UO Document Imaging Project Wins Award

From the start, it was a broad, campus-wide vision and a firm commitment to cooperation and collaboration that guided the UO’s ambitious document imaging project. And, as it turned out, it was these very same qualities that earned an award for the hardworking team of administrators, programmers, and technical consultants from six key university departments who developed the project from its inception to its first launch on October 2, 2006.

To understand the magnitude of their achievement, first imagine the volume of record-keeping that’s part of daily life in the Admissions and Registrar’s offices. Processing and archiving thousands of student records year after year takes up quite a bit of office real estate. Imagine a phalanx of filing cabinets, IN bins and OUT bins, record folders—all proliferating to contain and organize a formidable paper trail. Think of the time it takes to alphabetize and file these records and find them when they’re requested.

Now, after almost three years of work by the core document imaging project team, these records have been digitized and filed electronically for easy desktop access. No more digging through filing cabinets, walking or mailing copies of files to other departments or colleagues, or spending time searching for misplaced record folders. Instead, documents are now scanned, indexed, and entered into a system of online workflows and tasks that staff can process from their desktops. Each workstation is equipped with two flat-screen computers for easy online processing: one screen displays Banner, while the other shows the document image, workflow, and tasks for processing.

The software package that made all this possible is a Hershey Systems product called Singularity. But Singularity could not do it all. The software had to be tweaked and modified to fit the UO’s specific needs—a challenge taken on by Information Services systems analyst and co-project leader Derek Wormdahl, along with colleagues Micah Sardell, Stephanie Freeman, James Joule, and the Registrar’s imaging and web coordinator, Travis Shea. Together with co-project leader Jim Bouse (Registrar’s Office), the team worked closely with a core group of two representatives from each of six departments. Admissions Office IT specialist Lois Andersen and senior associate operations director Kirk Koenig were in the forefront of product testing, as it was their department which first implemented the program last fall.

Currently, the new document imaging system has been integrated into the workflows of both Admissions and Registrar’s, and the Business and Financial Aid offices are in the pipeline for deployment.

On October 25, Hershey Systems formally recognized the UO team’s achievement by giving them its annual Technology Award, noting that “[the University of] Oregon clearly stands out as the leader for 2006.” The award is the icing on the cake for Wormdahl, whose favorite aspect of the project was collaborating with others. “The entire team worked together from the beginning. We knew we’d have to involve everyone in the decision-making process and check our egos at the door,” he says. Wormdahl is also extremely pleased that the Oregon Hall staff enthusiastically embraced the new software. “No matter how good a system you devise, the end user is vital to its success,” he says. “Bottom line: Will they take to it? Will they use it?” Admissions Office teammate Lois Andersen agrees. “The staff did a great job of retooling,” she says. “They embraced the new system just beautifully.”