Implementing Laserfiche Records Management

Best Practices paper

January 2007

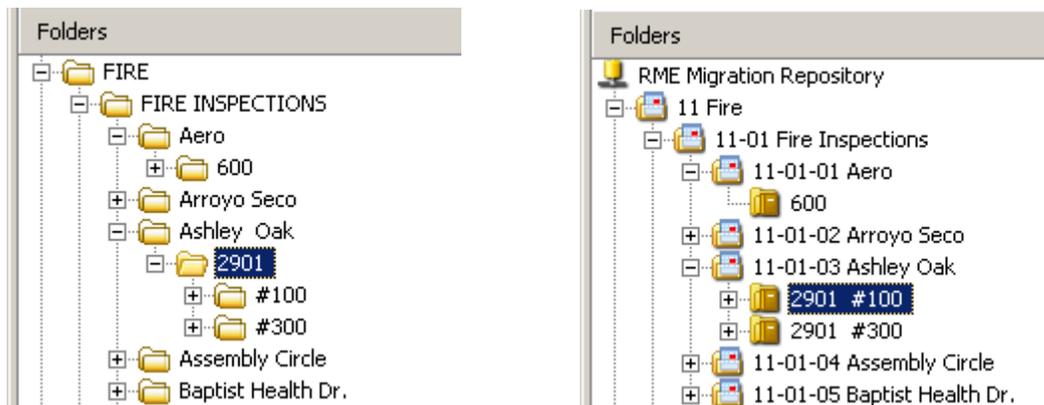**Laserfiche**®

Table of Contents

Planning your Records Management System

Laserfiche RME is designed to function as an integral component of a well-designed records management system. The components of the RME repository are flexible enough to allow you to customize your records management system to your organization's needs.

To get the most out of Laserfiche's Records Management features, you should plan your records system carefully, taking into account the retention rules you must follow, the needs of your users, and the best way to capture or migrate your existing documents. **Spend time planning now to save time searching later.** A poorly-designed repository may cause users to spend much more time than necessary filing and retrieving documents. Careful planning will allow you to configure your solution to be efficient, easy to maintain, and easy for both records managers and other employees to use.

A Sample Migration

To demonstrate how our migration techniques work in the real world, Laserfiche helped a city that had used Laserfiche for two years before acquiring RME migrate their repository to a Records Management setup. We'll use parts of their migration as examples throughout this paper. The images below show a portion of the sample repository before migration (on the right) and after migration (on the left.)

Important Questions for the Planning Process

Setting up any records management solution requires a records manager with a detailed outline of retention schedules and rules. In the case of Laserfiche, where records management and document management are both part of the same tool, a good solution will also require consideration of the needs of employees who will be using the system simply to find the documents they need, and will not necessarily know or need to know the details of the records management life cycle. A few things to consider before you begin your

implementation:

- Why are you implementing a records management solution? Is it to comply with federal regulations, or is it an independent effort to have greater control over the information within your organization? What rules will you need to follow?
- Who will act as your records manager? Who will work with your records manager to capture and file documents, and possibly to help with other administrative tasks? Will some filing and routing tasks be handled automatically by Quick Fields or Workflow?
- How do your employees currently use Laserfiche? What other programs do they use to manage their data? How can you integrate your records management processes and folder structures with their current ways of storing and finding information?

Working with a Published Schedule

Many organizations implement a Records Management system due to city, state or federal regulations that specify how long records must be kept and when they must be destroyed. Others may be following a published best practices guide for their industry. In either case, when following published guidelines, you will want to determine the best way to fit the requirements into an easy-to-use and sensible system for your own repository.

Published schedules present some challenges for the records manager designing a Laserfiche repository. Often the lists of record types will be extremely lengthy, meaning that the records manager must determine a way to organize the record folders that will both satisfy the requirements of the published schedule and allow users to find and file records easily. Published records management guidelines rarely include specific instructions on when records should be cutoff, so a records manager will frequently have to read between the lines to determine the appropriate cutoff criteria for a particular retention schedule.

However, because of this lack of specification, records managers have significant leeway in how cutoff criteria are configured. Cutoff criteria affect how your repository will be laid out, so you can take advantage of this freedom to make cutoff criteria that provide you with a simple and logical repository sctructure.

Understand your Users

The people who will be accessing your Laserfiche RME repository, for the most part, are not interested in the details of records management. This creates a conflict between records management—tracking records according to specific rules—and document management, which is concerned mostly with easing a company's workflow. Records managers want a system that can be easily configured to comply with specific, rigorous rules. Most other

employees want a system to supplement their primary work environment that will capture documents with minimum effort, and allow quick and easy retrieval when they need specific information.

How you reconcile these conflicting needs will depend on how your organization works with documents. If you are migrating to RME from a standard Laserfiche installation, you'll need to keep in mind the file structure your users are already used to; if you're starting off with RME, you'll want to take into consideration the procedures your organization currently uses to deal with documents. In our sample repository, where users had been working with the same file system for a few years, we compromised by retaining the original file structure as closely as possible and putting Records Management information into the description fields of record series.

Users and Laserfiche

Aside from the records manager, and possibly any scanner operators your organization may employ, most of the people who use Laserfiche will not use it as their primary work application. Developers will use a programming environment, writers will use a word processing application, and account managers might use a specialized application to track invoices and customers. When you design your Laserfiche records management environment, you should consider how they work with their primary application. If the application identifies documents using a particular code, do the same. If it organizes information based on accounts, or on addresses, or on patient numbers, do the same in your Records Management system.

In most organizations, many different types of users will work with Laserfiche, so keep in mind that the same folder structure may not work for all job departments or all job titles. Try to determine how your users work every day and set up Laserfiche to accommodate those habits. You may try to combine different ways of working, taking each department's priorities into account, or just set up separate sections of the repository where possible.

Important RME Concepts

Records management involves concepts that may be unfamiliar or infrequently used. The Laserfiche records management system uses several key RM concepts to move records through their life cycle. Below, we'll describe a few of them that are important to the system.

Record Series

Records management applications are organized around the central concept of *record series*. A record series is a group of records which includes instructions that control the life-cycle of those records. A record series can also be contained within another record series; in that case, the 'child' record series would inherit the instructions from the 'parent.' The 'child' could also

include additional, more specific instructions.

Record folders, described below, exist within record series as areas to file documents. A single Record Series can contain multiple Record Folders. These Record Folders may be at different stages in their record life cycles, but they will all follow the guidelines dictated by their Record Series. (Record folders, like child record series, can also contain more specific instructions.) Thus, the record management instructions applied to a given record depend on the record series it is contained within, as well as any additional instructions from its record folder or nested record series.

Each record corresponds to at least one document in a record folder. A document is filed in exactly one record folder. Every object (record series, record folder, record or document) has a unique identifier while it is managed within the records management application.

Record Folder

A *record folder* is a collection of records all of which are governed by the same set of disposition instructions and are at the same stage in their records life cycle. Record folders, like record series, can specify retention and cutoff rules for the records they contain.

Record folders represent the level at which most records management activities take place. These actions affect all records in that folder; no management tasks take place at the level of individual records except filing (or, in some circumstances, freezing.) Because records management properties and activities are all defined at the record folder level, people filing documents into a repository don't need to worry about setting the appropriate cutoff criteria and retention schedule on each document; all they need to do is file the document in the appropriate record folder, and the folder's retention instructions will take over.

Metadata

Each record, record series and folder may include a set of *template fields*, or metadata. Every template field has a human-readable name or designator, and can contain corresponding data. Some fields are *mandatory,* meaning that every object associated with such a field must be assigned valid data for that field when it is filed. Other fields may be filled in or left blank as appropriate. It's generally a good idea to set up your system to fill out as many fields as it can automatically, by defining default values for the fields. These default values may be tokens which will be replaced with the current date or the document ID when the document is filed.

You can set up template fields to restrict the data entered using constraints, which enforce a particular format. Laserfiche also allows you to make the fields "write-once" for your scanner operators, so that only authorized users may edit the fields after the record is filed. Note that if a user does not have rights to edit a mandatory template field, and it is not auto-populated, Laserfiche will not allow that user to file records using that template.

Vital Records

Some records can be deemed *vital records*, which are subject to periodic review and update. For instance, emergency operating records or legal and financial rights records would be considered vital to the organization's operation.

Records managers can assign a review cycle to vital records and record when they were last reviewed. You can also search for all vital records, or only for those that are currently due for review. Vital Record status is determined by the Record Folder, such that all records inside a Vital Records Folder are considered Vital Records. Vital Records Cycle periods may be any time range from daily on up. Only authorized users can indicate that a record has been reviewed.

Cutoff

Cutoff is one of the most important parts of a records management system; the point at which a record becomes eligible for cutoff is the point at which it becomes subject to records management rules and begins to follow its retention schedule. Cutoff is sometimes not well understood, and many published records management guidelines do not explicitly state what type of cutoff criteria you should use.

When a record is *cutoff*, it is no longer considered active, and enters the disposition phase of their records life cycle. Each record has an associated set of instructions, which must include the series' cutoff instructions, as well as the retention period and disposition actions. (For more information, see "Retention" and "Disposition," below.) A record's instructions are determined by the record series (and, in some cases, record folder) in which it is contained.

Cutoff criteria define the *cutoff eligibility* for record folders located within a given record series. A cutoff eligibility requirement is a strict rule; you cannot cutoff a record folder unless it is specifically eligible. Cutoff must be performed manually, but the record will begin its first hold period as soon as it is eligible for cutoff, regardless of whether it has been cut off by the records manager or not.

Cutoff criteria can take three forms: *time disposition, event disposition,* and *time-event disposition.*

Time dispositions

In time dispositions, the record series defines a time-based cycle period and the records in that series become eligible for cutoff at the beginning of each new cycle period. (For example, a monthly cutoff period would make records eligible for cutoff at the first day of the following month).

Event dispositions

In event disposition, eligibility occurs when an external event has occurred. The specific trigger for the event or events is defined on the individual record folder level within the record series.

Time-event dispositions

In time-event disposition, the triggering of the event inactivates the record, but it does not become eligible for cutoff until a certain period of time has passed. For example, a record folder with a time-event cutoff criteria where the event was 'account closed' and the time cycle was 'fiscal quarter' would be inactivated when the account closes, and eligible for cutoff on the first day of the next fiscal quarter.

Anytime after a record folder is eligible for cutoff, the Records Manager may elect to cutoff the folder. Since a record series acts to define the retention/disposition process, it can never be cutoff itself – all cutoff and further disposition events must occur at the folder level. While Laserfiche determines cutoff eligibility, the Records Manager must perform the actual cutoff – it does not happen automatically. Cutting off a folder prompts the beginning of the retention period and also closes and inactivates the Record Folder. A Records Manager can also uncutoff a folder at any point before the first post-cutoff disposition action.

Closing Records

When the Records Manager indicates that an event has occurred for a record folder with an Event or Time-Event record series, the folder is *closed* (no new records can be filed) and all the records in the folder are held *inactive* (no modifications allowed). During the interval between any folder being closed and being cutoff (regardless of cutoff eligibility), the Records Manager can *reopen* the folder allowing for further filing and re-activation of records. Folders that have been cutoff can also be re-opened if they are first uncutoff. For Event and Time-Event series, reopening the folder is equivalent to telling Laserfiche that the event did not occur; reopening will clear the original event date and remove any cutoff eligibility the folder may have had.

Retention

The first retention period, known as the hold period, can be of any duration including zero. Once the retention period is over, the records in a folder become *eligible for disposition.* They may then *enter disposition* by going

through a further disposition action. During the hold period, the records are stored within the current file area and must still be accessible within the system. Anytime during the hold period, the Records Manager may choose to *un-cutoff* folders within an event or time-event series. This would be done primarily to invalidate inappropriate event eligibility – for instance, if a record was believed to be no longer needed but was later determined to be still in use – and has the same effects as reopening a non-cutoff folder. The hold period ends when a further disposition action is performed on the specific record folder, moving it out of the current file area.

Disposition

After the hold period is over, inactive documents can be subject to one or more disposition actions. These actions may be *interim transfers* or *final disposition.* You can specify zero or more transfers in the retention schedule. If you specify transfers, these actions will be applied in sequence, with a retention period between each transfer, and ending with the final disposition. The available actions for final disposition are *accession, destruction* and *none*; a disposition of "none" means that the record is considered permanent*.* Disposition always occurs after any and all transfers have taken place. At most one final disposition can be chosen.

Interim transfers and final dispositions also differ in their eligibility requirements. The eligibility requirement for a final disposition is a strict rule – a final disposition can not be performed if the record folder is not specifically eligible for it. Interim transfers are much more lenient, however, allowing for transfers to take place when they are not necessarily eligible, in different orders then outlined by the record series, or even to be outright skipped. This is because the record is still under the authority of the original institution and they can choose how to handle it; leniency in interim transfers also allows final disposition – which is much more strict – to occur on schedule even if the intermediate transfers did not.

Transfer

Transfer is the act of moving records out of the current storage area. For physical records, this might entail moving boxes of records out of prime office-space into low-cost warehouses. For electronic records, this might mean exporting the documents to optical media and then deleting the on-line copies.

Destruction

Destruction is the act of permanently destroying documents. Records located within Record Series designated as containing *Permanent Records* cannot be destroyed.

Accession

Accession is very similar to transfer. Unlike transfer, during which the organization maintains authority over the records, accession entails transfer of responsibility and authority over the records to another organization, generally for archival purposes. Records with no final disposition are held inactive but available for access in perpetuity.

Records managers may export entire record folders and their metadata values for transfer and accession events. Following confirmation of a successful transfer, Laserfiche can maintain the records, maintain just the metadata or completely delete the records, depending on the retention instructions. Accession or Destruction events will always delete the records, although the Records Manager can save the associated metadata.

Freezing

At any time, a record series, record folder or individual record may be *frozen* by any authorized user. The act of freezing a folder, series or record entry halts all dispositions on it. Furthermore, when a series or folder is frozen, no records may be removed from the folder (regardless of whether they were in the folder when the freeze event occurred), and no records in the frozen folder may be modified. If the entry is active, then it may not be cutoff while it is frozen, even if it would normally be eligible for cutoff. If the entry is being held inactive, it will not enter disposition, even after the retention period is over. If the folder is held in disposition, it will not progress to the next action. A frozen folder may be *unfrozen* by the records manager, which allows it to re-enter normal retention/disposition.

Cycle definitions

Cycle definitions allow the records manager to define specific time cycles when events should occur. These cycles can be used to define time- and event-time-based cutoff criteria as well as review cycles for vital records. Cycle definitions can be month-based, such as a quarterly or bimonthly cycle, or day-based, such as a Tuesday-Thursday or once a week cycle.

Records Management Activities

Laserfiche Records Management organizes and tracks the records management process, but it does not fully automate it. Someone must still file and organize documents, enter appropriate metadata and create links, and supervise steps on the life cycle such as cutoff and destruction. Not all of these tasks must be performed by the Records Manager—filing, for instance, will generally be the responsibility of many people throughout the organization.

> **Note:** The Records Manager will not automatically be notified of records that require specific actions to be performed. We

recommend using the Records Management search functionality to locate records that require attention. For instance, you can use the Disposition search to locate records that are currently eligible for transfer, accession or destruction. You can also write a Toolkit script to automate this search process and send e-mail notifications.

Many of these responsibilities will be performed through the Record Management dialog.

The Records Manager's responsibilities include:

File the record. To enter records management, a document must be filed in the appropriate folder. This may be accomplished manually by the person working with the document, the scanner operator, or the records manager. If numerous documents are filed at once, it might also be done automatically through a Quick Fields session.

Close record folders. This will usually be done automatically when a record folder is cut off (for time-based cutoff) or when you set the event date (for time- or time-event based cutoff.) However, a records manager can also choose to do this manually. Close folders using the "Perform Close" button in the Close section of the Record Management dialog.

Cutoff record folders. Record folders that are eligible for cutoff will begin their retention period immediately, but the Records Manager must perform the cutoff manually. Folders that have not been cutoff will still be subject to deletion and modification. To cutoff record folders, use the Perform Cutoff button in the Cutoff section of the Record Management dialog.

Set event dates. Folders with Event or Time-Event cutoff criteria cannot become eligible for cutoff until the Record Manager sets a date for all associated events. Once the dates are set, the folder becomes eligible after the latest date has passed. Set event dates by choosing a date in the Set Event Date section of the Record Management dialog.

Transfer records. Laserfiche Records Management will track records as they move from location to location, and determine on which dates they will be eligible for transfer. However, the records manager must export the records and transfer them to their new location, and confirm successful transfer. Export and confirmation functions are located in the Retention/Transfer section of the Record Management dialog.

Accession records. Similar to transferring, this requires the Records Manager to export records, transfer them to the archival accession location, and confirm the accession. Export and accession records in the Retention/Accession section of the Record Management dialog.

Destroy records. The Record Manager is responsible for destroying records once they become eligible for destruction. Destroy records in the

Retention/Destroy section of the Record Management dialog.

Review vital records. Vital records will automatically be scheduled for review on a cycle determined by the settings on the record series or record folder. Find vital records in need of review using the Vital Records search. Review vital records using the Review Vital Record item in the Records menu.

Mark items as superseded. Retention schedules may specify that records will only be destroyed when they have been superseded by newer records. To show that an older record has been superseded by a new version, create a Document Link of type "Supersedes" from the new document to the old document.

Trigger alternate retention schedules. Retention schedule definitions may include an alternate retention schedule which will take effect if a certain event (defined by the records manager) takes place. The records manager triggers the alternate retention schedule by noting the event has occurred. Set the alternate retention schedule event in the Retention/Alt. Retention section of the Record Management dialog.

Freeze records. Record series, record folders, or individual records may be frozen using the Frozen Status item in the Records menu.

Auditing

The ability to verify a document's path from creation to destruction adds an important level of accountability to a records management system. Auditing refers to the process of recording actions that take place in the system. These records can be used to locate unauthorized intrusions or to verify that particular activities took place as mandated by records management rules. In Laserfiche Records Management Edition, you can configure auditing for both document-related and administrative tasks, with the ability to track particular users or groups.

System Design

With an understanding of the needs of your users and the basic concepts of records management, you will be able to begin planning your records management system. In this section we will discuss some of the important factors to keep in mind when designing your repository.

Security

Consider how different departments will access the repository. Should they have access to each others' records? Should departmental records be accessible to others in read-only form? Who will be able to file new documents in each department's folders? You will need to account for the way in which new documents enter the system (scanned by designated scanner operators or imported by members of each department, for instance)

and who will need access to them before and during the records management cycle.

In many cases, record folders with similar or identical retention schedules will be accessed and managed by entirely different departments, which will necessitate a folder structure that allows them to be secured in separate locations. Because you can perform most records management tasks automatically using Records Management search functions, you can configure your folder structure to simplify security without too much effect on records management considerations.

To implement security with a minimum of extra work, make use of nested record series so that security settings can be inherited from one series to another. See the paper "Laserfiche 7 Security Best Practices" for suggestions on efficient security setups. In creating your record series structure, you keep in mind that records management properties, such as cutoff criteria and retention schedules, can also be inherited from parent folders.

Record Series and Record Folder Inheritance

As discussed above, record series can be nested within each other (in versions 7.1 and higher of Laserfiche) and inherit properties from the parent series. This allows records managers to design systems that can be maintained easily and without excessive duplication of effort. For instance, several related record series might all have a 6-year retention schedule. If you placed them all within a single parent folder, they could inherit their retention schedule from the parent without having to be individually configured.

Record folders also inherit from record series. In Laserfiche records management, the record folder is the level at which most actions take place. This allows records managers to work with documents grouped by folder, avoiding the tedious task of performing actions on each record individually. Record folders can inherit their properties from the parent series or be individually customized if necessary. Record folder inheritance can save a great deal of time for record managers, since any folder created within a record series automatically inherits from the parent series and need not be individually configured. Records managers can even automate the creation of these folders through Quick Fields or similar LF tools.

Naming Conventions

In naming your record series and record folders, try to use descriptive names that make it obvious what type of record should go into that folder. Even if published records management guidelines specify a numeric code for each type of record, make sure you supplement the name of the record series with a description of the record types it will contain.

Laserfiche RME requires a code for each record series, but these codes can

include letters as well as numbers. You can also choose to prefix your codes with numbers or letters that will ensure that your record folders are sorted in the order you choose.

Cycle definitions and record folders

If you use time or event-time cutoff criteria, you will need to create record folders that match your time cycles. For instance, if all employee application records are to be cut off at the end of one month, you would create record folders for each month of the year. Records filed in January would go into the "January" record folder, which would become eligible for cutoff at the end of the month. This allows the records manager to work at the level demanded by the time cycle without worrying about smaller distinctions from day to day or week to week.

If your documents use a time-based cutoff, you can make your migration and maintenance tasks faster by grouping documents into larger blocks of time. In many cases, documents may be grouped into quarterly or even yearly folders rather than monthly folders. Such longer time periods will mean that some documents will be kept a few months longer than they otherwise would. This makes this approach appropriate for organizations that are concerned about keeping documents for a certain period of time, but are not required to destroy them immediately when that time has passed.

You can also use time-event cutoff to make your maintenance tasks more efficient. Folders cutoff based only on events will all enter retention at slightly different times, meaning that they will be eligible for transfer, disposition and other retention milestones at slightly different times as well. Using time-event cutoff, you can group them together at the end of a month or quarter and process them in batches.

Capture Strategy

Since your records management system can't manage documents until they've been captured and filed, this is a crucial part of your records management procedures. Time spent scanning is one of the biggest costs many organizations encounter in implementing document management, so adding documents to the repository should be as easy as you can make it. Otherwise, capture could become a bottleneck, allowing documents to pile up outside the system.

Scanning responsibilities

Scanning, the point where documents enter the system, can be a severe bottleneck if not handled correctly. One of the best ways to ensure that documents are scanned into the repository in a timely fashion is to empower the people who create and work with those documents to do the scanning, document by document, as needed. This helps prevent the large backlog of

papers that can sometimes occur when documents must go through just a few dedicated scanner operators.

In a records management system, however, this can create problems if the system requires strict filing or naming conventions. A repository set up for maximum ease of filing will help with this problem; in many records management systems, you will be able to set up a file structure that makes it intuitively easy to determine which record folder is the correct one for a particular document. For instance, in our sample repository, the folder structure makes it easy to determine where to file a fire incident report from March 2006.
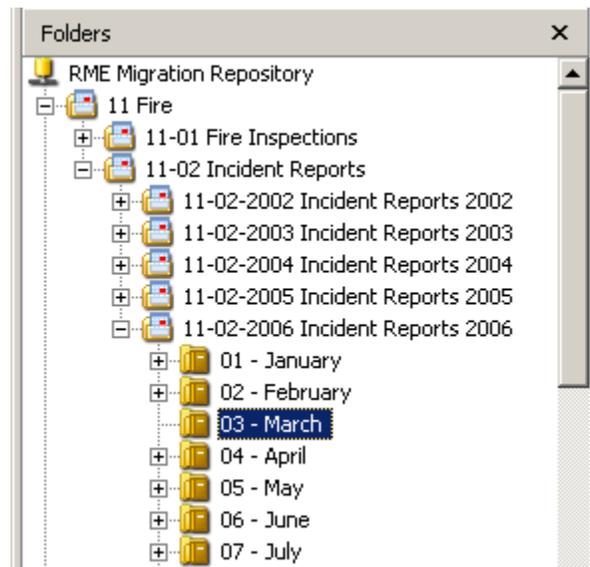
Filing constraints

Laserfiche template field settings are a good stating point for ensuring that all necessary information is present. Start with including default field values; using tokens, you can automatically fill in common values such as the date. You can make fields required, meaning that documents can't be filed until the required fields are filled in. You can also add constraints to fields that ensure any data entered into the field fits the format you define.

Automating Filing and Folder Creation

Quick Fields can also enforce good filing habits in users. Use required template fields make sure all necessary information is present, then use Real-Time Lookup or Pattern Matching to check that the information is correct. For instance, you could use Real-Time Lookup to see if a name appeared in your database of contacts, and Pattern Matching to make sure the field included both the first and last name. You can allow your users to classify documents, since they will probably be most familiar with the document types, then have Quick Fields file them appropriately.

Quick Fields can also create record folders automatically. This allows

organizations with high-volume filing requirements to use folders for organization with negligible additional costs in time and effort, since scanner operators or other filers need not create folders manually.

Automating classification

Record folders can inherit their properties from their parent record series, which is useful for document capture. Set up a record series so that any record folder created within it will automatically inherit the correct retention schedule and cutoff criteria. With this configuration, folders created in that series (for instance, by Quick Fields) will not need any additional setup.

Record Series Creation

One aspect of records management setup that is more difficult to automate is record series setup. Although you can use the Record Series Creation Utility to automate this process, you will still have to specify the properties for each record series you wish to create. Try to make relatively few record series, and make new record series inherit from old ones wherever possible. This reduces the amount of setup necessary for assigning properties to record series.

Minimizing the number of record series at the root level also makes it easier for your users to navigate your repository. Don't place all of your record series at the root if you can avoid it.

Migrating existing structures

Many people who license Laserfiche Records Management Edition were already Laserfiche users when they decided to implement records management. These users will need to migrate their records from their current Laserfiche repository, one that has often been in use for quite some time, to a repository set up for ease of records management.

When you migrate your Laserfiche repository or repositories, try to do so in steps or phases. Migrating one department at a time prevents widespread disruption and allows you to refine your technique as you move from department to department. This slow migration helps ensure that any mistakes or problems that appear will be small enough to manage.

Retaining the existing structure

Ease of use, both in finding and filing records, is of paramount importance in a system of records management. For an organization that already uses a Laserfiche repository, ease of use almost always means replicating the existing structure as closely as possible. Those who use the system already know where to find documents in the existing file structure, so a records management system that is organized similarly will require minimal retraining. (Of course, administrators who feel their current system is extremely poorly organized may seize on the migration to records

management as an opportunity for change. If you are tempted to do this, be sure that the benefits in ease of use are not offset by the necessity of retraining every Laserfiche user in the new file structure.)

The extent to which you can keep existing structure may vary depending on the type of record. Some folders may simply be replaced by record series of the same name. For instance, a folder containing police records may be transferred to a record series of the same name. Supposing these types of records must be cut off every month, we can create record series within this parent for each year, and within each record series we could create twelve record folders to represent months. In this system the current reports could simply go into the current months, and the older reports could be directed to older folders based on filing date if such information is still available. You might be able to determine original filing date, for instance, by working backwards from the recorded final disposition date.

Setting the filing date on older records is essential to a full migration, since their retention schedules will otherwise be "reset" to begin again from the date when they were migrated. It is possible to automate this process, but only using the Laserfiche Toolkit.

Migration Automation

The best way to perform a migration of any size is to automate as much of it as possible. This approach will generally make use of Quick Fields to sort and file documents; the Laserfiche Capture Engine can acquire documents from the old repository, and Real-Time Lookup can find additional data to help describe and file the documents correctly.

Clean Up Misfiled Documents

The first step in any automation, however, is a manual one: look through the repository and find any documents that are mis-filed or otherwise out of place. Folder browser columns can help make this task faster by showing template field values or other document information without making you open the document. This can help you quickly spot documents that are the wrong type for a particular folder. Displaying the document's creation date can also help you file it in the correct record folder.

Migration Strategies

In our sample migration, we used several methods to automate the transfer from one system to the other. Below are Before and After images of our sample repository.
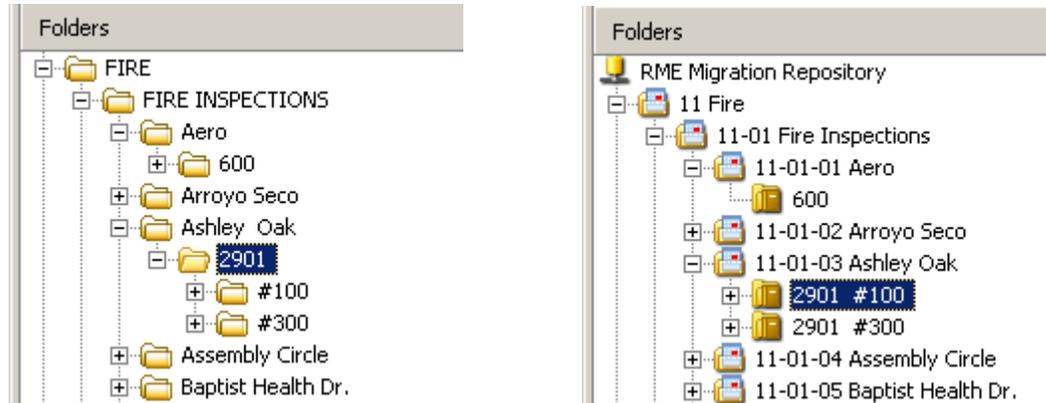
Note that these reports are connected to individual buildings; they are entered here whenever the buildings are inspected, and a building's inspection reports can be destroyed when the building is demolished. The filing system here makes it easy to find a specific structure by organizing with the street name, then the street address, and then the apartments or sub-buildings within that structure.

Export and re-import using Excel and the Record Series Creation Utility.

- In this case, we chose to preserve the folder structure as closely as possible, so we merely had to re-create it using record series folders. We began by using the Export List Contents feature of the Laserfiche client to export a list of folders at the root level.

- We used Excel's auto-numbering features to add consecutive record series codes, then deleted any unnecessary information (such as the creation dates and document IDs that may be exported when using Export List Contents.)

- Importing the resulting Excel file using the Record Series Creation Utility automatically recreated the folders at the root level.

- If you have relatively few folders at this level, you may prefer simply to create the record series manually—there's nothing wrong with this approach if you judge it to be faster.

- We repeated this process with two more levels, making record series for different types of reports within the FIRE category and for the streets listed in the Building Inspections folder.

Re-file using Quick Fields, Pattern Matching, and the Laserfiche Capture Engine.

- For the fire inspections above, the record folders for individual street addresses (such as 600 Aero) will be placed within the record series for each street. Each structure will have its own record folder, since each structure's files will be cut off only when that structure is demolished.

- To do this, we simply used Quick Fields' Laserfiche Capture Engine to get the inspection reports from the repository, then used the Pattern Matching tool to extract the street name and address number from the original path of the files.

- With the street name, we determined which record series was correct for each file. Then we used the address number to create a new record folder within that series to hold the inspection reports.

Automated migration may have higher costs up-front, in the time spent planning the automation process and sometimes money required for additional tools. However, most organizations will find that the tremendous quantity of labor, time, and potential human error saved by the automation process makes it well worth the initial effort.

Tools to Automate Capture Strategies and Migration

The Laserfiche product suite includes a variety of useful tools for setting up records management repositories, moving and filing Laserfiche documents, and associating data with the appropriate records. Here is an overview of a few of these, with information on how they can be useful in your records management implementation.

Record Series Creation Utility

The Record Series Creation Utility is a simple utility that can read an Excel spreadsheet and use it to create records management objects in your Laserfiche repository. This utility allows you to set up large record series structures quickly.

Quick Fields

The ability to process large numbers of documents automatically makes Quick Fields an extremely useful tool for both capture and migration.

Pattern Matching

In our sample migration, we saw how Pattern Matching could extract data from the document's original path, such as its parent folder and name. Quick Fields can then use this data to file the document, to name it, or to look up more information in a third-party database.

Pattern Matching can extract information from any string, whether acquired

from zone OCR, template fields, or another Quick Fields process. It can also verify the structure of fields; for instance, it can check to see whether an ID number is always five digits long.

Real Time Lookup

We used Real-Time Lookup in our example to get data from Excel spreadsheets we created. Since Real-Time Lookup can access data from a wide variety of different database types, however, it can be an extremely flexible way to get information for document names, filing locations, and fields.

Laserfiche Functionality

The basic features of the Laserfiche client can also be helpful in migration and capture strategies. We have already seen, in Migration Strategies, how Export List Contents can speed the migration process. Even something as simple as keyboard shortcuts can help speed a migration—for instance, moving documents with ctrl+c (Copy) and ctrl+v (Paste.) Customizable columns in the folder browser can show you quickly when a document is out of place, has an incorrect template, or is missing key information. Laserfiche Templates help gather correct and complete data using field constraints and required fields.

Recent versions of Laserfiche can also allow your users to access specific records or record folders without needing access to the parent record series, a plus in organizations with tight security.

Laserfiche Toolkit

The Laserfiche Toolkit is an extremely powerful tool for migrations if you are comfortable programming with it. All records management operations, as well as moving and renaming documents and folders, can be automated using the Laserfiche Toolkit. The Toolkit Script Library recently added to the Laserfiche Support Site includes code samples that demonstrate how to set up e-mail notification, which can help keep you up-to-date on which RM activities need attention in your repository.

Laserfiche®

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