they went paperless and use Livelink RM to manage their records much more efficiently. Transitioning records electronically between their work group area to the County Attorney’s office and to the court system has made it much easier for them to do their jobs.”

Today, the Human Services department is the heaviest user of Livelink. “They did an assessment in 2004, prior to using Livelink, and found that they had a document loss of about 25%. Part of the issue was that employees were taking documents home with them,” says Hughes. “There is legal exposure when documents are lost so the department chose to invest in improving that process and Livelink was part of that solution.”

Human Services utilizes Livelink for all their child support case management files. The case managers store all relevant information, from the intake of a support case to the time that the case is finalized. “It cuts down the amount of time needed to retrieve a document by allowing case workers to search, access and retrieve vital information stored in a central location quickly and efficiently,” says Schink. “One of the key benefits of storing information electronically is that the case workers can take their laptop to the court with a printer, and if the court asks for documentation, they can just print it out on the spot. Previously, they had to carry boxes of files with them to the court.”

In addition, with all case file information securely stored in the Livelink Web-based system, the Child Support Enforcement case managers always have immediate access to their documentation through a VPN connection, even from their home. So in the event of an emergency where they may have to intervene in a family issue, they can review the history of that child without delay.

Schink says they had great success implementing Livelink within the Human Services department even though when he first introduced the new system, “...the people were absolutely horrified by the idea that we might be taking their paper away. However, as soon as the case workers began to take advantage of the system they found that their paper work was reduced and they were able to get the file cabinets out of their offices almost immediately upon having a scanning team go in and scan all of their case work. At this point in the system’s life, there would be an absolute riot in the office if we tried to take Livelink away!”

Following the success in Human Services, other departments started looking at Livelink. “When you have a successful project of this magnitude, it’s much easier to overcome any misgivings,” says Hughes. “In addition to this implementation success, when we purchased Livelink in 2001, we had a visionary leading the IT department and he understood the needs of records management as well as the IT implications. He looked well beyond IT’s role in the county and looked long-term. I believe his vision in working with others to purchase Livelink and to give that first strategic strong-hold is why we bought Livelink and why we are where we are today. And, of course, having very strong, successful implementation projects to put up there as role models is the other main reason.”

Implementation Strategy

Today, Jefferson County is at varying degrees of deployment of Livelink. “We’re deploying projects as quickly as we can,” Hughes explains, “primarily based on the departments requesting to improve their use of

Livelink. We’re giving them advice and helping them to put together a plan. Our strategy for when a department should implement Livelink was to first get documents into the system that had high impact, such as the county policies and contracts. And one of the things that we do around contracts is the insurance validation. So those were the first three types of documents that we saved in Livelink: the county policies, contracts with outside vendors or inter-government contracts, and the insurance usage so we would know if we could work with a specific vendor or if they have not been approved.”

“Next, we went to work on core processes. So, for example, for Human Services we have multiple core processes within that organization that we’ve highlighted, child support being one of those major processes. Human resources, accounting, purchasing are three more examples of core businesses processes that we’re tackling to improve their usage of electronic documents. Our focus has always been, ‘if you’ve got an electronic record, move it into Livelink electronically.’ If it’s something that has to be scanned, we’ll use a scanning process. We also look at usage before we determine if we’re going to scan something or not. If it’s something that is used by multiple people collaboratively across different organizations, for example, we’re deploying some project spaces from the Board of County Commissioner or County Administrator level; they keep a lot of their major projects in Livelink. And then from there, we went to departments like the Building Safety, Planning & Zoning and Highway & Transportation, to see how we could deploy Livelink within their areas.”

“The targeting of Building Safety, Planning & Zoning, and Highway & Transportation was also governed by the fact that they are some of the greatest users of retrievals of the paper system,” says Schink. “So if we can get their documents scanned in, our retrievals go down and it really saves us a lot of time and we can then re-task people to scanning. We just developed a new scanning process for the accounting department and they are putting all of their invoices into Livelink. We’re hoping to be able to buy a solution through Open Text that will allow us to tie our JD Edwards system into those invoices, possibly as soon as next year.”

The county has also developed integration with a home grown system called eApplicant. When someone applies for a job at Jefferson County, they enter that information into an eApplicant form and eApplicant inputs their application and resume directly into Livelink. This is how the Human Resources department fills positions within the county.

The benefits are clear

Even though not all departments are utilizing Livelink RM yet, Schink is still able to point to several benefits for the county. “The return on the investment I think is becoming apparent,” he explains. “We’re reducing the amount of storage space that’s needed. We’re enhancing records management to automate the process of ensuring records are kept as long as legally required, and assuredly destroyed when that time

elapses. When a retention schedule is applied, final disposition can be made to destroy the object according to the schedule, retain it for legal holds, or keep it indefinitely if the document has permanent retention.”

“Human Resources is able to collaborate on documents that would have taken multiple drives to store because people would send a document to five people in an email and all five people would store it. So it reduces our disk space. Users have instantaneous access to documents and current documentation of personnel rules. The departments have access to records cumulative lists (Live Reports) to let them know their physical records are in storage with us, in addition to audit trails and the fact that we can have legal documents in Livelink. These are all benefits that allow us to get more work done with fewer people.”

Using Livelink, business practices in Archives & Records Management have become a lot more transparent, which is a great benefit. “We send the links out to people so they have instant access to everything that’s approved,” says Hughes, “everything that’s stored with us, any documentation that they need. We can give it to them in a matter of minutes, which is great.”

Looking ahead

The goal for Jefferson County is to continue to scan files into the electronic RM system. “We have approximately 1.8 million objects in Livelink and we scan in something in the neighborhood of 3,000 documents every workday,” says Schink. “We have a project right now to load some of the older building permits and scan in indexes from an outsource vendor, index books and aperture cards that we have on microfilm, which will generate approximately 200,000 documents just with this one project. We’re expecting to double our 1.8 million documents by the end of 2008, so we’ll have over three million documents in the system.”

An October, 2008 project for Jefferson County involves integrating Livelink to the permitting system so instead of the permitting system holding their documents the actual documents will reside in Livelink and it will be transparent to the end user.

The county has future plans to integrate with Time Matters®, a case management system, for the County Attorney’s office to capture content, store it and report and audit the documents, as well as assign records management to it.

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