



## CASE STUDY

# Hurunui District Council Digitizes 850,000 Property Files with Alchemy

<b>Industry</b>	Government, local
<b>Challenge</b>	Converting 850,000 paper documents to digital online
<b>Solution</b>	Captaris Alchemy Document Management
<b>Results</b>	Saved about \$186K NZD; up and running in only three months

## BACKGROUND

From the irresistible charm of Hanmer Springs, New Zealand's best alpine spa, to the magnificent wine and food of the Waipara Wine Valley and the marine mammals of Kaikoura, Hurunui is one of the most stunning and spectacular regions in the South Island of New Zealand. The Hurunui District Council is the local government agency responsible for managing the government services in this beautiful region.

## THE CHALLENGE

The Council had what appeared to be an unaffordable dream—converting about 850,000 property-related documents into easily accessible electronic files. In a region where property transactions and new construction are booming, management recognized that the continued use of paper files was unsustainable, with mounting pressures on storage space, continuing degradation of the files and excessive demands on staff time as requests for access to property records and council-generated reports increased. The Council needed to eliminate the time-consuming process of retrieving bulky paper files dating back more than 40 years.

The typical file management process would have been to hire a service bureau to convert the files to digital; however the project was thrown into doubt when quotes received for contract scanning of the records proved to be well beyond the council's budget. The Council was faced with scanning costs up to \$250,000 NZD plus the requirement to remove the files from the premises. They decided to go it alone.

The Council set aggressive objectives for success:

- To eliminate time spent searching for and retrieving property-related files from the archives
- To reduce the demand for on-site archiving hard copy storage
- To reduce degradation of the paper files caused by repeated handling
- To provide temporary work for local residents, especially targeting students seeking work over the university summer vacation period
- To improve service to members of the public and property professionals requiring rapid access to records
- To ensure the system would be easy-to-use for all users, including staff engaged in building and maintaining archives, those using the system to retrieve data and non-staff users
- To build a system that would scale and could be further developed, at low-cost and available over the Internet

## THE SOLUTION

With records storage space at a premium, the Council earlier had worked with Canon New Zealand, an imaging reseller and Captaris partner, to deploy Alchemy for its electronic document management and archiving needs. The council's first implementation of Alchemy was an advanced mail, document management and distribution system that delivers correspondence and documents to the desktops of relevant staff. The Council's ultimate goal was to achieve digital storage and online access for all property records, and integrate the system with their existing electronic storage systems and high-speed PCs that delivered Geographic Information System (GIS) maps and graphics to large, high-resolution computer monitors.

The experience gained on the initial project showed it was feasible, using Alchemy, to tackle the property file scanning and archive project and achieve the Council's stated objectives. In just over three months and at considerably less cost than outsourcing, the in-house project converted about 850,000 property-related documents into easily accessed electronic files. Costs were well within budget, and the Council was able to quickly see measurable results.

All documents relating to a property are now able to be displayed on staff computers using the council's intranet, and will soon be extended to enable public access on terminals provided in the reception area. An integration link to the Council's GIS) mean all records relating to a particular property can be called up with one mouse click on the map.

The next step will be to make the newly-digitized property records available over the Internet and the council is again looking for a low-cost delivery system starting with assessment of the Alchemy Web Server product.

## THE RESULTS

The entire project cost just \$64,000 NZD. The cost savings were immense and jobs were provided for local people. The staff time required for preparing Land Information Memoranda (LIMs) and Property Information Memoranda (PIMs) for prospective property purchasers has been drastically reduced.

Councilors were impressed by the project's low cost and likely high future returns in improved efficiency. Senior management buy-in for the next step in the project is easier due to the successful implementation of the phase one document and mail management system, and minimal training is required for staff, as they are already familiar with the easy-to-use operation of the Alchemy system.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Captaris Business Information Delivery solutions help organizations of all sizes automate the information and document flow throughout the information lifecycle (capture, process, deliver, manage and archive). With a comprehensive suite of software and services, Captaris helps organizations to grow revenues and increase profits while meeting compliance goals. Through a global distribution network of leading enterprise technology partners, Captaris has installed more than 90,000 systems in 95 countries in companies of all sizes, including the entire Fortune 100. For more information, visit [www.captaris.com](http://www.captaris.com) or call 1.800.443.0806.

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