

Vender Profile: Millican & Associates

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MYSTIC SEAPORT

MEMORANDUM

To: Records Management Staff

From: Abigail Tilden

Re: Millican & Associates

Recently, Millican & Associates, a records management company, proposed providing services to Mystic Seaport focusing on the use of their expertise in electronic imaging to further develop our present RIM program. The goal of electronic imaging is to cut down on on-site records storage by providing the necessary records in format that takes up less space, has multiple access points, and allows for additional copies to be made and disposed of as needed.

Mystic is unlike many of Millican's current clients, which consist of mainly utilities, Fortune 500 companies, and government agencies. Our RIM needs are very different from those companies. We already have an active retention schedule in place which handles the majority of our RIM needs with off-site storage and proper disposal. The key wild card of our organization is our Historical Collection. This collection is rather unsuited to electronic imaging. Many of the items are physical objects, such as our ships, or are already microfilmed and therefore do not require electronic imaging.

Based on these factors, I have chosen to decline Millican's proposal.

Millican & Associates is a records and information management vendor with locations in Florida, Washington, D.C., and around the nation. They offer a full range of services, both in the creation of new records management programs and the expansion of existing ones. Their list of clients is vast, but the majority are government offices and agencies. Millican proposes a contract with Mystic Seaport to utilize their experience with electronic imaging to digitize our records. At this time, I do not recommend we pursue this option.

About Millican

Millican & Associates have 23 years of experience in the field of records management. (http://www.filenet.com/English/Partners/Partner_Description/millican.asp). The company's clients include utilities, Fortune 500 companies, and government agencies. (<http://www.millican-assoc.com/about.htm>). Millican's website demonstrates a specific focus government contracts: their government contract number is prominently displayed on their website, as well as a link their catalog on the GSA Advantage website, which includes descriptions of the services Millican offers as well as the hourly rates for various contractors. Millican's services consist of both establishing records and information management programs and improving existing programs. They are suggesting that they can supplement our existing records and information system, both administrative and our historical collection, with electronic imaging. (<http://www.millican-assoc.com/services.htm>).

Electronic imaging

Electronic imaging is the conversion of physical documents into digital format. Alan Zaben, one of Millican's records managers, gives the following factors as primary considerations in determining documents to image:

1. Large volume
2. Lengthy retention period

3. High retrieval rate
4. Multiple people accessing the same document
5. Need for remote access
6. No legal requirements for maintaining original copies
7. Multiple copies of a document exist

While Zaben has identified multiple factors that can indicate using electronic imaging, there are other factors that can affect the use of electronic imaging. Documents that are of poor quality, colored, or will require a great deal of preparatory work are all poor candidates for electronic imaging. Large numbers of documents require further outlays of time and money. And documents removed from their storage area for scanning will be unavailable for immediate use or review until the process is completed.

Electronic imaging will permit a reduction of savings by allowing space presently occupied by records to be freed up: documents available in digital form can be stored off-site or destroyed if the retention schedule permits it.

An additional benefit is allowing multiple users to access a document simultaneously, from multiple locations. Having documents digitized allows users to search keywords and content. While content can be determined by OCR (Optical Character Recognition); keywords must be entered during the scanning process.

Applications at Mystic

Mystic Seaport is a unlike many of Millican's other clients. We are not a large government agency or a major utility or company in the Fortune 500. Consequently, we do not generate records on the level of these institutions. Mystic is required to retain original copies of many of the records which would otherwise be candidates for imaging, such as information regarding donations or employee W4 forms. Many of these documents can be stored off site, saving expensive office space for other uses. These documents are subject to our general

retention schedule, and will be disposed of as scheduled, helping to create space for future records.

The largest collection of documents we maintain on-site are our historical collections of documents and items. Much of our collection is already on microfilm, or consists of objects or is part of our fleet of ships. These items can not be digitized. Those items that can be digitized are frequently sufficiently old and fragile that scanning could endanger them. In addition, the benefit of regained storage space is irrelevant in this case, as these items are retained for their intrinsic historical value, and as part of our compliance with the requirements of the American Association of Museums, our accrediting organization.

Recommendation

While electronic imaging is an attractive technology, Mystic Seaport's structure, collection of non-paper-based archival items, and unique accreditation retention requirements make us particularly unsuited for large electronic imaging projects. Therefore, I cannot recommend using Millican & Associates to establish an electronic imaging project.

References

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