

Document Management 101

About the University

Athabasca University is a world-class leader in distance education with an average of 40,000 students spread over multiple campus centers and countries.

The Situation

The university had been using microfilm and microfiche machines to store 34 types of student documents including transcripts, credit transfers, third-party billings, and name change requests, to name a few. More than 20,000 transcripts alone are processed per year for the student body. Each campus had to email the main campus to do a document retrieval, causing delays. The wall of tapes was becoming overwhelming and difficult to manage. Document retrieval required logging in to a system to find the appropriate row number, then finding the tape, then finding the document, printing it out, and mailing it if needed. One typo meant the tape couldn't be found among the thousands stored. The camera used to capture images was old technology and parts were very difficult to acquire. The image quality was becoming a great concern as it was not always clear enough to be used and, in the case of transcripts, resulted in a new request adding a time and money cost to students.

Compliance with the Canadian government for disposal was crucial, wait times for students needed to be reduced, and employee hours to be used more efficiently.



Partners

Zia Consulting and Alfresco

Technologies

Alfresco and Ephesoft Transact

Solution

Utilizing Ephesoft and Alfresco, Athabasca optimized the processing of student-related documents for the Office of the Registrar

Results

- Average time for retrieving documents has been reduced from minutes per document to seconds
- Better quality images
- Reduced costs associated with maintaining microfiche and microfilm tapes
- Employee hours are now spent more efficiently
- Student satisfaction has increased thanks to faster replies
- Solution is compliant with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy act

The Process

Zia Consulting had worked previously with Athabasca to implement Alfresco in other departments. The success they saw helped them to decide to implement it in the office of the registrar as well. They knew the system would work for document storage with the capability to search. The university also had Ephesoft prior to the project beginning. Based on their deep experience with both Alfresco and Ephesoft, Zia was contacted in order to create a solution that would utilize these technologies to efficiently classify and extract from the various document types, as well as store the records.

The Solution

Zia assisted Athabasca as a consultant to streamline the document system and make it accessible to all campuses. The process started with creating a system for managing transcripts. Through Ephesoft, documents were tagged with metadata using OCR, and then every document was verified by operators before it was sent through Alfresco.

Once the initial test was determined to be a success, a project was started for the other 33 document types. Since this is a government institution, all compliance procedures must be followed. The project was approved and a general batch class was started with different document types. This was developed and the batch class was launched, handling everything from the office of the registrar regarding students.

An on-demand migration was decided on so that any student documents that are pulled from the tapes are then uploaded into Alfresco. Older tapes are set to a disposition schedule that is in keeping with government mandates.





The Results

Once the solution was live, the benefits became apparent almost immediately. Across all campuses, employees were able to get the transcripts when they needed them. The average evaluation time for document retrieval was reduced significantly thereby helping the evaluation team decrease their processing time. Employee satisfaction was high with this project as time spent looking for documents was decreased as were frustrations. The microfilm and microfiche tapes were used minimally.

The Athabasca team is now looking to implement similar systems to other departments in the university. As with the office of the registrar, these departments are currently processing many of their required documents manually—from applications to invoices.

In addition, Athabasca believes they will also save money when a program is put in place to utilize the system for exam grading. Though an online university, Athabasca has exam centers across Canada and the US where students take exams which are then mailed back to the university.

By giving exam centers a way to scan and email the exams, they can automatically go to Alfresco and into a folder where an email is then sent to the appropriate professor. After grading, it goes back into Alfresco and results are emailed back to the student.

Beyond the direct cost and time benefits, governance has also been significantly improved. Security is now stronger and Athabasca is compliant with Alberta's Freedom of Information and the Protection of Privacy (FOIP) act.



United States HQ

+1 (949) 335-5335
info@ephesoft.com

Ephesoft, Inc.
8707 Research Dr.
Irvine, CA 92618
United States

United Kingdom

+44 (0) 1184665000
info.eu@ephesoft.com

Australia

+61 2 9056 7490
info.au@ephesoft.com

Germany

+49 6126 5503510
info.eu@ephesoft.com

Italy

+39 (02) 8088 6345
info.it@ephesoft.com

France

+33 1 8288 4002
info.eu@ephesoft.com

Singapore

+65 3163 5499
info.asean@ephesoft.com