

Digital Archiving Promotes Sustainability and Improved Service Delivery for the London Borough of Islington

Islington is one of London's inner-city boroughs and an area of significant social contrast, where some 55% of the population lives in council housing alongside wealthy owner-occupiers in houses worth several million pounds. To help bridge the digital divide, Islington has installed wireless access to the Internet and is piloting its own digital TV service so that local people will be able to access council services from their homes, using their TV.

The Challenge

Meeting the challenge of online service delivery requires a different way of working. The council's IT and technology department, Technology Solutions Group (TSG), has led the way in organisational change, with several projects aimed at maximising existing resources and improving services, as well as creating a more dynamic, smarter, and more flexible working environment for staff.

TSG calculated that the council could achieve significant savings by reducing its office footprint. At a conservative estimate, it costs about £6000 per annum

to maintain a single desk space in this part of London, money that could be better spent on front-line services.

By introducing wireless network access, plus flexible working with hot desking and people working at home or on the move, TSG has successfully doubled its number of employees working in the same space over the past three years. Currently, the group has 110 people based in office space previously occupied by 65.

Why Xerox and DocuShare?

Dependence on paper documents was a challenge to change. People couldn't easily work from home because they needed access to centrally-held paper files. And bulky paper files took up expensive office space.

The council decided to pilot and test a paper-free model of working. It chose Xerox's Web-based enterprise content management (ECM) software, DocuShare, which was installed and is managed by the council's long-standing outsourcing partner, Xerox Global Services. The council also replaced individual desktop printers with Xerox WorkCentre 255 and 3545 multifunction devices (MFDs), which can copy, print, and scan.

The first phase of the DocuShare installation was piloted in the council's Student Support Services department, and involved scanning and archiving 350,000 pages, which can now be searched online and accessed by staff.

By summer 2007, DocuShare servers were holding about 1.2 million

Content management and digital archiving are helping Islington Council in London to implement online service delivery and improve social inclusion. The application of paperless working has financial, environmental, and social benefits for the local community.



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documents ranging from single-page letters to 100-page leases. Stored documents include:

- Indexes to birth, marriage, and deaths registers
- Parking appeals
- Property archives
- Tenancy files
- Contract documents
- Buildings archive files
- Council tax files

Electronic and paper files are loaded daily, directly from the user's desktop via central scanning through local MFDs. The council expects to have 500 active DocuShare users by the end of 2007.

About London Borough of Islington

Headquarters: London, UK

Industry: Local government/
public administration

Applications: Content management; digital archiving and retrieval; flexible, paper-free working

Summary: Islington Council is a 'technology beacon' in the UK public sector, committed to using IT for advanced service delivery to residents and to create a cleaner, greener environment. It has chosen Xerox's DocuShare content management system to reduce its use of paper, cut costs, and improve customer service.

Rapid Response to 'Freedom of Information' Requests

It is vital for the council to be able to locate and retrieve information quickly and efficiently because it needs to comply with the UK's Freedom of Information Act. This Act came into force on 1 January 2005 and gives anyone the legal right to ask for and be given any information that is held by a public authority. Public authorities must comply with the request and provide the information within 20 working days.

TSG staff are encouraged to scan documents for storage into DocuShare and to retrieve them electronically using DocuShare's powerful search facility. Rapid online retrieval has significantly sped up service to members of the public who request documents under the Freedom of Information Act, with response times greatly reduced—in some cases from weeks to days.

For example, DocuShare stores copies of property leases, which are freely accessed by several different departments. Previously, in response to a request, someone would need to photocopy the original lease and send it manually to the requesting department. This process routinely took about three weeks. Using DocuShare, it now takes about 30 seconds to retrieve the required lease.

Homes for Islington Digitally Archives Leases to Improve Property Management



improving housing through partnership

Homes for Islington (HFI) is the arms length management organisation (ALMO) that manages Islington Council's rented and leasehold housing stock. It is one of the largest ALMOs in the UK and, together with its partners, manages nearly 40,000 properties within the borough.

HFI and its partner agencies keep an individual file on all 40,000 tenants and leaseholders. These are large and bulky paper files, some occupying a metre of shelf space. Problems would arise when a tenant was linked with two properties and, of course, if a file went missing.

Initially, HFI trialed electronic document management within its estate parking and housing investigation operations. Satisfied with the results, it has now moved on to apply electronic storage and retrieval to the core of its business.

Using DocuShare, HFI created an electronic archive for key documents from its tenant files. Electronic storage makes it easier for HFI staff to link

tenants and properties and also to access the same document simultaneously.

About half the 10,000 leasehold properties have been bought on the open market by professional people who represent a very different client group from the traditional council housing tenant. The council retains the lease of the property and can levy charges according to the lease for maintenance and other services. It is critical that HFI can access the specific details of an individual lease so that it can correctly apportion costs and deal with any queries from the leaseholder.

The leases are original legal documents and need to be securely stored, yet accessible. Currently, they are kept in the council's vaults and, in practice, access is difficult. So HFI's next big step was to scan all its 10,000 leases into DocuShare. The original documents will remain in storage, as required legally, but the HFI team, its partners, and council departments now have easy, fast access to all 10,000 leases electronically. Says Doug Goldring, director of operations for Homes for Islington, "It obviously creates a problem if a paper file is mislaid. Electronic access gives us and our leaseholders rapid access to information without compromising

the physical security of the original document."

HFI also plans to create an electronic repository with one folder for each property in DocuShare. "This is a long-term project for us and we will start by scanning new documents as they are created or received. It will be a long time before we destroy the old files—they can be 40 years old and we need them in case of dispute—but as it is always the most recent documents that are most in demand, we expect the benefits of electronic availability to come through very quickly."

In the long term, Doug Goldring envisions a totally automated document workflow system, where documents are scanned into DocuShare, categorised and automatically routed to the relevant HFI team or employee for action.

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— Doug Goldring
Director of Operations
Homes for Islington

The Results: Financial, Environmental, and Social Benefits

Using DocuShare, the Islington Council has successfully created a model for smart, paperless working that can now be rolled out into any of its ten departments, and which delivers measurable financial, environmental, and social benefits.

▪ Financial benefits

Paper-free working has already saved the council hundreds of thousands of pounds and removed vast quantities of paper from its operations.

It estimates that using digital archiving for 250,000 pages will save 12 square metres of space costing £2,400 annually. And when documents are printed out, it costs just 1p per page on an MFD compared with 11p on a personal printer. These efficiencies helped the council to save £8 million in 2007 and consequently residents of Islington pay one of the lowest council taxes in London (source: <http://www.islington.gov.uk/Council/CouncilNews/PressOffice/2007/02/2867.asp>).

The ability to work on the same file at the same time is improving efficiency and decision making within council teams. It also allows easier consolidation of teams and further streamlining of working procedures in the pursuit of superior service delivery. And there is

now zero risk of misfiling, losing, or accidentally destroying scanned files, with backup and business continuity protocols in place.

▪ Environmental benefits

Digital archiving also has big benefits for the environment, by significantly reducing the council's printed output and saving paper and energy. Home-based workers also reduce traffic congestion and pollution, helping the council achieve its objectives for a greener Islington.

▪ Social benefits

The opportunities created by paper-free working also deliver visible social benefits for the local community. According to the council, more flexible working patterns supported by electronic document management will create new jobs for local people, especially those individuals who, for various reasons, are not able to work in an office; they can now be recruited, trained, and equipped to work from home.

A further social benefit from digital filing is that council employees can be more mobile and spend more time in the community, handling live issues and dealing with people face to face.

The council also envisions building closer relationships with its residents and local businesses, by providing public, login-secured Web access to advanced document management services over the Internet via the wireless network.

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The Future—Smart Working Delivering Sustainable Improvements in Services

The council is now set to become one of the UK's most significant users of DocuShare, as it rolls out document conversion across its ten departments. The long-term vision is that the vast majority of documents stored by the council will be converted into searchable, digital documents, enabling smart working in all departments and sustainable improvements in customer services. And with a digital archive of historic documents from across the council, easily accessed from anywhere in Islington over wireless IP network, Islington Council will be able to set even higher standards of performance and create new and innovative services for its residents.

About Xerox DocuShare

Xerox DocuShare, a highly intuitive and secure Enterprise Content Management (ECM) application, enables users in document-intensive organizations to dynamically capture, manage, retrieve, and distribute information, regardless of skill level or location. DocuShare customers can significantly improve

productivity, streamline business processes, and reduce the time and cost of managing routine business documents and information. Leading the industry in speed of deployment and ease of administration and use, DocuShare significantly reduces installation cost and complexity by leveraging

an organization's existing infrastructure and offering near-pushbutton installation. Tightly integrated with Xerox multifunction devices, DocuShare can manage both hard copy and electronic content with unsurpassed ease and convenience.

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