



*“Digital Reel has enabled Xcel Energy to digitize 13,500 microfilm rolls and offer employees and researchers an online app to search and retrieve records.”*

Rebecca Wessman  
Procedures and Records Management Supervisor  
Xcel Energy



## Case Study



### INDUSTRY

- Energy | Utilities

### LOCATION

- Minneapolis, Minnesota

### CHALLENGES

- Days of staff time consumed with trying to locate information only available on physical microfilm
- Inability to easily print and read information requested from physical microfilm archive
- PII protection

### BMI PRODUCTS & SERVICES

- Approximately 13,500 microfilm rolls digitized at BMI's California microfilm scanning facility
- Rolls included plant-specific engineering/operational records dated January 2006 and older
- On-site installation of Digital Reel
- Separate delivery of searchable PDFs
- Self-service stations, including remote access, give time back to staff
- Adjustable grayscale enables researchers to improve previously illegible photos and text

### Overview

Xcel Energy is a major U.S. electricity and natural gas company, with operations in eight Western and Midwestern states. Xcel Energy provides a comprehensive portfolio of energy-related products and services to 3.6 million electricity customers and 2 million natural gas customers through its regulated operating companies.

“Xcel Energy’s records from 2006 and older were archived on 13,500 microfilm rolls”, states Rebecca Wessman, Procedures and Records Management Supervisor. “We clearly needed a way to digitize our microfilm repository.”

Wessman collaborated with her IT team, who also recognized the potential benefits. After a few on-site demonstrations for various internal constituents, the decision was made to move forward with Digital Reel leveraging a local BMI Imaging partner, Mid-America Business Systems.

## No Risk of Missed Images During the Microfilm Scanning Phase

The Digital ReeL scanning process converts each microfilm roll in its entirety (versus dissociating and scanning each image separately). This ensured that no images were lost during the microfilm conversion process. Because of this, it negated any need for a rigorous quality check by Xcel Energy staff.

It's worth noting that most conversion processes result in a small percentage of lost images. Why? Each image is dissociated and separately indexed. Poor microfilm quality, human error during quality assurance, and a host of other factors can cause record images to be missed during this phase.

Digital ReeL eliminates these risks by accurately creating a digital replica of each microfilm roll. As a result, customers face minimal quality check requirements because the risk of losing an image is nearly nonexistent.

## Self-Service Portal for Staff and Researchers

Wessman states, "We are eliminating all the older microfilm reader equipment and cabinets of physical microfilm. It will free up a lot of prime real estate in four key locations and save money that was previously dedicated to maintenance, ink, and power."

In the past, staff would need to help researchers trying to learn how to access records on physical microfilm. With Digital ReeL, users access the application from their own workstations to digitally search and access records.

## Adjustable Grayscale Enables Image Quality Optimization

Digital ReeL's grayscale enhancement feature enables users to optimize image quality using contrast and brightness adjustments to create a high-quality

image. Users can save, print, or email the record directly from the application.

One of the challenges with microfilm conversion projects is image quality. In many cases, the physical microfilm is old and worn, causing some of the images to be difficult to read. Those poor-quality images are then digitally converted with a microfilm scanning project.

In some cases, the digital record is virtually unreadable. Digital ReeL includes a feature called *adjustable grayscale*. This feature enables users to fine-tune the image until it is exactly the way a researcher wants it. It makes it possible to optimize images that were unreadable.

## Improvement in Protecting Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

One of the ancillary features of Digital ReeL has been its impact on protecting PII. Physical microfilm cabinets had microfilm with PII in the same location as microfilm without PII. Although the microfilm records with PII were stored in locked cabinets, there was a risk that any one of Xcel Energy's 1,300 employees could have accessed those cabinets while researching non-PII records.

Today, with Digital ReeL, non-PII records are made accessible to all users with Digital ReeL access. Confidential microfilm rolls with PII are segmented out and have more stringent Digital ReeL access privileges that protect them.

## Conclusion

Digital ReeL has enabled Xcel Energy to digitize 13,500 microfilm rolls and offer employees and researchers an online app to search and retrieve records.