

The United States Federal Courts

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Federal judiciary improves court proceeding efficiencies and shrinks paper processing costs by publishing case files on the Internet in PDF

ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

- Administrative office for federal judiciary
- Serves the nation's 200 trial and appellate courts
- Headquarters: Washington, D.C.

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- U.S. courts improve court processes by providing access to case documents published on the Web as PDF files.
- PDF provides the precise fidelity to paper documents that's essential for creating an electronic archive of legal papers.
- The electronic archive of PDF files reduces storage requirements, virtually eliminates lost documents, and enables multiple people to view the same file concurrently.
- By using Adobe Acrobat to create PDF files for submission via the Web, attorneys save photocopying and courier costs, and can file cases more quickly.
- Acrobat Capture software enables courthouse staff to convert attorneys' paper documents to PDF files for inclusion on the Web-based docket.

www.uscourts.gov

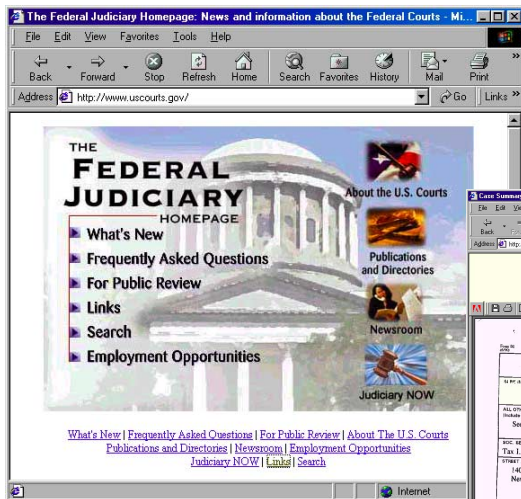
For most court hearings, a river of paper precedes litigants to the courthouse. A typical bankruptcy petition, for example, contains 30 pages; documents for more complex trials can contain hundreds of thousands of pages. Managing, tracking, and distributing all the documents associated with a court proceeding is a time-consuming, paper-intensive process that must be handled flawlessly in order to meet critical court deadlines. Attorneys, who must submit multiple copies of all documents, consume reams of paper. Anxious litigants can often face delays associated with copying and distributing documents. And people who need to view the documents must go to the courthouse to do so, often encountering misplaced documents or inaccessibility of documents that may be locked in a judge's chambers.

For the nation's federal trial courts, known collectively as the U.S. federal courts, filing and obtaining the documents related to court cases is now faster, easier, and less expensive thanks to Adobe Acrobat and Acrobat Capture software and PDF. "We require virtually all documents submitted to the U.S. courts to be stored electronically as PDF files, which attorneys, judges, court personnel, other trial participants, and the public can access via the Web," says

Michael Greenwood, program manager for the Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) prototype project. Attorneys and court personnel convert documents directly to PDF from their native applications or scan and convert paper documents to PDF using Adobe Acrobat or Acrobat Capture software.

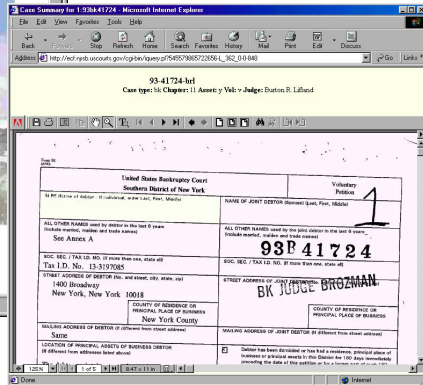
ELECTRONIC CASE MANAGEMENT AND FILING

Before the U.S. federal courts' adoption of PDF, attorneys submitted paper documents, which were stored at a courthouse. As each document was received, clerks entered summary information into a legacy database that represented the case docket, which was accessible only to attorneys and case participants via a bulletin-board system's (BBS's) dial-up connection. "The paper-based system meant expensive storage requirements, lost and misfiled documents, the possibility of someone walking away with a document or the entire case file, and the inability for two or more people to view the same document concurrently," says Greenwood.



To submit case filings to the U.S. federal courts, attorneys and court personnel convert documents directly to PDF using Adobe Acrobat and Acrobat Capture software. Acrobat software provides precise fidelity to the paper copy originals—which is essential for legal filings—and enables courthouse staff to convert attorneys' paper documents to PDF files for inclusion on the searchable, Web-based docket.

To streamline courthouse procedures, reduce court staff docketing and document filing time, and reduce case participants' photocopying and document shipping costs, the Administrative Office of the U.S. courts developed the CM/ECF system, which allows submission and access to entire case files and dockets in PDF via the Web. Interested parties can go to the Web site and select the case docket—which lists all the activities associated with the case and all its related documents—and click a hypertext link to view or print the PDF file of a particular case document. Each fully searchable PDF file can be easily located and looks just like the paper original. "Adobe Acrobat and PDF provide the cornerstone for the electronic system, allowing users to submit and view case documents 24x7, without ever leaving their computers," says Greenwood.



PRECISE FIDELITY WITH PAPER DOCUMENTS

The U.S. federal courts selected PDF as its standard for electronic case files because of its widespread acceptance for online document delivery and the popularity of the freely available Acrobat Reader® software. In addition, the fidelity of PDF files with the original native application files and paper documents is essential for legal papers, and the small file sizes conserve storage space and enables fast downloading from the Web.

The CM/ECF system is currently in place in nine districts—five bankruptcy and four district courts—and is targeted for rollout to all 200 federal courts nationwide. To date, more than 80,000 official case dockets containing more than one million PDF files are available electronically.

FASTER FILING AND 24x7 ACCESS

As case documents are converted to PDF, attorneys submit them to the courts via the CM/ECF Web site by completing a few fields on a browser-based form and attaching the

PDF file. The file is stored and cataloged in an Informix database. Attorneys can bring cases to the court's and other litigants' attention faster by avoiding the delays associated with photocopying and shipping paper documents. Cost savings are significant. "Attorneys' ROI for purchasing Adobe Acrobat is achieved in a matter of weeks in courier and photocopying costs alone," says Greenwood.

Within minutes of filing case documents, the parties who are associated with the particular case are informed via e-mail that the new document has been submitted. They can access the documents and dockets immediately. Greenwood adds, "We enhance the court proceedings process because case participants know that they're being given immediate access to all necessary case documents and are not blindsided by a finding days later."

IMPROVED CONVENIENCE, LOWER COSTS

"The PDF solution is so efficient that several courts no longer maintain any paper case files," says Greenwood. "We've improved court processes by making it more cost-effective to submit documents, and more convenient to retrieve them, 24x7, from your own computer."

TOOLKIT

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