



AMS Imaging
Australian Microfilm Services
230 Bank Street, South Melbourne, Vic 3205
Ph. (03) 9690 6800 Fax. (03) 9696 3865
ABN: 87 129 201 221
www.ams-imaging.com.au



The Continuing Benefits of Using Aperture Cards

By John Webb of Imation UK Ltd.

Following the recent shift in focus towards digital technology by Imation Document Imaging, with our range of PDDMS (Product Data and Document Management Systems) software solutions and hardware peripherals for engineering document management and distribution, we are often asked if this means we are abandoning our role, continued since our spin-off from 3M two years ago, as the world's largest supplier of 35mm aperture cards.

The answer is a firm "No!"; we strongly advocate the importance of the role of 35mm microfilm in meeting all the business needs of nearly all of today's customers.

Subsequent to research carried out for us across Europe on future trends and attitudes to 35mm microfilm, we asked a number of the UK respondents what caused them to continue to use the format. This is a selection of the most common answers:

- ❖ The 35mm Aperture Card is still the only truly archival storage system – magnetic media is subject to decay, and optical disk is still unproven in practice despite assurances of up to 30 years life, which, in many industries, is too short.
- ❖ Although recent changes in the law have allowed digitally-stored documents to become admissible as evidence, only the 35mm Aperture Card is considered to have the same weight of evidence as an alternative to the original drawing. Whilst courts have readily accepted digital text data, technical drawings are viewed as a totally different subject in law, due to their complexity and volatility. So, even though many companies do not have any legal or industry regulations demanding long term archival storage of drawings, in today's adversarial legal system, they can leave themselves vulnerable in the event of, for example, a Product Liability defence.
- ❖ An Aperture Card library is easily controlled, and available to any person – from the M.D down to the temp or trainee – at any time, and provides an effective, readily-accessible back-up against system congestion, when there just isn't a spare workstation available. There can also be system downtime when drawings would not be accessible, and this invariably happens when the need is urgent – an Aperture Card library will ensure that you need never be without a drawing, when you need it.

- ❖ Both operating system and application software revisions and upgrades can potentially corrupt, misread, or make unreadable previously stored archive data. For example, CAD users have had situations where a certain linestyle, selected and stored in an original file, has been misinterpreted with expensive, if not disastrous, consequences when that drawing has been modified at a later date, companies changing from one CAD system to another have found translation a minefield. Migration can be, in practice, more difficult than at first believed, and a digital archive can be very vulnerable – so an Aperture Card library, which can always be scanned, avoids disaster.
- ❖ Many companies have to deal with customers, contractors or business partners who either do not have digital technology, have systems that are not compatible, or are located overseas where support is questionable; the 35mm Aperture Card is a universal standard, and the technology and support to utilize it is readily available anywhere in the world.
- ❖ Technology changes are so rapid in computing – and there are few, if any, migration standards – very few of the data storage media of 5, never mind 10 years ago, can be accessed on today's systems; yet the Aperture Card has remained a constant for 50 years.

Whilst a few companies admitted to “grey areas” existing in certain of the above cases, all agreed that the automatic archiving to Aperture Card would give you the peace of mind of immediate, absolute security of your company's Information and data, and would also allow you to visually interpret exactly what the designer/engineer saw at the time he completed the drawing. In addition, an Aperture Card archive provides a simple and cost-effective disaster recovery system.

[Contact AMS if you have any queries regarding analogue vs digital storage](#)