

Case study

William Breman Museum

»The Fujitsu scanning technology has already proven to be an incredibly valuable asset that is helping us preserve and publish documents that are vital to understanding the history of Jewish life in the South.«

Jeremy Katz, director of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History, William Breman Museum



The customer

The William Breman Museum in Atlanta was founded to celebrate and commemorate the Jewish experience in the Southeastern United States, offering a central location to collect, preserve, interpret, and teach Jewish values, culture, and history. Named for the businessman who was active for decades in Atlanta's Jewish community, the museum provides visitors with a historical perspective of the Jewish community in Georgia and adjacent states through permanent and rotating exhibitions. It also hosts a resource library and extensive archives containing documents and other artifacts of Jewish life in the South.

The challenge

Jeremy Katz, director of the Cuba Family Archives for Southern Jewish History—the formal name for the museum's extensive archive collection—says gathering and preserving historical documents and other items from Jewish families in the South is essential to providing a rich portrayal of Jewish history and activities in the region.

"We have two primary focuses," says Katz. "The first is Holocaust history, especially as it relates to survivors who wound up in the South. Then, we focus on Jewish history in the South. We have families in the region whose history dates back to the colonial period."

One important collection the museum obtained included documents from the Alexander family, including Henry Alexander, Sr., one of the family's most prominent members. He was a lawyer for Leo Frank, a factory superintendent convicted of rape who was seized by a lynch mob and hanged in 1915, a period in which anti-Semitism was rampant.

In addition to preserving the Alexander family documents, which consist of nearly 13 linear feet of documents dating back to the 1800s, the museum wanted some way of safely digitizing the Alexander materials for a website redesign.

The customer

Customer: William Breman Museum
Country: USA
Industry: Other
Website: www.thebreman.org

The challenge

With a mission to preserve historical records and make them accessible to the public, the Breman Museum needed a scanning process that could handle large volumes of ordinary paperwork, but that also would not damage old, delicate documents.

The solution

The dual-function fi-6770 allows the Breman Museum to process documents, both new and old. In addition to superior image quality, Fujitsu scanners enables OCR tagging for easy digital searches. The Fujitsu solution assists the Museum to provide public access to personal stories for the preservation of history.

The benefit

- Speed enabled 37,000 documents to be scanned in one week
- Helps make museum's archives far more accessible online to researchers and general public
- Assists in providing backup copies in case originals are lost or irreparably damaged
- Reduces physical contact with original helping to preserve them

"The Alexander collection is a treasure trove for learning about Jewish life in the South," Katz says. "We wanted to digitize this and other collections, with the goal of making a lot more of our archived material easily accessible online for people doing research as well as for the general public."

The solution

As the museum reviewed its technology options for the digitization project, Katz recalled his experience working for the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. "They had purchased a Fujitsu scanner for their documents, and it worked wonderfully," he says.

Following discussions with one of the organization's patrons, the Breman Museum received a new Fujitsu fi-6770, which can scan up to 90 pages per minute. It also provides a flatbed scanning option for more fragile documents, such as letters and contracts handwritten on onion-skin paper. In addition, the donor provided funds so the museum could hire a part-time assistant to help prepare documents to be digitized.

During the scanning process, the museum converts documents into Adobe PDF files. Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology is used to extract information and the part-time assistant and volunteers add metadata, footnoting and watermarking.

"Our goal," says Katz, "is to make documents easily searchable, and to provide as many hits as possible for researchers and members of the public who are looking for specific information on our site."

Products and services

- FUJITSU Image Scanner fi-6770

The benefit

The speed and convenience of the Fujitsu scanner is a boon to the museum's archival activities.

"During one week alone, we used the Fujitsu fi-6770 to scan about 37,000 documents," Katz says. "Of course, there was a lot of preparation work to do first, such as removing paper clips or other objects that could become jammed in the machine. But with that work done, the Fujitsu scanner was incredibly fast and efficient, and allowed us to use the flatbed in instances where documents were too delicate to go through the sheet feeder."

Digitizing archival documents delivers a number of important benefits. "If we lose materials for some reason, we still have a digital backup, so there is a permanence that scanning technology brings to our collections," Katz says. "It helps preservation efforts in other ways too, like minimizing the physical handling of documents. This is critical with very old or fragile materials, since dirt or oils on hands, or simply the act of handling, can damage these artifacts."

The Alexander digitization project went so quickly and smoothly that the museum is now using the technology on other collections, including documents from the Georgia Farm and Resettlement Bureau, which helped refugees just prior to World War II, and the Jewish Grocers' Coop of the early 1920s.

"The Fujitsu scanning technology has already proven to be an incredibly valuable asset that is helping us preserve and publish documents that are vital to understanding the history of Jewish life in the South," Katz says



Contact

Fujitsu Computer Products of America, Inc.
Address: 1250 East Arques Avenue, Sunnyvale, CA 94085-4701
Phone: (888)425-8228
E-mail: info@fcpa.fujitsu.com
Website: <http://us.fujitsu.com/fcpa>

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