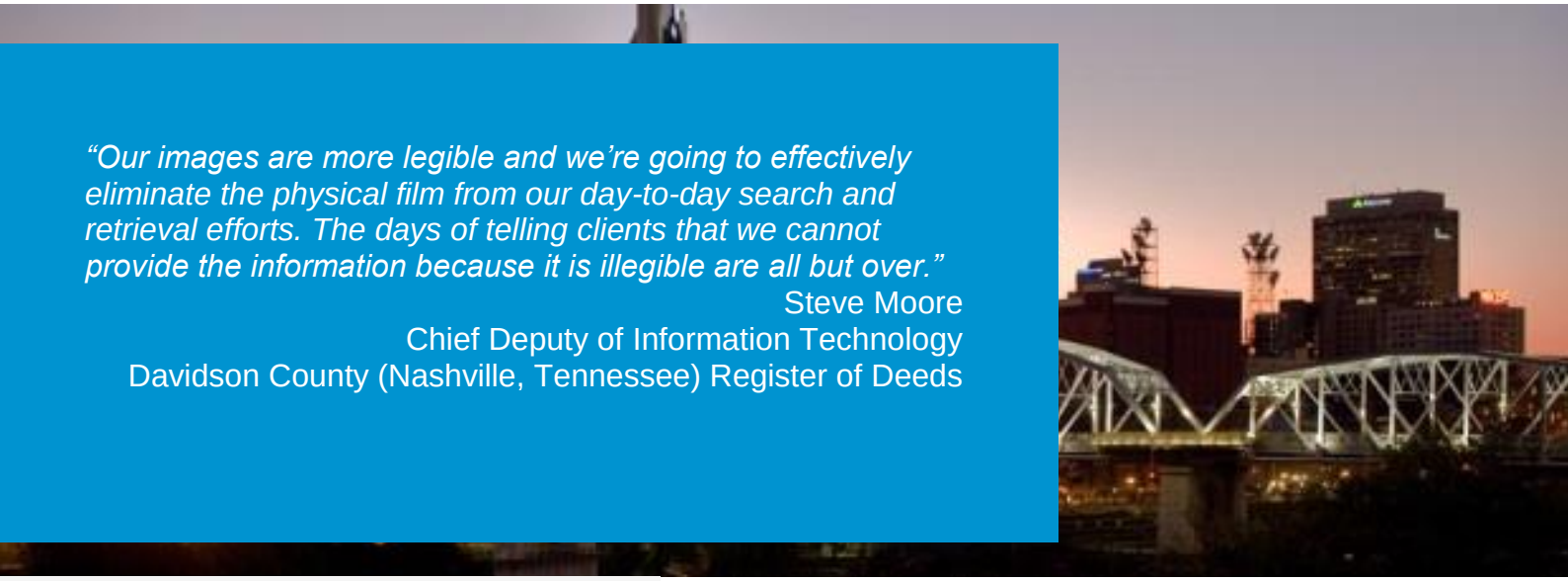

"Our images are more legible and we're going to effectively eliminate the physical film from our day-to-day search and retrieval efforts. The days of telling clients that we cannot provide the information because it is illegible are all but over."

Steve Moore
Chief Deputy of Information Technology
Davidson County (Nashville, Tennessee) Register of Deeds

Case Study

INDUSTRY
- State & Local Government

LOCATION
- Davidson County (Nashville, California)

CHALLENGES
- Conversion inaccuracies and poor quality images from previous microfilm scanning project
- Record searches often relied on using physical microfilm records as back-up when digital records were not legible

BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES
- 10,000 microfilm rolls representing over 10 million records digitally scanned at BMI's California conversion facility
- 12 TB of virtual microfilm records stored at Metro Government Intranet
- Virtual microfilm roll archive accessible over the Internet through the Digital ReeL web client interface

BENEFITS
- Faster record searches that almost never require the use of physical film
- No longer have to tell clients that we cannot get them the information they request due to illegibility

Overview

The Davidson County (Nashville, Tennessee) Register of Deeds is responsible for the maintenance and accessibility of publicly recorded documents that include Deeds of Trust, Liens, Plats and other information.

Several years ago, Davidson County embarked on a project to convert their records from microfilm to digital copies. The County selected a vendor offering a standard microfilm scanning service that delivered individual, indexed images as their finished product. Conversion inaccuracies and poor quality digital records left Davidson unsatisfied with the integrity of the digital records delivered by the vendor.

Davidson County was particularly impressed with Digital ReeL's image enhancing, adjustable grayscale feature. Moore states, "We sent samples of our microfilm to BMI for testing and determined that BMI's Digital ReeL was the answer we were looking for."

Standard Microfilm Scanning Not Up to the Task

Moore states, "Several years ago, we selected a vendor to scan our microfilm in a standard way that indexed each individual image on the microfilm and delivered a set of indexed, digital images back to us. We did not realize the problems we were going to have until we got the images back." Scanning and indexing individual images is prone to error because each image is individually indexed. Moore continues, "We'd have good images and bad images mixed on the same rolls and many of these digital images came back in worse quality than they were on the microfilm."

Overall, the expense and quality of the final product were disappointing to Davidson; thus, the physical microfilm archive had to be available for use. Moore states "the goal of the project was to get rid of the microfilm. We now had people looking information up on their computer, but because some of the digital images were poor in quality, they would have to pull the record from the original microfilm. In some cases, we were unsure if all the records from microfilm were properly transferred to the digital archive. Overall, the record retrieval process was still too time-intensive and tedious."

From Proof of Concept to Completed Project

Davidson started its research by sending microfilm roll samples to BMI. "We sent BMI some of the worst microfilm rolls we could find - the rolls with bad images, splices and anything that could hinder the effective scanning of these records", Moore states. Having been impressed with the quality of the digital samples, Davidson decided to move forward with the project.

The facility was important to Davidson County. Moore states, "We are in Nashville and wanted to make sure that we could trust the location where our microfilm was going to get scanned. We visited BMI's California facility and were impressed with the team's professionalism, the security and the processes in place to ensure that our microfilm would be in good hands."

As the microfilm scanning process unfolded, BMI offered a secure Internet line that enabled Davidson to view the digital microfilm process as it occurred. Conversion accuracy of the records is critical if an office truly hopes to remove physical microfilm from the daily search and retrieval process. Moore states, "BMI visually confirmed that our records were getting digitally converted accurately because we could simply log-in and view each digital microfilm roll as the process unfolded. We were able to view an exact digital replica of each roll to be sure that none of our records were getting missed or lost during the microfilm scanning process."

Image Enhancement with Digital ReeL's Adjustable Grayscale Feature

Many organizations assume microfilm records will last essentially forever, but that just isn't the case in reality. Moore states, "We had rolls that were degrading and cracking and we knew that digitally converting these records into a legible format was going to be a challenge."

Digital ReeL's adjustable grayscale feature enables users to tune the brightness and contrast of each grayscale image until it is legible. "This was critical to us because we not only digitally converted our archive, but we enhanced the quality of the entire archive with this feature. Our images are more legible and we're effectively eliminating the physical film from our day-to-day search and retrieval efforts. The days of telling clients that we cannot provide the information because it is illegible are all but over," Moore concludes.