![Iron Mountain®]

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORIES

WELSH GOVERNMENT

ARCHIVING EXCELLENCE UNDER LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP

Iron Mountain® has been providing off-site records management services to the Welsh Government for more than 15 years.

Andy Parker, Senior Operations Manager, Information and Records Management, explains: "Over the years we've consolidated our paper archives with Iron Mountain. Having a single service provider helps standardise processes, while leveraging economies of scale."

There's a vast assortment of documentation in those archives. Examples include details of EU-funded projects in Wales and staff training records. Each file is assigned a retention date ranging from seven to 100 years and allocated to a box. The inventory is managed via the Iron Mountain Connect™ online portal

SATISFYING LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY OBLIGATIONS

The total archive comprises 80,000 boxes of which around 500 are assessed for continued retention or destruction each month. "We've developed an efficient system that helps us retain only what we need to satisfy legislative and regulatory obligations while protecting the Welsh heritage," says Andy Parker.

Document destruction used to be managed internally, but now Iron Mountain carries out disposal of time-expired material.

"Outsourcing to Iron Mountain has reduced our destruction costs by around two-thirds," confirms Andy. "We've got an ongoing records consolidation programme, aiming to reduce legacy files by 50 per cent over the coming decade."

"IRON MOUNTAIN PROVIDES A VERY DEPENDABLE AND COST EFFECTIVE SERVICE. THEY KNOW OUR BUSINESS AND WE KNOW OUR FILES ARE IN A SAFE AND SECURE ENVIRONMENT."

ANDY PARKER, SENIOR OPERATIONS MANAGER, INFORMATION AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT WELSH GOVERNMENT

FREEING OFFICE SPACE FOR MORE VALUABLE USE

Recent service developments include an initiative to encourage departments to transfer files being held on-site to Iron Mountain. Andy Parker says: "While a lot of our records are now electronic there's still a need to retain certain paper files. However, the high cost of office space and more flexible working means our people often have nowhere to store things."

Accordingly, Iron Mountain now offers the option of indexing at file rather than box level. This enables more granular tracking for file retrieval. Around 6,000 file boxes have been added to the archive as a result. This has reduced storage costs by over 90 per cent and the freed accommodation is now available for higher value use. It's anticipated that around 2,000 additional boxes of files will be added each year.

Iron Mountain runs a weekly collection service. Files requiring retrieval for review or to support an investigation can be delivered next day or even faster if urgent.

DIGITISING HERITAGE RECORDS AND IMAGES

More recently Iron Mountain was invited to expand its service to include digitisation of historic records. One project was to digitise important historical photographic images that were beginning to degrade.

"Iron Mountain put forward a comprehensive and cost effective proposal," says Marlize Palmer, Head of Library and Archive Services. "We know that with Iron Mountain the work will be done to the highest standard in a safe, secure environment. So that made our decision easy."

The project involved scanning 16,330 slides, 1,500 photographic prints and 800 negatives that chronicle the history of the greening of the valleys programme of land reclamation to regenerate ex-coal mining areas. Iron Mountain captured key metadata for each scanned image to identify the subject matter, its date and origin.

"Iron Mountain designed a spreadsheet for the metadata, which made upload to our document management system straightforward," recalls Kate Roberts, Discovery and Appraisal Manager. "The project was completed to a very high standard in just eight weeks. Iron Mountain even repackaged the images to help preserve them for longer, which was a welcome bonus."

The team is now seeking funding for a similar project to digitise another 20,000 photographic records and reports concerning the disposal of industrial waste.

TRUSTED WITH THE MOST HIGHLY SENSITIVE MATERIAL

Other digitisation projects include scanning of around 2,000 paper files involving historic child abuse allegations. These highly-sensitive files total around 600,000 pages. They needed to be digitised to support freedom of information requests following the Macur Review.

This programme is helping preserve and improve public access to important historical documents. Certain digitised records are already available electronically through the Welsh Government online public access catalogue (OPAC).

SUSTAINABLE, SPEEDY AND SECURE

Storing records off-site has proved very cost effective. "Relieving our staff from the archive management burden, it's a far more efficient way to work," says Andy Parker.

The Welsh Government is now looking to extend digitisation with a trial of scan-on-demand services. That would see Iron Mountain retrieving a required file from a box and, rather than physically transporting it, make a scan available electronically. This sustainable approach will see faster access and improve security of important files.

Andy Parker concludes: "Iron Mountain provides us with a great service. Their management of special projects is an area in which they really shine. I can't think of any challenge we've given them that they haven't risen to."

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