



Court records storage

## UV&S UNCOVERS SOLUTION FOR COURT BURIED IN RECORDS

District courts across the nation must provide public access to vital records and secure them for generations to come – all while making the best use of taxpayer money. Yet one Colorado district court's growing volume of records, and the public's interest in them, rendered an existing storage situation unacceptable.

### OUT OF ROOM

Colorado state law mandates that district courts store and preserve vital paper records that date back to the 1800's; including wills, estates, guardianships, mental health files, calendars, personal injury cases and settlements. These records also serve as a rich resource for genealogists and researchers.

The court's 16 ft x 16 ft on-site storage vault overflowed with tightly-packed document boxes and file cabinets. Courthouse staff often couldn't retrieve a file without ten more falling to the floor. Adding to the frustration, it was not unusual for people to try bypassing the court – searching for records and attempting to pick them up directly.

### EVALUATING OPTIONS

The court's district administrator weighed various options. Expanding on-site storage would incur

construction and utility costs while merely delaying the problem. Digitizing older documents would free up space – yet costs for file preparation, imaging, indexing and quality control could easily hover in the millions of dollars. That's out of the question for a government agency on a budget – especially when the court only calls back about 5 percent of its stored records. Moving the records off-site would be more economical, providing the facility was secure and records were still easily accessible.

The district administrator evaluated local and regional storage vendors. He chose a private room within Underground Vaults & Storage's salt mine facility, located in Hutchinson, Kansas.

### SECURITY AND PRESERVATION

The salt mine facility is buried 650 feet below the plains of rural Kansas, within a 400 ft thick rock formation, miles from flood plains, major seismic activity, and dense populations. The storage facility's cool, dry underground climate is ideal for paper records; significantly extending their life for generations to come.

Geographic separation from the Colorado district

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court assures that researchers cannot bypass the court to peruse records. Unauthorized access is prevented by multiple physical, technological and procedural security measures.

"I appreciate that I don't have to worry about anything," says the court administrator.

#### **SIMPLE TRANSFER, FAST ACCESS**

The court hired college students to index, inventory, and label records. A UV&S truck picked up more than 1,200 boxes, along with file cabinets, and transported them directly to Hutchinson. Once entered into the UV&S inventory management system, the materials took their place within the district court's private room.

"It was really simple," the administrator says.

Distance does not interfere with the court's duty to produce records upon request. The court normally places an order for records once a week.

If needed quickly, records are delivered the next day. For more urgent needs, UV&S can send them electronically.

"Their customer service is outstanding," the administrator says. "I feel like I have a file room that is staffed and I pay when I need it."

Moving the records provided an unexpected benefit. The "spring cleaning" brightened up offices and boosted courthouse staff morale. The staff converted the old storage room into a break room - complete with TV and a couch.

The district administrator's responsibility to the people is understood: protect vital records, provide them upon request, and allocate resources prudently.

UV&S, which has what he calls "the best customer service of anyone, anywhere," helps him do just that. 