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No more paper-file headaches in this Bucks County, Pa., office

With more than 16,000 open cases on its books, the Domestic Relations Office of Bucks County, Pa., is responsible for a lot of important documents and reports. What's more, some of those 16,000 open cases can remain active for as long as 18 years. The county's new centralized digital document storage and management system is designed to help ensure that those documents are safely stored and available when needed.
By Michael Keating

The system, which cost $235,000, is capable of maintaining tens of millions of records, and will replace the business process of maintaining hard-copy files. The system will enable authorized Bucks County staff to easily access and manage Microsoft Office documents, e-mails, scanned images and other information previously available only in hard-copy format.

The Bucks County Domestic Relations Office assists the public to establish court-ordered child and spousal support obligations. The office also administers, collects and enforces court orders once they are established. In 2006, the Domestic Relations Office collected more than $81 million in revenue for the county.

Quality Associates Inc. of Fulton, Md., recently completed installation of the document storage system at the Bucks County offices.

"Across the United States, county governments are being challenged with organizing and accessing all kinds of print and electronic records," said Scott Swidersky, director of Quality Associates' Information Systems Division. "County domestic relations offices are specifically challenged because they are tasked with managing what typically amounts to millions of hard-copy pages, e-mails and computer files related to thousands of distinct cases. These files must be accurately and appropriately tracked from the time they are initially filed and docketed, all the way to the court hearing, and ultimately through caseworker assignment. Potentially dozens of county employees can be involved in a single case, which clearly demonstrates the need for an advanced digital content and document management solution."

Quality Associates was founded in 1986, and is a General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Service (FSS) contractor. The company works with all levels of government.

Located midway between New York City and Philadelphia, Bucks County's population in 2006 was 623,205.

Records management resources for governments

Administrators planning a major records management project should consider contacting ARMA International, which is a not-for-profit professional association and the authority on managing paper and electronic records and information.

"There are a few ways we might be able to be a resource to your government readers," Cyndy Launchbaugh, ARMA International director of marketing and brand integration, told *GovPro.com*. "First and foremost, as a not-for-profit professional association, we develop and publish numerous standards, guidelines, books and articles on the many facets of managing records and information in various media. In addition, we offer a number of Web seminars and other educational events throughout the year. We also have a print and online buyer's guide, which includes a consultant category, to help individuals and organizations locate vendors of various products and services. We do not provide consulting services as an organization, but many of our members are consultants."

Established in 1955, ARMA International's 11,000 members include records managers, archivists, corporate librarians, imaging specialists, legal professionals, IT managers, consultants and educators, who work in the United States and 30 other countries.

Another resource that government administrators might want to explore is the National Association of Counties (NACO), which offers services to the 3,066 counties in the United States. Go to the Information Technology section of the NACO Web site for useful papers and reports on a variety of IT and records management issues.

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