

**CASE STUDY**

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION,  
DIVISION OF STATE LANDS,  
BUREAU OF SURVEY  
AND MAPPING



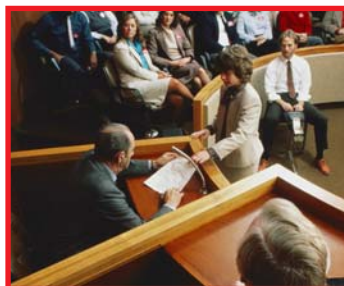
**THE SITUATION**

It was the fall of 2001, and Sara Warner, analyst with the Bureau of Survey and Mapping, had a problem. Her department had amassed a huge document collection maintained by an aging work force. As her staff retired, their valuable insights into the content of these documents was being lost. Warner was also aware that any system for organizing and accessing this data had to support specific, detailed legal and historical issues surrounding boundary disputes and land ownership.

But perhaps the most perplexing issue was the nature of the documents themselves. "We beta tested an internal solution based on a traditional indexing system," said Warner. "But in an environment where information retrieval depends on constantly changing needs and characteristics, this very simplistic solution fell far short of the mark."

**OUR ASSESSMENT**

ROH was asked to perform a needs analysis for the Bureau to determine how OCULUS could best be deployed to meet Warner's needs. The first issue to be addressed was the design of dual search approaches that used a conventional indexing hierarchy as well as a free text search function. This would allow the researcher to mine the information in one or both of two ways; first along dimensions that were unique to the Bureau's data characteristics (for example, by location, water-body, county, date, etc.) and secondly with a precise search by word or phrase through the actual documents.



During the analysis phase of the project, the issue of document management and retrieval in the legal context surfaced. It became clear that the Bureau needed the ability to quickly locate and transport data into the courtroom without embarrassing connectivity issues.

In practical terms, this meant that a room full of boxes of documents of all shapes and sizes pertaining to a specific trial needed to be transportable to court at a moment's notice. The further implications were that the data had to have different levels of accessibility and that it had to be compressed to a manageable file size.

**THE SOLUTION**

OCULUS was the answer that Warner was looking for, and the development of a dual search utility gave the Bureau a unique tool which is still growing and developing today. "I wanted a Google-like experience for the researcher, a schema that would allow the database to change as the needs of Bureau expanded over time," said Warner. The tiered catalog system of the **SLRD** (SOVEREIGNTY LANDS RESEARCH DATABASE) is a carefully-researched taxonomy with profiles that define access to the various types of data. The free text search function combines a searchable pdf image with a text file. The researcher can determine where a key word or phrase appears in a document, providing a rich source of information. Updates add additional profiles of data as necessary and security can be precisely controlled. The entire system is compact, easy to use and expandable.

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the OCULUS story is the development of **PORT**, the PORTABLE OCULUS RETRIEVAL TOOL. This self-contained server pulls all image files and metadata pertaining to a specific legal case, retrieved by case number, and resides on a laptop, making it easy to transport to court with little effort. Warner feels that this aspect of the OCULUS solution was the icing on the cake, making her job and those of her staff more efficient and much less costly. "My experience with OCULUS was stellar; from inception to getting us up and running took a very short time and we've never looked back," says Warner. "I expect OCULUS to be here far into Florida's environmental future."

"OCULUS IS A  
REVOLUTIONARY PIECE  
OF SOFTWARE THAT IS BOTH  
ROBUST AND FLEXIBLE ENOUGH  
TO SUPPORT THE UNIQUE AND  
EVOLVING CHARACTER OF OUR  
DMS REQUIREMENTS. I HIGHLY  
RECOMMEND IT."  
**Ms. SARA WARNER**  
SLRD COORDINATOR  
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