

Case study

Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo

»The ability to enlarge scanned images at a high resolution shows details we could not see before.«

Shigekazu Kondo, Professor, Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo



The customer

The Historiographical Institute of the University of Tokyo studies Japanese history from ancient times to the Meiji Restoration period. Founded in the Edo period, this institute collects and analyzes a wide variety of historical resources. After compiling exhibits, the Institute opens their work to the community in order to contribute to developing the public's knowledge of Japanese history. They use the ScanSnap SV600 to scan the old books and documents which can be easily damaged.

“The most basic work of the Institute is to compile historical material from the 9th century to the Meiji Restoration period. Then we organize the resources on a timeline and discover all sorts of interesting information.”

Professor Kondo belongs to the Ancient Historical Resources Department, the keeper of historical items from the Kamakura period (years 1221 to 1333).

The challenge

To completely understand the significance of a particular ancient item, the Institute sorts events from the records in a chronological order. For example, take a statue of Buddha. To investigate who created it, as well as who commissioned it, the Institute looks for information in the temple's archives. The Institute has collected copious records, and many materials are thin and quite delicate, and tend to tear easily.

In the past, Professor Kondo copied old documents by hand, though he worried about accidental damage. Therefore, the Institute tries to avoid handling original items, and refers to copied documents often. Using a flatbed scanner however, was time consuming and required manual manipulation of the items with great care.

The customer

Customer: Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo
Country: Japan
Industry: Education

The challenge

The Historiographical Institute at the University of Tokyo collects old documents, art, and books from all over Japan. The items may be hundreds of years old so they are difficult to copy without causing damage. It is delicate and time consuming work.

The solution

The ScanSnap SV600 scans delicate books, documents, and art without the hassle of a flatbed. With just a turn of the page, its quick overhead scanning of about three seconds per page allows for quicker preservation of items.

The benefits

- Saved time spent digitizing historical resources for compilations
- Prevented damage to delicate items during the scanning process
- Enabled details to be enlarged through image clarity

The solution

The SV600 provided Professor Kondo and the Institute a way to carefully scan ancient items that limits physical damage. Because the scanner does not touch the object, the historians can be confident of the process. It also speeds up the work because the operator only needs to turn the page.

"This scanner can reduce storage space while protecting items from loss or damage. If I need documents in hurry, I do not have to go to storage to get the documents."

Digitizing resources is the preparation for understanding how these collected items fit into the "big picture" of that time period. By shortening the preparation time, historians can have more time to actually do their work. Not only does the SV600 speed through the scanning process at a rate of three seconds per page, but it can also enable quick searches in the future.

The benefits

"The first time I used the ScanSnap SV600 I had doubts," Professor Kondo remembers. He had been using an overhead camera but the image was often compromised by texture and other light sources. In contrast, the SV600 can produce a very clear picture regardless of surrounding brightness.

"Since we scanned in black and white to make the data smaller, some old documents show some noise, but it is still good enough to use as a reference. Most of the other overhead scanning solutions are very expensive and we simply did not have the budget. So we were glad we found the SV600, which provides high quality images at an affordable price."

About scanning of books, he says,

"The easiest way to keep thick books open is by pressing the books with our fingers when scanning it. There is less concern for damage to the books.

Products and services

- ScanSnap SV600

It is very smart that Fujitsu included the Point Retouch function to easily delete the fingers that were scanned with the book at a later time."

An additional positive feature for Professor Kondo is its compact size. The SV600 is small enough to sit on his desk and he can use it whenever he wants.

"It is also very lightweight, so I would like to try carrying it on-site and collect the documents directly from that location."

"The ability to enlarge scanned images at a high resolution shows details we could not see before."

Ordinary scanners can cause damage with ultraviolet rays and heat. However, in addition to the contact-less scanning of the SV600, the use of an LED light source protects the object from further damage. Professor Kondo can now confidently copy items he would not even have attempted before.

Conclusion

Using the ScanSnap SV600, Professor Kondo has digitized his compilation of Japanese historical references. Now any scholar can find this important resource online to enrich their knowledge of Japan's history and culture. Three books can contain one year of materials and it takes three years to finish one book. Professor Kondo wrote nine books to cover the three years since he came to the Institute for the Compilation of Historical Material 30 years ago. The SV600 will continue to help improve the efficiency of his compilation work.



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