

“The main advantage of storing our documents with WRM is ease of access. All documents are catalogued and on the system so we can just quote a barcode and the box is sent back to us.”

Madeline Moore,  
Deputy Chief Clerk,  
The Courts Service - Ireland.



**CLIENT:** The Courts Service was established as an independent corporate organisation in 1999. Its key functions are to provide support services to judges, public information, maintenance of court buildings and user facilities within the courts.

**CHALLENGE:** To ensure all documents relevant to either the Courts Service or its customers are properly stored and, more importantly, easily and quickly accessible when requested.

**SOLUTION:** Wincanton Records Management in Ireland has stored over 11,000 archive boxes for departments across the courts service since 2001.

**INTRODUCTION:** As a public body, it is crucial that the Courts Service provides the highest possible levels of service and response times, particularly as the situations in which their customers find themselves can often be stressful.

Legislation dictates that all legal documents must be kept in archives for the entirety of their lives. While some areas of the courts system are becoming more computerised, such as family and civil law, many are still heavily paper-based. The Courts Service is responsible for these documents for the first 30 years before they are passed to the National Archives.

All files predating computerisation have to be kept. At any point in the future someone can request a specific document, and it has to be available.

## Challenge

While it is imperative to retain important paper documents – such as civil judgements and small claim files – storage and cataloguing space was at a premium, with documents stored across seven different Dublin locations, all without a cohesive filing and cataloguing system.

This created a number of issues. Firstly, the documents were not being kept in conditions conducive to long-term document storage – over time this would have led to their significant deterioration and eventual destruction. Secondly, because detailed file cataloguing wasn't being undertaken, staff didn't know precisely where specific documents were – leading to delays in finding them as well as poor use of staff resources.

Changes of staff also meant that it was difficult to keep track of particular records. Madeline Moore, the Courts Service's deputy chief clerk, says, "Staff may have had to search two or three sites to find a particular file – sometimes taking up to two weeks to do so."

## Solution

It was decided in January 2007 to take the files from their locations, catalogue and box them before sending them offsite. Wincanton Records Management had worked with the Courts Service for a number of years and was selected as preferred supplier for this project.

It was a big task as multiple types of document were stored across Dublin. Each had to be sorted, boxed, bar-coded and catalogued before being transported to WRM's state-of-the-art records centre in Dublin.

The process itself involved visits to four key sites to assess:

- The condition of each record
- The cataloguing of records
- Best storage medium for records
- Access to the current storage areas

## Results

In total the process took four months and used over 2,000 boxes, all of which are now fully catalogued and stored at WRM's Dublin records centre. At any one time, WRM has two librarians on site, processing the records and getting them ready for storage. With the backlog of Courts Service records now off-site, packing and cataloguing is undertaken on an ongoing basis. When a request is made, rather than having to dispatch a colleague to look for a file, managers can request a specific box, quoting a barcode.

Madeline Moore says: "The main advantage of storing our documents with Wincanton Records Management is ease of access. We can just quote a barcode and the box is sent back to us. If we request a box before 3pm we get it the next morning. Then we simply photocopy it and arrange for the box to be collected.

"Not only does this save time, it allows staff to offer a far greater level of service. When a customer asks for a particular document, it can be sent out in days. Previously this may have taken weeks."

In addition to cost and labour savings, the space reclaimed by sending records off-site is being used for better staff and court facilities, more consultation rooms and judges' facilities.

The Courts Service exists to serve the public, and this project allows its staff to provide their service even better than before.

For further information and evidence of our capabilities, please contact:

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