



The Evolution of Document Management: From Physical Filing to Digital Solutions

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We are all aware of the importance of having your documents

organized. Whether it's for storing important financial information on your business, record-keeping for the clients you've worked with, or even just detailed instructions for employee onboarding, being able to (or not being able to) access this information at a moment's notice is crucial for business operations.

In the ever-changing landscape of information management, the methods and tools for document storage have witnessed a remarkable evolution. But how did we get here? How did society get to a point where we have the benefits of a DMS like digital storage, keyword search, and encrypted network password protection? In order to understand the present, we must take a look at the past. In this blog we will embark on a journey through time, exploring the history of document storage and the advancements that have shaped the way we manage information today.

Filing Cabinet Beginnings and Improvements

The filing cabinet, as we know it today, was invented by Edwin G. Seibels in the United States in 1898, from a patent he filed for what he called the "Vertical Filing Case." His filing cabinet design featured vertically arranged drawers that could be pulled out, allowing for easy access to stored documents. The drawers contained hanging folders, typically made of cardboard or later metal, where individual documents could be filed.

Seibels' invention was a significant improvement over previous document storage methods, such as horizontal shelves or pigeonholes, which made it difficult to organize and locate specific documents. The vertical design of the filing cabinet allowed for a larger storage capacity with smaller square footage, making it ideal for

offices and businesses with limited space.

The popularity of Seibels' invention grew rapidly, and his filing cabinet became widely adopted by various industries, government agencies, and organizations. As demand for document storage solutions grew, the filing cabinet underwent further improvements. Wooden cabinets gave way to metal constructions, offering enhanced durability and security. These metal cabinets, often made of steel, became the norm in the mid-20th century. Their robust nature made them suitable for storing large volumes of documents and protecting them from damage, fire, and theft. The introduction of locking mechanisms added an extra layer of security, ensuring that confidential information remained safe.

The Advent of Microfilm and Microfiche

The next step in document storage came with improvements in photography and film technology. In 1925, the Eastman Kodak Company introduced the 35mm microfilm format. Though they were not the first to introduce the concept of photographing documents and printing them onto rolls of film, their method became the industry standard and was widely adopted. Microfiche was an advancement on microfilm; it was introduced in 1960 and printed documents on a single 4x6 sheet of film. Both required specialized readers in order to view the documents, but this requirement came with new features such as the ability to zoom in, scroll, and adjust brightness levels which made reading documents significantly easier.

Both microfilm and microfiche had significant advantages in storage mainly in size and space. Existing documents could be reduced to 1/24th of their original size. So every inch of the film could contain 24 inches of documents. This meant that a single roll of film or booklet of microfiche could contain thousands of documents, allowing for more

documents to be stored in significantly less space. And with the fact that these were just printed images and not physical pieces of paper, this new method of storage was way more resistant to wear, tear, and degradation over time.

The Digital Storage Revolution

In the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st, scanners, personal computers, and digital storage drives completely revolutionized document storage, along with the ability to capture and index documents.

The first scanners in the late 70s and early 80s were as large as washing machines and were able to scan a document with 200 dpi resolution creating a digital file of about 460KB. In the early 80's a 10MB Winchester disc (aka a Hard Disk) could store about 20 documents and would cost several thousand dollars. As time went on computers grew vastly more sophisticated at a near exponential rate. (Moore's law) This was true not only for storage capacity but with the ability to have scanning devices directly interfaced or built-in to the PC. In a matter of only 20 years, computers could store terabytes of data for under \$10, making document storage extremely cost effective after the turn of the century.

This also led to invaluable new indexing features using databases that drastically reduced the labor costs for searching for specific information in an archive. This includes key word searching and adding metadata to make retrieval even easier.

Implement a DMS Today!

The history of document storage goes all the way back to the 19th century, but in the past 40 years with personal computers and advanced storage technology, the industry has made incredible leaps that have helped propel businesses into the modern age of document management. And looking into the future, cloud storage can propel us even further as documents can now be accessed across the internet without the need to be directly attached to a local network. This opens up the possibilities for remote collaboration on projects and information sharing across an organization.

With the many changes that have happened over the past century and a half with document management, a modern DMS has become the culmination of all these features and innovations of the past improved and combined into one easy-to-access platform.

At Mindwrap, we are proud to offer the expertise of industry-leading professionals who can initiate the conversation about implementing a Document Management System and propel your company toward progress and success.

[Contact us](#) today for any inquiries you may have regarding your existing tech stack and how seamlessly integrating a DMS system can enhance your operations. Our team is ready to provide the guidance and support you need to optimize your document management processes.