



Case study

# Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv secures document preservation for posterity through digitization

Protecting irreplaceable historic records while transforming operational efficiency.

## Conserving one of Austria's largest public archives

Located in St. Pölten, the Landesarchiv stores records produced by the administrative bodies and courts that have been and are currently active in Lower Austria. Extensive holdings, which date back to the Middle Ages and the time of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, include manuscripts, administrative and court records, photographs, plans and cadastral items as well as other sensitive materials that are to be preserved for posterity.

"All citizens have a right to inspect records and we very often attract researchers, historians, and government officials seeking clarification of specific events," said Dr. Stefan Eminger, Head of Contemporary History at Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv. That demands not only a data-protected environment but also careful handling of the documents in terms of conservation.

**"No archival record has ever been damaged."**

**Dr. Stefan Eminger**  
Head of Contemporary History  
Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv



## Industry

Public governmental archive

## Challenge

Digitize and permanently secure official documents and testimonies from the Holocaust and nazi regime, many of which are fragile paper files and handwritten notes

## Solution

Iron Mountain® tailored imaging solution for digitizing historic records with secure full chain of custody throughout

## Value

- Less effort retrieving files, leaving more time for better indexing and archiving of older holdings
- Far less risk of damage and reduced restoration costs
- Faster access to full historic records, plus time and money savings for researchers
- New opportunities for international academic research



## Taking charge of history

The archive's principal duty is to preserve all records of state administration worthy of archiving, including physically endangered and very old documents that should remain untouched and safe from harmful environmental factors like damp and dust.

Dr. Eminger added: "The best way to store an asset would be if no one had access to it, but that misses the point of an archive because our goal is to make historical documents accessible to everyone. Our role as an archive means we must meet both objectives and through our restoration department ensure the originals remain in good condition."

With that goal in mind, as part of a large international digitization project the archive was looking to convert official documents from the Holocaust and Nazi regime, many of which were fragile paper files and handwritten notes. Thereby improving access for researchers, relatives of victims, and other interested parties around the world.

## Ensuring secure full chain of custody

Following initial discussions, Iron Mountain® developed a customized, cost-effective imaging solution to fit exactly with the archive's priorities, focusing efforts on records most frequently in demand rather than those that were hardly ever requested.

Crucially, Iron Mountain was able to ensure secure full chain of custody throughout: from collection, transportation, and imaging, with the originals safely returned for re-archiving. New digital files are usually available in PDF format within a few weeks.

"We never normally release documents," noted Dr. Eminger. "Another key requirement was to ensure the correct designation when creating digital files. That can be quite challenging and time-consuming when dealing with notes in different formats and from different file collections. Iron Mountain was able to reassure us on both points."



## Simple access to sensitive records

As part of the project Iron Mountain has already digitized thousands of files and processed about half a million images.

“No archival record has ever been damaged,” said Dr. Eminger. “For example, many files are bound together with staples, which can rust and become a hazard to the condition of the paper. Iron Mountain expertly removes the old staples and returns the originals, saving us a difficult job. And in digital form the pages naturally follow on in the correct order, so it’s not a problem.”

With digitization, staff now spend less time physically hunting around for archived materials, leaving more time to tend to new files that need to be correctly classified and catalogued.

“At present, when we receive a request, we must check the index to see where the file is, go into storage to the appropriate box, take out the file, submit a deposit slip, close the box, and put it back. Then we proceed to the visitors’ room and present the file for inspection. Digitization eliminates a lot of that effort and is so much faster and easier.”

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## Risk reduction and remote access benefits

Now researchers will be able to work remotely and more productively, saving time and money by not having to make repeat trips to the archive. Moving to digital records also reduces the risk of irreplaceable historic files becoming damaged from frequent inspection and handling, in turn lowering demands on the archive’s restoration department.

Dr. Eminger summed up: “We have a dedicated Iron Mountain digital specialist who carefully collects and handles our records almost exactly like our archivists. And their IT experts quickly solved our archival wishes for indexing the files, while our Iron Mountain project coordinator is super-responsive and keeps everything in calm waters.”

In addition, as part of a larger research initiative, Iron Mountain supports similar digital projects at the Mauthausen Concentration Camp Memorial and Tyrolean Provincial Archives.

800.899.IRON | [ironmountain.com](https://www.ironmountain.com)

UK. 08445 60 70 80  
R.O.I. 1800 732 673  
N.I. 08445 60 70 80

[www.ironmountain.com/uk](https://www.ironmountain.com/uk)  
[www.ironmountain.com/ie](https://www.ironmountain.com/ie)

### About Iron Mountain

Iron Mountain Incorporated (NYSE:IRM), founded in 1951, is the global leader for storage and information management services. Trusted by more than 220,000 organizations around the world, and with a real estate network of more than 85 million square feet across more than 1,400 facilities in over 50 countries, Iron Mountain stores and protects billions of information assets, including critical business information, highly sensitive data, and cultural and historical artifacts. Providing solutions that include secure storage, information management, digital transformation, secure destruction, as well as data centers, art storage and logistics, and cloud services, Iron Mountain helps organizations to lower cost and risk, comply with regulations, recover from disaster, and enable a more digital way of working. Visit [www.ironmountain.com](https://www.ironmountain.com) for more information.

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