



[Business Cases]



Contex Helps Celina Historical Society Preserve a Century of News with the COPYmate® 18 Scanner

Celina Area Heritage Association - a local historical group that works to restore historical structures and preserve the history of Celina Texas.

Challenge - preserving fragile local newspapers dating back to the early 1900s by converting them to digital files to build an online archive.

Solution - a Context COPYmate® 18 Flatbed Scanner with WIDEImage software to convert thousands of fragile, historical newspapers into digital format.

Results - the Celina Area Heritage Association is on its way to preserving precious local history and converting fragile turn-of-the-century newspapers.

“*The Context COPYmate 18 is easy to use, and we’re getting really good quality with these old newspapers. I’m just tickled.*” Jane Willard, Director/Volunteer, Celina Area Heritage Association

Profile - Celina Area Heritage Association

Originally established in 1876, the little town of Celina Texas underwent its first major upheaval in 1896 when the entire community was moved to a new railroad right-of-way and homes and businesses were placed on rollers and pulled across muddy fields to a new location. Today, more than a century later, the community is experiencing another major wave of change. The small town of open fields and gently rolling farm and ranch lands, just 40 minutes north of Dallas, has experienced explosive growth in recent years. As growth and modernization change the make-up of the town, the Celina Area Heritage Association is working to preserve the town’s local buildings and 100 years of newspapers and historical documents that record a rich and colorful past. As part of this effort, the association teamed up with the Texas Historical Commission’s “Visionaries in Preservation,” a program that establishes historical districts to restore historic structures.

The Celina Area Heritage Association purchased and restored a 100-year-old building downtown that had once served as the home for the community newspaper. With the purchase of the old building, the association also acquired nearly a century of newspapers dating back to the early 1900s. The remaining papers were acquired through a local reporter sympathetic to the association’s preservation efforts. Today, the historic building serves as a Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center and a local history museum.

Challenge

Transforming Fragile, One-of-a-Kind Newspapers to a Digital Archive. As with many small towns, the newspaper published in the restored building was like a history book of life in the small Texas town. The Celina Area Heritage Association wanted to preserve the newspapers so that people researching the town’s history or creating family trees could find the information they needed without further damaging the fragile newspapers. The Celina Area Heritage Association board of directors/volunteers realized that there was only one way they could both safeguard the newspapers and provide public access to the historical and genealogic information contained in them—scanning and converting them to digital format. The challenge? Finding a way to transform the one-of-a-kind originals into a high-quality archive that would provide an index of obituaries, genealogic information, weddings and other historic events—accessible via the Internet. “We have several old newspapers that go as far back as 1911, 1913, and the 1920s. From 1930 forward we have 90 percent of the newspapers. They provide a fascinating record of life in our town, but some of the older papers are in really bad shape,” says director/volunteer Jane Willard.

*“ Without the
Contex COPY-
mate, we might
lose the valu-
able history that
our old newspa-
pers provide. ”*

Bob McKnight, Officer
and Director of the Celina
Area Heritage Association



AT A GLANCE

1. Simple operation and excellent image quality
2. A roadmap to online access for people conducting genealogic research
3. Valuable documents are safely digitized without damaging originals.
4. Preservation of one-of-a-kind documents that provide a record of small-town life.

The association explored options for the back-file conversion. Willard recalls, “We had been looking for a way to convert the newspapers for three years. We considered microfilm and outsourcing scanning to a third party, but that would mean the newspapers would have to go offsite, out of our control and with someone else handling them that didn’t love them like we did.” She adds, “Outsourcing would have been costly—up to \$40,000—so we decided to do it ourselves. We first tried mounting a digital camera on a tripod to photograph the papers, but that method was laboriously slow and the images had a fisheye effect.”

Solution

Contex COPYmate 18® Makes it Easy to Create an Accessible Digital Archive. That’s when Scott Schuppert of CAD/CAM Services, an IDEAL dealer and an officer of the Celina Area Heritage Association, introduced the group to the Contex COPYmate 18 flatbed scanner. Impressed with its quality and clamshell design, ideal for scanning the fragile originals, the Association installed the scanner with WIDELmage software for image enhancement, de-skewing, and quality control in August 2006. “It was the only scanner that was large enough to handle the newspaper pages in one pass and the only wide-format scanner with a flatbed design that could handle the fragile pages,” states Officer and Director of the Celina Area Heritage Association, Bob McKnight. The Contex COPYmate 18 combines a clamshell design with 48-bit color capture, high-speed color and black and white scanning, on-board iJET™ technology and an easily accessible operator panel to enable full scan-to-print or scan-to-file capabilities without requiring an additional PC or software. With its large 18” x 24” scan area, the COPYmate 18 was the only scanner on the market capable of scanning the large, fragile newspapers without unnecessary wear and tear. WIDELmage software makes it easy for volunteers to scan, clean up and archive files as needed. “Our purpose,” says Jane Willard, the director/volunteer in charge of the back-file conversion project, “is to preserve the heritage of our community and its surrounding area. There’s a world of old time stories in these newspapers, and that’s what we want to preserve—the history of our community.”

Result

Contex COPYmate 18® is simple to use and easy on fragile documents

Since implementing the Contex scanner, the Celina Area Heritage Association has made impressive strides in converting the collection of nearly 5000 newspapers to digital format. “We started with the oldest papers first because they were in the worst shape—some we just had bits and pieces. We’re just about through with those and now we’re working forward,” says Willard. The association volunteers scan the newspapers one page at a time. While some of the newspapers can be laid directly on the scanning surface without further deterioration, many are so fragile that the only way to scan them front and back without falling apart is to sandwich them between two pieces of clear plexiglass. This way, volunteers can more easily flip the newspapers to scan both sides of the page. The association’s ultimate goal is to create an online archive that citizens can use to access historical information. Willard estimates that the entire back-file conversion project will take about five years to complete. “My goal is to get to the 1950s in a couple of years and I’ve already made good progress. In the meantime, we couldn’t do what we’re doing without the Contex scanner—we just love it. It’s easy to use and we’re getting really good quality with these old newspapers. I’m just tickled.”

About Contex

CONTEX is a high-technology global manufacturing company of over 500 employees around the world. CONTEX is the leading provider of large-format color and monochrome scanners, 3D printers and an innovative developer of advanced software for these products. CONTEX distributes its products through a worldwide distribution network with representatives and distributors in more than 100 countries. CONTEX has subsidiaries in the United States, China and Japan.

HEAD OFFICE
Contex A/S
Svanevang 2
DK-3450 Allerød, Denmark
T: +45 48 14 11 22
F: +45 48 14 01 22

USA
Contex
365 Herndon Parkway
Herndon, VA 20170, USA
T: +1 703 925 2316
F: +1 703 707 0825

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