

Southwest Oncology Group

INDUSTRY: **Medical, New Drug Development**

PRODUCTS: **5.25" Optical Library**

The Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) is an adult cancer clinical trials organization, the largest in the world. SWOG's network consists of over 5000 of the nation's leading physicians at 377 institutions throughout the United States and Canada. Since its inception in 1956, the Southwest Oncology Group has directly affected the lives of more than 150,000 patients enrolled in clinical trials. The organization has touched millions more through dedicated and successful clinical research. Within the past 10 years, Southwest Oncology Group research has led to the FDA issuance of new drug approvals for seven cancer therapies. Despite this impressive record, SWOG faced a multitude of problems as far as storage and retrieval of documents were concerned.

Late in 1998, SWOG decided to install an integrated Electronic Folder and Document Management System (EFADMS) to address the needs of this dynamic organization. SWOG decided to choose a proven technology that provides a reliable document imaging system matched with a storage system that meets the FDA's regulatory requirements of write-once storage. This allowed SWOG to evolve from a paper-based document processing system to a digital system more suited to the fast paced environment of the Southwest Oncology Group.

A document imaging system that allow easy integration of multiple existing applications with imaging and workflow, was able to integrate with the existing Oracle Patient Therapeutic Database (OPTD) without much ado. The total system consists of 25 viewing and retrieval stations, one scan/index station, a data file server with 36 GB of on-line RAID storage and 320 GB of near online storage (Optical Library). Back-file conversion was done using the existing scanners. A dedicated scan/index station with a large monitor is used to review

each scanned image for clarity before the image is indexed to information on the appropriate document management screen. The images are then stored on a large capacity hard disk (shared drive) and they are available for near instantaneous retrieval using any one of the 25 viewing stations. Optical libraries were indexed through document management software through the use of a storage management API and were able to provide archival support directly and seamlessly meeting FDA regulatory requirements. This allows for files to be passed off from on-line storage devices to near-line storage and back again. SWOG's application required that data be stored for a very long time and thus write-once optical was chosen as an archival solution allowing SWOG to keep the costs of long-term storage down. Searching for a document is performed within fields created in the application. Once located, a single keystroke brings up the documents to view and another keystroke sends it to print.

SWOG started with a single archive storage device for the first year and now they have higher storage with additional distributed storage libraries. Storage of different data types like MRI, X-rays, photographs, video and voice have also been added.