

Acentra delivers scanning-to-go for big genealogical challenges

SITUATION

Customers possess large quantities of valuable genealogical data that they wish to safeguard and preserve, but they don't want to ship these materials and risk damage or loss.

OBJECTIVE

Bring digitization services to customers at their own turf.

SOLUTION

A versatile, on-the-road scanning solution featuring **Kodak i260, i1220** and **i1320** Scanners.

COMMENT

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-Matt Bills,
Founder, Acentra, Inc.

Your customer is a sweet lady in her 80s. She has over one million letters, documents, photos and other pieces of important genealogical data. She wants them all preserved and safeguarded digitally. Yet she won't let the collection out of her sight for a minute. What do you do? If you're Matt Bills, you bring your scanning operation to the lady and scan her materials on site. And you let her watch, if she wishes to do so.

Personal experience inspires a new business

Five years ago Matt Bills was newly married. He and his wife were moving into a home formerly occupied by his wife's grandmother. Now suffering from Alzheimer's, she had left a few years prior and rented out the house. All of the grandmother's things were stored in a damp, dark room in the basement. As Bills sorted through the belongings, "I realized that under my feet was the history of this woman and her life. We found photos, documents, letters her husband had written from overseas during World War II ... it was all such a mess. I thought, there *has* to be a better way."

From that illuminating experience sprang the genesis for Acentra, Inc., a somewhat unusual service bureau operation headquartered in Provo, Utah. While Bills has other Acentra locations in Idaho, Arizona and the tri-state area of NY/NJ/CT, his Provo business finds itself heavily involved with genealogical preservation. Provo is home to Brigham Young University and — according to Association of Religion Data research — 98 percent of area residents are adherents to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). These Mormons are very interested and involved in genealogy. "We worked with one group, the Daughters of the

Utah Pioneers, who compiled almost 60,000 folders, each filled with 30 to 40 pages of historical data," says Bills. "Each folder was for a specific person. Mormons don't want history and stories to be forgotten, and we assist them in safeguarding their past for the future."

"... like the A-Team on a genealogical mission"

As noted earlier, many Provo-area residents are loath to let these invaluable collections be sent to a service bureau. So Bills and his coworkers come to them. "We're essentially a mobile digitizing unit," he says. "It's kind of like the A-Team taking on a genealogical mission. Our clients have books, records, photos, documents, great history. We've scanned 15th century land records, even pieces of stainless steel with text etched into them!"

Taking scanners on a road trip is no easy task. Bills tried out scanners from several well-known manufacturers before deciding on models from Kodak, primarily **Kodak i260, Kodak i1220** and **i1320** Scanners. "Simply put, the scanners from Kodak aren't wimps and can take the wear and tear, and travel and perform well," Bills states. "Other companies' scanners were too finicky or SCSI-based. We will do some modifications to our scanners to assure even more robust performance, and we even put some flame decals and other customization on them. We like to have fun doing what we do." Acentra uses **Kodak Capture Software, Lite** along with the built-in imaging processing capabilities of their **Kodak Scanners** and finds the results "outstanding."

Bills' teams use trailers to transport the scanning operations, and build custom configurations and cases for their journeys and on-site projects.

"While we will work out of the trailers, we'll also set up in a home or office, sometimes on a dining room table," says Bills. "Whatever is most efficient and comfortable for our client. We're flexible, and we target the scanners and related equipment to the needs of the job."

Acentra's Provo facility employs about 20 people most of the year, but the workforce swells to over 100 in the summer when the company embarks on an annual door-to-door campaign. "Provo is home to the largest LDS missionary training center, and we hire many young people who come back to the area to explain the advantages of digital preservation," Bills says. "They talk up the service, and we generate a tremendous amount of business."

Acentra converts almost anything analog to digital

Along with hard-copy materials, Acentra also transitions videos, audio tapes, cassettes, slides, vinyl records, old 8 mm and 16 mm films and other analog media to digital formats, primarily DVD. Recently they've begun to offer newer formats, such as Blu-ray discs. Acentra has found that archiving service is increasingly popular. "People love having safe access to their collections on DVD, but they also want to know that they're protected in case of a fire or mishap," Bills notes. "We'll burn a gold archival DVD and store it off-site, actually in an underground or Granite Mountain vault. It provides great peace of mind."

To create additional selling opportunities, Acentra works with a sister company that offers scrapbook products, enlargements, and other photo specialty products. A customer can simply drag and drop digitized photos into predesigned templates, for example, and then have prints made with pictures and backgrounds as composite pages.

"We're very happy with our Kodak Scanners," says Bills. "They simply perform better in a number of ways. Dust can be a big problem for us with old documents, and we're able to more easily clean these scanners and keep our production up and running. Kodak does a good job of making scanners that can handle road trips and all that we put them through."

~Matt Bills,
Founder, Acentra, Inc.



Kodak i260 Scanner
Kodak is raising your expectations for desktop production scanning by delivering powerful imaging plus a long list of productivity features. Perfect Page scanning makes scanned images sharp while SurePath paper handling minimizes jams. The optional dockable flatbed and document imprinter give you even more versatility.

Kodak i1220 Scanner
*Small, powerful and packed with features and benefits, the duplex **Kodak i1220 Scanner** delivers on your desktop scanning needs with an unprecedented combination of performance, value and price.*

Kodak i1320 Scanner
*The duplex **Kodak i1320 Scanner** delivers the highest level of capability and affordability of any product in its category. This is true breakout performance, with ease of use, versatility and imaging quality that sets a new benchmark.*