

The Canada Council for the Arts

Improving the Effectiveness and Efficiency of Document and Records Access and Management

Business profile

Canada Council for the Arts

A governmental agency responsible for promoting the arts in Canada

Industry

Government

EMC Documentum Products

Documentum Records Manager

Deployment Summary

Deployed enterprise-wide to 90% of the 180+ employees

Benefits

- Enterprise-wide implementation of records management
- Increased productivity by over 800% in one department with more efficiency gains in other areas as well
- Return on investment estimated at 265% with a payback in a little over a year
- Average annual savings projected at \$325,000 with annual benefits per user at over \$2,500

Business overview

The Canada Council for the Arts is a national arm's-length agency created by an Act of Parliament in 1957. The role of the Council is to foster and promote the study and enjoyment and production of works in the arts. To fulfill this mandate, the Council offers a broad range of grants and services to professional Canadian artists and arts organizations in dance, interdisciplinary and performance art, media arts, music, theatre, visual arts, and writing and publishing. The Council administers the Killam Program of scholarly awards and numerous endowments and prizes.

The Canada Council for the Arts reports to Parliament through the Minister of Canadian Heritage. Its annual appropriation from Parliament is supplemented by endowment income, donations, and bequests. Its accounts are audited by the Auditor General of Canada and included in an Annual Report to Parliament. In 2000 to 2001, the Council awarded 5,700 grants to artists and arts organizations and through the Public Lending Right Commission made payments to 12,740 registered authors. Grants, payments and awards totaled \$117 million.

The Council installed EMC Documentum® Records Manager, formerly TrueArc Foremost Enterprise, to help manage its records and library system more efficiently and effectively. This case study describes the Council's reasons for selecting Documentum Records Manager, the organization's implementation experience and the significant and measurable benefits it has derived since installing the product.

Challenges

The Council receives a majority of its funding from the Canadian government and is, therefore, accountable to both the public and the government as to how funds are spent or allocated. This requires that documents showing proof of the allocation and distribution of funds have to be well maintained and easily located. Grant files are vital to the operations of the Council since they illustrate how the Council makes grant decisions. Financial records are also essential for annual reporting to the government. These essential documents along with executive board documentation, annual reports, and other records need to be accessed in a timely and cost-effective manner. This was proving to be a significant challenge for the Council.

The Council's previous records management system had been created and developed in-house on a very limited database platform. Its original purpose was to track the locations of archived paper files, and even doing that was becoming almost impossible. Because files were only tracked in bulk and not necessarily at the specific record level, the Council's records managers sometimes had no idea where a specific file was located, making file access very time consuming. In addition, the database's insufficient capabilities limited the amount of information that could be entered into the system. This caused the Council's records managers to memorize the entire records classification system because look-ups could not be supported.

Electronic documents were not being captured except to print and then file the paper document. This meant that access to key organizational records, if filed with the Art Services Unit, was difficult, resulting in a bottleneck in trying to retrieve or locate records. According to Michelle Chawla, head of the Arts Services Unit of the Council, which provides the records management services for the organization, “People didn’t want to give records to the department because they were afraid they wouldn’t get the information back.”

To complicate things even more, from 1994 to 1996 the Council had downsized its staff by about 50%, bringing the records management staff down to two people. The workload for records management services dramatically increased as this group received hundreds of boxes of documents from other offices that were also downsized. At the same time, the unit inherited the corporate library, which consisted of a mass of uncataloged information.

Those issues together with the fact that there was no formal records management policy in place, and the fact that the system the Council did have was not Y2K compliant, spoke to the need for a new process and new system.



“The Canada Council for the Arts now has an effective record-keeping system that meets our needs in both the paper and electronic environments. Employees are experiencing the advantages of filing their information and using the new file plan. Every day we are saving time and energy that used to be spent looking for documents. Our improved records environment allows not only the records center staff but the entire organization to do their jobs better and more efficiently than ever before.”

Michelle Chawla, Head Art Services Unit, Canada Council for the Arts

Strategy

Before any discussions about products and vendors could take place, the Arts Services Unit needed to create an internal awareness campaign to educate everyone on the impact that the lack of access to all this information was having on the organization. The value of the records, the organization of those records, and the access to those records needed to be defined at an enterprise-wide level. The Arts Services Unit identified the personnel costs associated with the inefficient business practices, the potential time and productivity savings that could accrue if the practices were changed, and the potential on-site and off-site storage cost reductions if a new system was installed.

Additionally, the overall strategy was to decentralize the management of records and information at the Council. This meant that all staff would be able to file their own documents (which was the most effective way of filing since they would know where a file should go). But even more importantly, staff would be able to search the system to find any documents they were looking for. This involved a big cultural change within the Council; some areas of the organization adapted immediately while other areas required more convincing before they came on board.

Once the different parts of the Council bought in to the idea of changing how records were managed, and the productivity benefits were sold to upper management within the Council, the organization could then evaluate what products it should use. A committee was set up to review the alternatives, and the feature/function checklist was extensive; therefore, anything selected had to be functionally rich. Other key factors for selection were cost, the ability to migrate legacy information to the new system, the ability to integrate with the Council's installed finance system, and the ability to support library management.

The selected vendor would also have to interface with the Council's Arts Tracking System (ATS), an in-house developed system based on a Microsoft SQL Server database, which only managed grant-processing information. In addition, it was very important that the records management system be able to function within a variety of applications and have files viewed in their native format including Microsoft Office documents, Adobe Acrobat PDF files, photos in GIF or JPEG format, and other file formats.

After evaluating a variety of different products and testing some of them, the Canada Council for the Arts chose TrueArc ForeMost Enterprise, now Documentum Records Manager. In addition to the product's records management features, the Council was impressed with the fact that it could support the Council's library management requirements and was flexible enough to be integrated with its finance and ATS systems.

Solution

The productivity benefits of using Documentum Records Manager and changing its own business practices have been real and measurable to the Council.

For example, the Arts Services Unit has been responsible for managing accounts payable records that eventually must be provided to the Auditor General of the Canadian government as requested. In the past the process for managing these records included keying in client names in the outdated file system, actually filing the records, and then shelving them. This process used to account for about eight days of effort per month and with the implementation of Documentum Records Manager it has been reduced to a half day per month. This translates to a productivity improvement of over 800% for handling accounts payable records, and that is just in one area of the organization.

The Arts Services Unit is also responsible for managing about 120,000 grant files that must be held for eight years. After eight years these grant files become property of the National Archives of Canada. Each year the Unit lists, boxes, and ships approximately 20,000 grant files to the National Archives. In addition, it was difficult for Council staff to understand the disposition of grant records without submitting research requests that resulted in time-consuming searches for records. As a result of implementing Documentum Records Manager, research time has gone from days to seconds. Adding together both the grant files management and accounts payables files management, improvements amount to approximately \$16,000 per year in person savings in addition to the productivity savings in getting work accomplished more efficiently.

Other areas where the organization has benefited from the Documentum Records Manager installation include mail administration, which saves about two hours a day by automating scanning and filing its own mail; backlogs, which have been diminished in several departments; and inventory of paper-laden boxes, which has been reduced.

Arts Services estimated that its previous paper filing activities would take about five minutes per document, processing about 12 documents per hour. Now users file their own documents in less than 15 seconds with a throughput of about 240 documents per hour. Research time has significantly diminished throughout the entire organization. Other benefits identified:

- After digitizing some of the Council's holdings, the quality of the information holdings has improved dramatically and accessibility has also improved.
- In addition to managing paper documents more effectively, many different types of electronic documents are managed as part of the enterprise repository.
- The back-up and recovery features and processes of Documentum Records Manager have given the Canada Council for the Arts disaster recovery capabilities that it did not have before.
- Documentum Records Manager provides a heightened level of security to ensure that only authorized users can access information. The product also provides audit functionality with log tracing and retrieval.
- The Council has gained an ability to accurately track and locate information, both physical and electronic.

As the use of Documentum Records Manager increases, the cost of files, paper, and printing will decrease over time, eventually decreasing paper box storage resulting in the use of less real estate and a future reduction in overall real estate costs. In addition, the National Archives of Canada is considering moving to a chargeback system for storage space when records are forwarded to them. The use of automated records should serve to reduce the impact of this potential charge.

Documentum Records Manager allowed the Canada Council of the Arts to move its library holdings from a manual tracking system (with virtually no record of its holdings) to an automated tracking system. Holdings are now entered into the system and barcoded, allowing Arts Services to sign out materials in seconds and providing a complete listing of reference materials to the Council's staff.

Of course, the overall success of a system can also be measured by its impact on the daily work habits of the entire enterprise. This is the case with the Canada Council for the Arts' Documentum Records Manager installation. During a major conversion effort after the system had been installed for several months, the it had to be taken down for about two weeks. Most of the organization's staff were very anxious for the system to return to normal because it had become such an integral part of their work day, even those that had originally balked at the idea of having to file their own documents.



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Customer Profile
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Future

Even though Documentum Records Manager is now used by almost 90% of the Canada Council for the Arts staff, the Arts Services Unit is always looking for ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of document and records access and management. The Council plans on leveraging new Documentum features for auto-filing and auto-categorization of records and documents, and it is confident that the present system will be able to support Canada Council for the Arts for many years to come.