



Location:
Marks, Mississippi

Industry:
County Government

County Size:
7,000

Founded:
1877

Types of Records:

- Land
 - Land Title
 - Plat books
 - Court
 - Power of Attorney
 - Wills
 - Criminal Court
 - Marriage
 - Veteran
 - Board of Supervisors
-



QUITMAN COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

Preserving the Integrity of History

Quitman County is in the heart of Mississippi. With about 7,000 people, it is one of the least populous counties in Mississippi and in the United States. Quitman County is also one of the poorest counties in the state, but with a long, rich history that deserved to be protected and preserved. With these things in mind, Chancery Clerk Butch Scipper needed to ensure that historical documents were preserved while staying in budget.

Dating back to 1877, there were many different types of documents, from proving the chain of title in the transfer of land, to genealogical searches of the public's ancestors. These documents, and the information in them, had to be protected for historical and legal purposes.

Challenge

All these historic documents were at risk of decay and total loss of information. The ink was beginning to dim and becoming hard to read, and many pages were torn. Each time a book was handled, it deteriorated a little bit more. After being used for reference countless times over 130 years, the books were completely falling apart and resembled something you might see in an “Indiana Jones” movie.

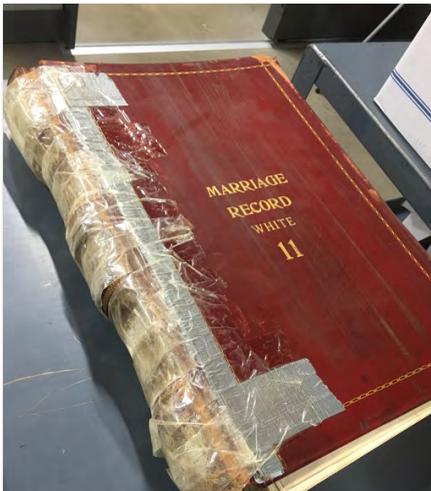
In addition, book bindings were splitting, and the public had written on several pages, changing their original context. Some books had pages missing, as people had torn a page out and taken it with them, not realizing these were one-of-a-kind, irreplaceable documents. With flooding becoming more prevalent in the South, along with the threat of fire, sprinkler system failure, tornado or hurricane, mother nature continued to put these documents at risk as well.

In the early 90’s when Butch took office, the entire Quitman County Courthouse was utilizing only paper documents for their data and records storage. In Butch’s first attempt to digitize the records, he took these books to New Orleans and had them shot on microfilm. However, he found that microfilm wasn’t the answer. The process to access the film was cumbersome and the chemicals used to process the film also deteriorate the film over time. Microfilm was not a simple or a long-term solution.



“We have records dating back to 1877 that could not be replaced. These documents must be protected to maintain the history as well as many legal requirements. Preserving these records through Grooper has provided high-quality digital scans and they have restored all my sewn books to pristine condition. Grooper has preserved the integrity of our historic records and enabled me to meet my goal of providing records to the public in less than five minutes per request.”

- Butch Scipper, Chancery Clerk,
Quitman County, Mississippi



In 2016, Butch was responsible for empowering his staff to digitize the courthouse's records. Using college students with desktop scanners alongside the current staff of Quitman County, the staff digitized their modern (letter-sized, post-bound, all of which were post-1990) books and their newly created documents as the first step in creating a digital courthouse.

However, for the oversize sewn books that held some of the most irreplaceable information, Quitman County did not have the tools or technology to handle the conversion of these records.

Solution

Quitman County began their search for a company to partner with who would be able to handle these pre-1990 oversized books. They looked for a solution that was an immediate fit and scalable over the lifetime of the project. Impressed with the technology of Grooper, as well as the staff and facilities of BIS, the partnership between BIS and Quitman County was born. BIS was trusted to remove these priceless books from the county and securely transport them to BIS headquarters in Oklahoma for digital conversion and repair.

As an economically challenged county, it was important not to raise taxes to pay for the protection of the county records. So, it was decided that the records would be digitized and protected over a five-year period, with the most critical records first. The project began with Quitman County's land records.

BIS staff carefully de-assembled the sewn books, removed crumbling and deteriorating covers, repaired all damaged pages, and then imaged and enhanced the pages through Grooper. Once all imaging and quality control measures had been completed, BIS then re-assembled the books with new covers.



Results

First in the State!

Under Butch's direction, the Quitman County Courthouse will be the first in Mississippi to have completely restored and digitized records.



"When I leave office, I will be able to look back and say that I have made a difference to the records in Quitman County. Not only am I digitizing my office's records, but also the other public offices in Quitman County."

- Butch Scipper, Chancery Clerk, Quitman County, Mississippi

A Format That Will Stand the Test of Time

While paper documents deteriorate over time, digital images in PDF format almost freeze the documents in time, remaining high quality to preserve the quality of the book at the time of scanning. Even microfilm deteriorates over time, but PDF images are approved by archivists for long-term preservation.

Disaster Recovery

In the event of disaster, Quitman County now maintains digital copies in the courthouse and off-site in multiple locations. If a disaster impacted the courthouse building, county staff can retrieve a hard drive from an off-site storage location and have records available within 24 hours.

Improving Customer Experience

BIS has enabled Quitman County to easily reach their county goal of delivering any document request to an attorney, banker, owner, or the public simply doing a genealogical study in less than five minutes by helping them to streamline processes.

With a digital courthouse, the public can leave their magnifying glasses at home. Quitman County can enhance the image to more than 100% when the public needs to verify difficult-to-read information.



Repairing Damaged Books

Not only is BIS assisting Quitman County in moving closer to a digital courthouse, they also helped preserve the records books that were previously falling apart. When the records books were returned to Quitman County, they were in like-new condition, preserving the historic pages and information inside.



Established in 1986, BIS is a privately held full-service data, information, and content management solutions provider. Building on modern, intelligent data capture technologies, BIS solves data extraction and migration problems for private and government organizations. Headquartered in Oklahoma, BIS has achieved national recognition through a software platform called Grooper. Built with machine learning and natural language processing capabilities, Grooper is an artificially intelligent data capture and robotic process automation platform. Leveraging the power of Grooper, BIS is achieving rapid growth through strategic partnerships and industry-first solutions in healthcare, oil and gas, education, and finance. Find more information at www.bisok.com or www.grooper.com.