

TWINSBURG CITY SCHOOLS GRADUATES TO SMARTSEARCH

CASE STUDY



BUSINESS:
School District

COMPANY:
Twinsburg City Schools

OBJECTIVES:
Comply with retention mandates; solve document storage problems

SmartSearch helps school district comply with state record retention mandates, while boosting efficiency and solving paper storage problems

When the State of Ohio reorganized and systemized school districts' record retention and disposal processes, Twinsburg City Schools turned to electronic content management. Their first solution was cumbersome, however, and the district eventually transitioned to SmartSearch. Affordable, easy to learn and use and extremely reliable, SmartSearch gives administrators the assurance that their district is in compliance with the state's directives and affords the district far greater efficiency and flexibility in storing and retrieving important records.

Twinsburg City Schools is a large suburban Ohio school district comprised of five schools, from primary school through high school, with a central administrative building. The district is the third largest employer in Twinsburg with more than 500 employees and supports over 4,300 students. Twinsburg is a very progressive community and strongly supports education. As a result, the State of Ohio has consistently classified the district as "Excellent," and in 2007-08 classified it as "Excellent with Distinction."

The State of Ohio requires Twinsburg City Schools to retain numerous documents—from school board and administrative records to a wide variety of student records—many of which must be retained permanently. Prior to adopting electronic content management, designated original records were allowed to accumulate in various district buildings throughout the school year. At the end of the school year, they were cataloged, boxed up and put into storage wherever there was room in the district's facilities. When public record requests were made, a staff person would physically search through boxes to find the file—and hope it was in good shape.

The district's acute document storage predicament would occasionally manifest itself in dire and rather unfortunate ways. In one memorable instance, some of Twinsburg City Schools' student records had been stored in cardboard boxes in the district's transportation and maintenance garage. When shelving in the non-climate controlled building collapsed, the records sustained severe damage from water and rodents. Predictably, a parent needed access to the nearly destroyed records and conscientious administrators were distressed and embarrassed by the incident.

Eventually, in response to the state's retention mandates and occasional incidents like this one, district administrators prudently decided to implement an electronic content management system, initially by electronically archiving only the most frequently requested categories of documents. Although the district's first solution allowed the process to move forward, it was extremely inefficient. Office support staff had to manually create virtual folders for each student and needed to use a second software application to perform the actual scanning before electronically storing records.



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Through decades of experience with content management technologies in business enterprises of all kinds, Square 9 Softworks has acquired a thorough understanding of document-driven business processes. Intensely customer-focused and highly responsive, the company delivers effective, value-driven solutions and has achieved a reputation for excellence in meeting the rapidly evolving needs of its customers.

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When this underperforming solution was no longer supported by office systems dealers, it became imperative for the district to select a new and better solution. After carefully evaluating Twinsburg City Schools' requirements, the district's trusted office technology company installed SmartSearch. The result was a dramatic and welcome increase in efficiency, flexibility and reliability.

Selected student documents are now archived on an ongoing basis instead of annually. Those forming part of a new student's file are available to administrators immediately and can be updated throughout the year. This capability is especially helpful for legal documents pertaining to custody matters or court placement, and for withdrawing students' records which are often requested by the students' new school districts. The use of SmartSearch is now expanding throughout the organization to support payroll and other critical business functions as well.

"The old system had become a huge problem for the district," said Bonny Cairns, technology business coordinator for Twinsburg City Schools. "End of the school year duties for the support staff have increased exponentially. My job is to find ways to help them absorb these new tasks efficiently, and SmartSearch has helped me to do that."

Replacing the first solution with SmartSearch was an immediate hit with the district's employees. "Our hard working support staff was just thrilled because SmartSearch eliminated all of the prep work associated with the first solution we had used," Cairns said. "They found SmartSearch very easy to learn and use. It has made a very tedious and time consuming job a real snap."

"With SmartSearch," Cairns explained, "the office support staff walk up to their multi-function printers and scan documents directly into a SmartSearch Inbox. When they get back to their workstations, they can index the documents whenever time permits. I think that the flexibility SmartSearch gives us to index documents in this way is one of its biggest advantages."

A recent legal opinion from the school district's lawyer confirmed that electronic documents fulfill the state's retention mandate for documents that must be stored permanently, allowing the district to shred its originals. "This has really helped to solve our storage problem," Cairns said, "and our administrators appreciate the assurance that we are in full compliance with the state's retention directives."

"I would recommend SmartSearch wholeheartedly," Cairns said. "Because SmartSearch has been so effective for the district and because it is so easy to use, our payroll and other departments have begun to use SmartSearch, and as our use of SmartSearch expands we will enjoy even greater efficiency with this marvelous solution."