

# Probate Office of Shelby County, Alabama

The **IN**side Story

*Ever since many employees could remember, the Shelby County (AL) Probate Office utilized a document imaging system to record and access deeds, mortgages and other land- and property use documents. With the current manufacturer no longer in business, parts and service became harder and harder to obtain. In the summer of 2001, Shelby County's Deputy Clerk and Chief Clerk began to work with county management as part of their search for a new solution offering streamlined records acquisition and safe backup.*

Along with creating a digital archiving strategy for the Probate Office, Shelby County wanted to develop a recording and management strategy for all county records. Their old, almost-outmoded system involved a great deal of manual labor. Documents were scanned and stored on PCs, and a second process saw the same documents microfilmed. The amount of time and money devoted to both processes was excessive and detracted from productivity. And there were workflow issues – re-filming of problem images that were skewed, of poor quality, upside down, etc., plus the difficulty of organizing all related documents onto a single roll of film. This created indexing nightmares and made the retrieval process more cumbersome.

UNISYS was selected as the primary contractor – and they enlisted the expertise of AmCad, LLC, an independent consulting and development firm headquartered in Reston, VA – to develop Reference Archiving capacities. AmCad's expertise in geographic and land information systems has allowed them to work with scores of city, county, state and national governments to improve the way they deliver information and services to the

public and preserve valuable documents. The first challenge was to address the concerns of the Probate Office, responsible for maintaining records in perpetuity and providing a backup copy on microfilm, as required by law. "We need to preserve over 300 different types of documents," says the Deputy Clerk. "These include deeds, titles, mortgages, liens, releases, judgements, incorporations and a slew more."



Kodak Document Archive Writer

AmCad proposed a solution featuring a Kodak Document Archive Writer (DAW) and their Land Information System (LIS). LIS, a fully integrated land records management application – including cashiering, indexing, scanning, workflow management, Internet access, system administration and management reporting capabilities – was utilized to help automate all aspects of the Recorder's Office.

The Kodak Document Archive Writer fit perfectly into the solution, creating film images from scanned documents and eliminating the previous duplication of effort, while safekeeping records on Archive Storage Media from Kodak. And now – in contrast to the old microfilm camera operation – misfeeds, overlaps, bad exposures, and related-

## Situation

*Old recording system no longer supported, as manufacturer ceases to operate and parts/service become increasingly difficult to locate; need for secure backup of critical documents.*

## Objective

*Create a Reference Archive system based on microfilm to safeguard documents, as part of a modernized document imaging and management solution.*

## Solution

**Kodak Digital Science Document Archive Writer, solution development and Land Information Software from AmCad, LLC, via their Birmingham, AL office.**

## Comments

*"The Document Archive Writer does a beautiful job of logically ordering and indexing our documents ... We can now group images in an intelligent manner and at the end of the day let the DAW convert them to microfilm ... This whole solution has just made it much easier and more efficient for us to record, verify and safeguard all our documents."*

*~ Deputy Clerk,  
Shelby County*

document confusion are no longer problems. "The Document Archive Writer does a beautiful job of logically ordering and indexing our documents," notes the Deputy Clerk. "We can now group images in an intelligent manner and at the end of the day let the DAW convert them to microfilm. And the protection of everything on a media that lasts a very long time and offers instant access, if it's ever needed, provides a good feeling of security."

While the Probate Office was the first step in the process, other Shelby County records are now being prepared for similar safeguarding via solutions developed by AmCad that feature *Kodak* Document Archive Writers.

Shelby County's Clerk voices her satisfaction noting, "The Document Archive Writer is a big part of a much more efficient system for us. It performs exactly as advertised. We've been able to handle increased volumes of documents with no

increase in staff or overtime. The quality of the film is very good, and we're very satisfied with the Writer and AmCad's attention and service. I'd say productivity and speed are the things we appreciate the most. We haven't yet had to utilize the film for any emergency, thankfully, but Montgomery [state offices] – where they archive the history – reports that the film quality is exceptional. This whole solution has just made it much easier and more efficient for us to record, verify and safeguard all our documents."



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