

Stories from The Underground





We believe that our most precious asset is our customers' trust

Where do you work? In an office building? A store? Restaurant? Maybe from home?

How about 220' beneath the surface in a former limestone mine? That's where a select group of Iron Mountain employees work every day, trusted with some of the world's most vital assets.

If you've never been to [The Underground](#), as it's called, you likely have some questions about who works down there, what they do, and what it's like. So we asked a few people to share their personal stories with us.

Here's what we unearthed.

Julian Savage

Armed Security Officer

As a retired veteran of the United States Air Force with 36 years of service, I now work as a member of the Global Safety, Risk and Security (GSRS) team at Iron Mountain. For the past 13 years, I have been responsible for managing facility access here at Boyers and to over 500 locations throughout North America. Building strong relationships within the proprietary security force, tenants, and visitors is a top priority for me, as it ensures the safety and security of all individuals and the valuable assets located here. I am proud to be entrusted with such a unique and high-security facility.

Taking care of reception and departure for any visitors, vendors, or contractors we have coming into the facility, I'm usually the first and last person people see when they come here - and I never get tired of seeing the look on visitors' faces when they emerge.



Interesting fact: Julian is an Extra Class ham radio operator, which is the highest FCC amateur license class you can earn. Should the regular public service communications systems fail, emergency management would call on him and fellow amateur radio operators to establish an auxiliary communications network.

Tom Benjamin

Solution Development Executive, Vital Records (retired) 1986-2021



Interesting fact: Tom is a Panera Bread fanatic. But for his last meal, he'll take a bacon cheeseburger, please.

Not all records are the same. You may have traditional business records that you'd like to store. And the thousands of Iron Mountain locations across the globe that are local to clients are certainly fantastic for those types of records. But there are vital records that have very specific security and environmental storage requirements. My job was to clarify the differences between storage types with customers and to explain why The Underground was an unmatched option for vital records storage.

Clients typically have four considerations when thinking about their records - security, environmental conditions, price, and convenience. Not necessarily in that order. If security and consistent, ideal environmental conditions are of top importance - say, for original motion

picture footage - The Underground simply can't be beat. Its constant temperature and relative humidity ensure that materials remain in as good a condition as possible for as long as possible.

I once met with the lead archivist at one of the nation's premier museums. I was explaining that we guarantee optimal, unwavering temperatures and humidity levels for each medium. The archivist looked at me and said, "I know. We put temperature- and humidity-recording devices inside a box and sent it to you. It's been in storage for six months, and everything you're telling us is 100 percent spot on." I thought that was a great strategy, and I used to tell prospective clients to do the same. It won us a lot of business.

Larry Stuppy

Solution Development Executive, Vital Records

I help companies and organizations protect their vital records. One-of-a-kind artifacts and information that can't be replaced. In The Underground, there are no earthquakes, tornadoes, nor'easters, sabotage, fires - all the things that people storing in above-ground storage facilities or buildings have to worry about. It's also temperature- and humidity-controlled, which makes it ideally suited for storing delicate assets like film, audiotape, costumes, books, etc.

If you've ever sung or danced to a song, there's a good chance the original recording is down here. A lot of the original footage from the world's most famous movies is here too. To see some 1932 iconic classic and you're two feet away, eyeball to eyeball with it, is pretty amazing.



Interesting fact: Larry played right guard for the Rice University football team.

Our industry's not known for being cool, but when you are driving on a golf cart with your customer and our sales reps are hosting them here for a tour, it's just fun to see their reactions to seeing something like this. Then they go back and talk to their peers at work, and they go home and tell their family and friends, "Hey, I saw the coolest thing."

There are a few videos that give you some sense of this place, but you just can't grasp [The Underground](#) until you've been here.

Heather Sweesy

Customer Success Manager, Vital Records

My grandfather was a miner here in the '40s. It's really interesting to think his hard work contributed to making this place what it is today. And my aunt also worked here, making microfiche back in the day for a company that was one of the first companies in The Underground when the vital records facility started. So this place is definitely a big part of my family history.

I help educate our clients and our sales team about our vital records solutions and also liaise projects between our Ops and Sales Teams here at Boyers. I tour visitors and explain our various services, such as records storage and digital conversion services, and explain how we can help them properly preserve their irreplaceable records.

The Underground is such a unique combination of location, technology, services, and people. We're able to offer custom solutions and environments to securely and properly store just about anything. Our team has a lot of tenure, and they truly understand what we're storing here and the importance of it to so many people. We're preserving history and also making it available to future generations, which is invaluable.

After 20 years, it's still fun seeing people's reactions when we drive into the mine. Then at the end of the tour, you always get the comment, "I had no idea how big this place was." It's fun to have this unique position and to bring excitement to different people. It makes you remember just how unique this place is.



Interesting fact: Heather spends a lot of time flying in single-engine airplanes with friends.



Brett Zinn

Audio Engineer, Iron Mountain Entertainment Services (IMES)



Interesting fact: Brett is a picker, so it's not unusual to find him on the weekend at an estate sale, auction, garage sale, or flea market.

I work here because I'm obsessed with music, audio engineering, and recording, and I have been all my life. I often joke that I didn't come here 17 years ago to get a job; I just get paid to do what I love, and I just happened to find someplace where I can do it professionally.

This is a unicorn job. There are archivists out there, but most are not archiving material for the major record labels. Not that their work is any less important, but for me, the music side of it and the major record label content are the largest drawing factors. To be able to get under the hood of my favorite recordings is amazing to me - you get a completely different perspective of something that you've heard all your life.

We work with constant urgency. Everything is needed quickly, but we're also racing the clock on material degradation, equipment availability, and personal knowledge. The fact is that even though we store this material in the absolute perfect environment, it will slowly degrade over time, eventually to the point that it's simply unplayable. So we understand and work with this knowledge, knowing our roles and responsibilities to save this information before it's lost forever. Where else would you get to do this?

Carrie Weber

Audio Engineer, Iron Mountain Entertainment Services (IMES)

I started coming to The Underground many years ago as a vendor. I called it Narnia because I never knew what I would see or hear. Then about five years ago, I was offered my dream job. Every day is Christmas because we get to work on something special. Some Christmases are better than others, but they're all interesting.

I love music history. Hearing the progression of an artist's work is fascinating. The engineers get a behind-the-scenes look at not just an artist but also the producer, the mix engineer, and the entire record label. We get to see and hear things in a way that other industry people don't get to, because we have access to the whole collection, for the most part - the instruments they used, the choices artists made, the production technology, and the processes they used. That's pretty cool.



Interesting fact: Carrie is a classically trained musician (French horn) with a degree in wind instrument repair.

We had a world-renowned jazz artist in here a while back, and we played back one of his tapes that he hadn't heard in 30 years. He listened and said he preferred a different take than the one that was released, which became a huge hit. It's funny how your perspective can change on something once you get some distance from it.

It's virtually impossible to watch TV or listen to the radio without hearing something we've worked on in [IMES](#). I was shopping the other day and heard a couple of things we worked on, so it's like your work follows you wherever you go. It really speaks to how much our work reaches throughout our and everyone else's lives

Matthew Steck

Audio Engineer, Iron Mountain Entertainment Services (IMES)

When I was a kid, I would tear apart tape recorders. I ripped apart my little Playskool microphone toy and somehow managed to put it back together, to the amazement of many people. That progressed into tape recorders when I was about 10 or 11, and then I started collecting 8-track tapes. I had hundreds of 8-track tapes and probably 20-some players. I could fix them, and I was fascinated by how the little head moved up and down and the fact that they were very electromechanical.

When I got this job about five years ago, it was as if it was meant to be. I spend a lot of my time doing tape transfers, working on everything from major record labels' music to shareholder meetings and commercial spots. Pretty much anything under the sun that has to do with audio, and generally dated audio formats from the past. My job is to figure out how to take it off that tape or storage media at the best quality possible and get it to our clients digitally.

It's amazing opening a box of tape that might not have seen daylight for decades. Listening to the original studio sessions, plus all the banter in the studio, is a glimpse into history most people never get. Knowing that by digitizing it and making that content available to people who can use it again, and knowing that it's now going to be out there for the future to hear, are probably my favorite parts of the job.

It's a race against time to save as much of this stuff as we can. The source material is slowly degrading, the equipment is becoming harder to find, and the people who know how to do this are retiring. We're saving important history - and having a hand in that history and each asset's story is pretty meaningful. And it's a privilege that I don't take lightly.



Interesting fact: Matthew owns and restores a fleet of American Motors cars - two AMC Eagles and a Jeep Grand Wagoneer.

Bethany Boarts

Solutions Architect, Imaging Department



Interesting fact: Bethany is a hockey mom through and through, supporting her young son's goaltending dreams.

Our team focuses on digitizing photographic materials. We work with many businesses that were established decades ago - maybe even over a century. Back in the day, before digital, they recorded everything on film. Whenever they had a big event or were creating something, they'd take photographs along the way to document milestones. It's our job to scan these to make them digital, so they can be preserved forever.

It's legacy and history. It's how these companies have progressed, how they've grown, how they've scaled the inventions and the continuity of their history. What we do is vitally important to each company, so we treat each photo, file, and project with the utmost respect.

In the 19 years I've worked here, my team and I have definitely seen some amazing things. And we never really know what will come in next, which keeps it exciting. But honestly, the best part of my job is the people I work with - our customers and the talented professionals I interact with on a daily basis. It's inspiring to be surrounded by people who have such a commitment to excellence.

Britt Mueller

Manager, Library and Archives Solutions Architect

I've been with Iron Mountain for six years as an archivist and a librarian who works with institutions that have collections, archives, and/or libraries that have historical value. More specifically, I engage with these organizations when they're facing a trigger event causing them to relocate their collections - maybe they're renovating, relocating, or downsizing their existing storage space. We figure out how the materials need to be collected, cared for, and preserved, whether short term, long term or forever, and how to manage those collections safely and securely.

We deal with rare books, manuscripts, archival materials, oversized materials like newspapers and oversized ledgers, even rare geologic assets.

Many of these materials may need a very low temperature or very low humidity point, but what's really important is that they remain in a steady state.



Interesting fact: Britt can comfortably and correctly work the word “incunabula” into any conversation.

The Underground is unique in that it has really unmatched capability in terms of security, space, and flexibility in how collections can be stored. We're able to offer clients targeted spaces with very specific temperatures and humidity levels, which are essential for these one-of-a-kind collections.

We work very closely with many of the teams in The Underground, particularly our Iron Mountain Entertainment Services (IMES) partners, to digitize assets and make them available to the world. We need to comply with rigid standards set by certain organizations, including the Library of Congress's Federal Agencies Digital Guidelines Initiative (FADGI) standards. We comply with those up to the three- and four-star levels, which are the highest levels possible.

Essentially, what we're doing is creating a digital surrogate that makes some of the world's most precious treasures accessible to everyone, which I think is vitally important.

Bill Ford

Operations Manager, [Data Center Facility](#)

I worked for Iron Mountain for 25 years as an industrial electrician within The Underground and for the past 10 have worked as manager for the data center business. In this role, I provide guidance and support to the on-site team performing maintenance and customer support.

This facility is quite unique. When I came here, there were 80 acres of developed space - now there are over 300! And if there's something else as secure or as unique, it's probably top secret and I'm not aware of it.

It starts with the geographic area. It's a very boring weather area. The rolling hills prevent tornadoes from being a problem; you're not near the coast, where you can have hurricanes; and there's very low seismic activity.

Add to this the fact we're 220 feet underground, where the temperature is steadily 53 to 55 degrees, so the natural shell of the facility is always cool. That's a big advantage versus normal buildings and data centers, which are always fighting heat. We also have the advantage of utilizing the 100-acre underground lake as a simple yet reliable and efficient means to geothermally cool the data centers.

When you add together everything, The Underground is an ideal facility for highly secure and reliable production, colocation, and disaster recovery solutions. It's fun to be part of such a unique environment and to fulfill customers' ever-changing needs.



Interesting fact: Bill's favorite band is The Who ... whom he last saw in concert in 2014.



Ty Mericle

General Manager, North Central Region (retired) 2006-2017
16 years total with Iron Mountain




Interesting fact: Ty was a captain in the United States Army and was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

I was kind of like the mayor of The Underground, so to speak, responsible for operational service delivery of the facility. This is not only a secure underground location, but it's also essentially a subterranean city with a water system, sewage, fire department, cafeteria - all these different services and systems that have to be addressed daily to keep things running. So you have this obligation to everyone down here - employees, clients, vendors - to keep them safe, and that goes beyond a simple job. It's a personal responsibility.

The people I worked with were of outstanding caliber and quality. And the interesting thing is that you have husbands and wives, parents and children, all sorts of interconnections working in this space. And a large portion of them had family that helped excavate this mine generations ago. So there is a very, very special link between the generations.

An interesting story is that when this was an active mine, each miner was issued a tag before they entered the space, and then they'd return it when they exited. Occasionally, we would find old tags in spaces we were excavating. Nothing happened to these miners; the tags were just forgotten when the mine closed. We'd clean up the tags, find the family - which was almost always still in the area - and hand-deliver them. Everyone we met was grateful and would tell us a story about the person and their experience in The Underground. This place means so much to the community and the people who live in it.



A quick overview of The Underground

- Located in Boyers, PA
- Active limestone mine from 1902-1957
- 220 feet beneath the surface
- 100-acre lake used to cool the data centers
- 1.8M sq. ft. of developed space
- ~6 miles of roadway
- ~1,100 workers daily
- Impervious to man-made and natural disasters
- Temperature- and humidity-controlled environments
- Diverse multimedia storage meeting ISO standards and NQA-1 (nuclear quality assurance)
- World-class security
- On-site, OSHA-approved fire brigade
- Redundant power sources and telecom capabilities

