



— Special Edition —

Update from Intersect Systems

Software Systems for Records Management

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Intersect: a CISV Vendor in Texas



RCAMS Image Management

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Image Management

This special issue of *Update*, our periodic information resource for current users of Intersect records management software, is the result of questions and requests for information from a number of users of Intersect software who are evaluating imaging systems, and who are looking at various compatibility and implementation issues. These evaluations have typically concerned such areas as systems compatibility and long-term access, licensing considerations, compatibility with records control schedules, and other aspects of planning for, implementing, and managing electronic imaging systems.

Let us emphasize that the sections of the *Texas Local Government Code* and the *Texas Administrative Code* referring to records control schedules, records management, and electronic records standards and procedures, are essential resources for any local government or state agency when evaluating electronic imaging systems and planning for their use. These should be the primary, authoritative resources for information about planning and implementing an electronic records system that complies with state requirements.

Our comments, observations, and suggestions in this article are intended to provide some additional insights and suggest some practical considerations based on our experience in this area with respect to system compatibility, long term requirements for image accessibility and maintenance, integration with records databases, and the process of indexing and maintaining electronic images over the long term.

Recent Announcement

In early 2004, Intersect Systems Inc. announced an Image Management system supporting electronic image indexing and access to electronic images through Intersect's records database, and through the Accession remote access system.

Intersect's retention and records management software applications provide a *single integrated software suite* that allows a Texas Local Government or Texas State Agency to:

1. Create, edit, maintain, and publish a records control schedule (in print, electronically, or on an intranet site) using electronic versions of the retention schedules published by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, State and Local Records Management Division;
2. Use the Intersect's records database system to maintain an organization's records in accordance with the control schedule created, including locating records, checking records out and in, and processing records disposals in accordance with the control schedule;
3. Incorporate microfilm information and electronic images in the records database, thereby extending the control schedule and the records management functions to these records in addition to paper records;
4. Apply convenient workflow functions to the overall records management process through departmental accession and transmittal components provided with Intersect's records management software.

Development Based on Information from Texas Local Governments and State Agencies

As has been Intersect's practice throughout its eleven-year history as a developer of records management software, we have relied heavily on information from our users about their needs from an imaging system in the design and development of our Image Management software. We will base future additions and enhancements to the image management system on suggestions and recommendations from our users, as well.

In a special introductory program for the new electronic image management component, Intersect Systems is providing the Image Management software to current users of Intersect *Plus* and *Master* versions of its records management software with no extra license fee as part of the existing one-time, paid-up license for those local governments and state agencies that have current paid-up Annual Support Programs in place with Intersect. In addition, Intersect is currently providing the

Image Management (Cont.)

Image Management software for Plus and Master versions of our records management software to new users with no additional license fee. In early 2006, the Image Management component will be licensed separately as a third software module along with the RSM (retention schedule manager) and RCAMS (records database) components.

It should be noted that Intersect does not sell scanners or scanning utility software since there are many systems available from numerous sources that provide these functions, nor does Intersect provide digital imaging services. Intersect's focus has been on methods for convenient indexing of images, image access, and management of imaged documents within Intersect's records management system. This approach allows management of imaged documents, along with paper and microfilm, in accordance the central records control schedule, extending the retention component, accession, disposal processing, and workflow functions of the system to electronic images.

Research and Planning

Intersect began researching image management needs for Texas Local Governments and State Agencies in the Summer of 2003. Although we have attended numerous conferences and seminars on electronic records, we have relied primarily on information provided by records managers for several Texas Local Governments and State Agencies in identifying needs and areas of interest for electronic document imaging specific to these areas.

We note that a number of Local Governments have acquired "back door" imaging systems (in the words of one records manager) — that is, imaging systems purchased by individual departments or by information technology departments without the involvement of the records management officer. As a result, there are concerns that a number of these systems are being used without attention to or awareness of the Texas requirements regarding retention and destruction of electronic records, maintenance of electronic records storage media, and data migration requirements. In two instances we noted two or more such systems in use apart from a Local Government's formal records management program.

We have also noted some unrealistic expectations with respect to electronic document imaging. With surprising frequency, we've found expectations that all of an organization's paper records should be, or will eventually be, converted to electronic documents — indicating a lack of understanding not only of the cost for initial scanning and indexing of paper documents, but also of the long term costs involved in periodic testing and re-copying of storage media, migration requirements, and technology updates to insure access and usability of electronic records throughout their retention periods.

A Local Government that is considering adding an electronic imaging component to their records program should first carefully research the Texas electronic records standards for Local Governments. Documents that could reasonably be converted to electronic records should be identified based on such factors as frequency of access, retention requirements, retrieval time requirements, and the actual costs involved, including not only the cost of scanning and indexing, but also costs associated with the required commitment to media maintenance, technology upgrades, and migration.

Scanning and Indexing Images – A Major Investment

Scanner hardware can be expensive, and various imaging software systems even more so. But the major investment for any organization that implements an electronic imaging system will be the person-hours invested over a period of time in scanning and indexing documents. Therefore, it is important that the investment made in scanning and indexing images be preserved.

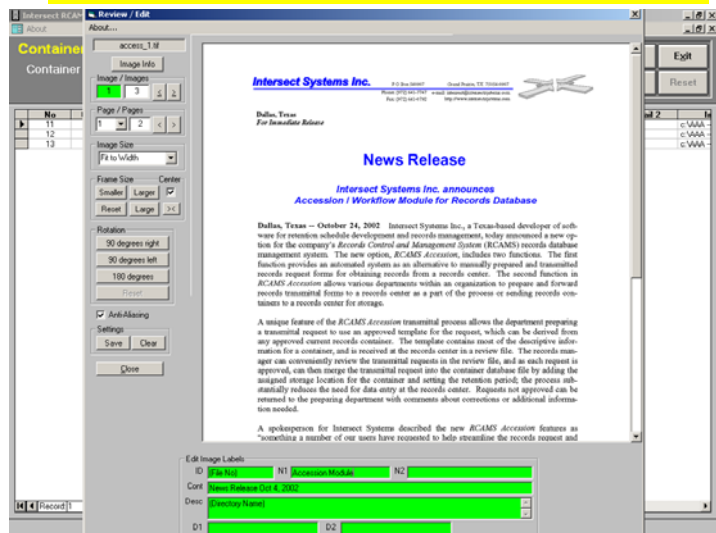
Consider that scanner hardware will periodically become obsolete, or wear out, and need to be replaced. Likewise, any software applications used for scanning and indexing images will need to be periodically upgraded as updates are available, and as computer hardware and operating systems are upgraded or replaced. You may want to change hardware or software vendors in the future as well, depending on price, performance, and other factors.

Don't Get Locked In to a Proprietary System

When it is appropriate to make any change in scanning and image management software, your multi-year investment in scanning and indexing documents *should be accessible and transferable to another system*. Neither your license for any imaging system, nor proprietary file or software considerations associated with a software application, should prevent your organization from access to scanned images and the index file or files that you have created.

How can you insure such transportability or compatibility of your scanning and indexing investment? There are at least three considerations:

1. Your license to the software should specifically provide that the electronic images you create in the scanning process, and the indexing information that is generated through use of the software, are the property of your organization, and should not restrict your access to these images or files. Further, if your license is not a "paid up" license, but requires an annual license renewal for continued use, and you should decide at a future date to terminate the license **and switch to another system, the images and index files you have created using the system should remain the property of your organization, and *should be readily exportable***



Intersect's Image Management indexing utility display. The green fields provide auto-fill options and user-set tab stops to facilitate indexing.

Image Management (Cont.)

or separable from the licensed software. If in doubt, ask the vendor to demonstrate this capability for you. You would not want to have to re-scan and re-index several years' worth of documents as a condition of switching to another software application at a future date.

- The images you create when scanning documents *should not be imbedded in any database or file system, proprietary or otherwise.* A number of database and file manager systems allow the user to imbed, or actually incorporate or merge, an image into the database file. This sometimes sounds attractive, since a single database incorporates all text and numeric information as well as the images themselves. The database is self-contained, and if you want to copy it, or move it to another location on a network file server, you can copy or move everything by copying or moving one file. However, even if only a few images are included initially, most imaging projects grow over a long period of time; most will eventually involve many hundreds or thousands of images. The result with imbedded images will be huge database files that impose substantial requirements on any networking system to access, becoming almost unmanageable over a period of time.

Imbedding images in a database brings with it another liability. If at a future date you want to extract the images, or copies of the images, and switch to a more efficient and manageable image structure, the process of un-imbedding thousands of images may not be easily accomplished. In one recent experience, the only workable approach that could be identified was to copy or export each image individually – a monumental task.

- A preferred alternative to imbedding images in any database or file system is to organize and group the images in a folder / sub-folder structure that reflects logical groupings by departments, document categories, and retention requirements. Using this approach, as you scan documents, you organize the images into folders and multiple sub-folders, with appropriate naming conventions, and give individual images descriptive file names or descriptive names in an index file. An example might be a folder labeled "Accounting," with a sub-folder named "Vouchers." The Vouchers sub-folder might contain a sub-folder for each year, into which the images of vouchers for that year would be placed. An example: *Accounting/Vouchers/1999*, where the 1999 folder would contain all of the voucher images for 1999. Vouchers for 2000 would be in another sub-folder under Vouchers labeled 2000 – *Accounting/Vouchers/2000* – and so on.

With the image organization and folder structure described in (3), locating and displaying or printing images is accomplished through references or clickable links to individual images from the central records database. Each reference or link points to the actual image location (think of a link as an "address" containing the location of the image), which can be located anywhere on a Local Area Network server resource. The records database, which incorporates additional text-based information about each image such as retention period, department / owner, state record series title and item number, etc., includes the link

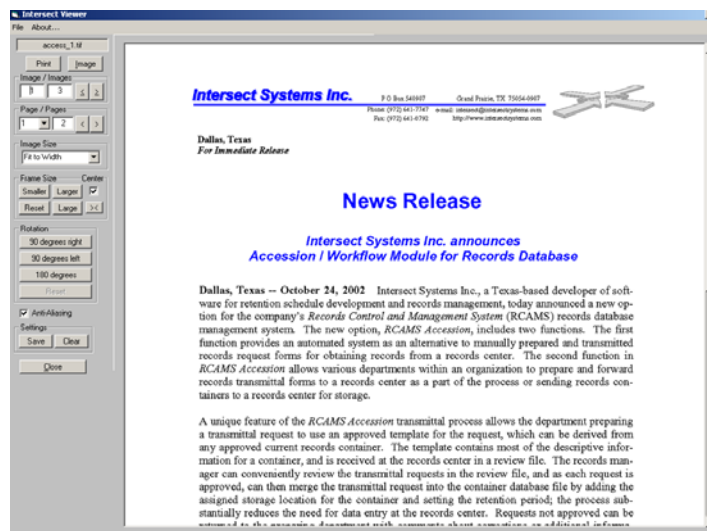
to each image in the image folder / sub-folder system. With this structure, adding image links to the records database increases the database size minimally, even for several thousands of images.

The image organization described in (3) also has the advantage that it is compatible with the way computer systems organize file and directory structures. The Microsoft® Windows operating system includes Windows File Manager, which provides a drag-and-drop capability for creating and arranging files into this type of folder / sub-folder structure. Other file managers provide similar capabilities, and many scanning hardware systems include software that allows scanning of images directly into folders that the user specifies, and are compatible with the image organization described in (3).

The image folder / sub-folder structure has the further advantage that you can add to, or change, the structure with an appropriate file manager. You may want to add folders and sub-folders at a future time, or split an existing folder into two or more folders. Or it might be necessary at some future date to move your image folders, or a portion of them, to another server on your organization's network system. An appropriate file manager makes it easy to make such changes in the image structure.

But what happens to the links in the records database that point to the folders, sub-folders, and images that have been moved? When you reorganize folders containing images, or move folders to another location, the links to the images in the records database must also be changed to reflect the changed locations of the folders and images – and it could be a monumental task to have to change each image link or address individually. To accommodate such changes, the records management system *should include a global change or edit capability* – that is, the records management system should allow the user to select a group of images that have been re-located, and change the location links for the group in one operation.

We hope that these comments and observations will help you in reviewing image management systems, and in planning and preparing for an image management application. While not comprehensive, they represent some of our recent experiences in this area as we have introduced our new software updates. If you would like any additional information, please contact us.



Intersect's Image Viewer. Once a document directory or container record is located in RCAMS, a double-click on the Link field opens the image to view or print.