



Introduction:

Miami-Dade County encompasses more than 2000 square miles (larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware). Located along the southeast tip of the Florida peninsula, one-third of Miami-Dade is located within Everglades National Park (to the west) and is bounded by the Atlantic Ocean and Biscayne Bay to the east and Broward County to the north.

Currently, more than 2 million people reside in Miami-Dade County. Of that number, just under one million live in the 30 incorporated cities. Each city has its own government and provides city-type services such as police and zoning protection. The City of Miami is the largest municipality, followed by Hialeah, Miami Beach, North Miami and Coral Gables. The areas of the county that do not fall within municipal boundaries comprise the unincorporated area of Miami-Dade. With a population of more than one million, the unincorporated area, if declared a city, would form the largest in Florida and one of the largest in the nation.

The Eleventh Judicial Circuit is the largest judicial circuit in the state of Florida and the fourth largest trial court in the nation. There are 111 judges presiding in courts located throughout the County. An executive Mayor and the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners govern the County. The Clerk of Courts and the Chief Judge are both elected officials. The Clerk is a constitutionally elected official and oversees a staff of 1350 employees who support the Judiciary in the courts and carry out other non-judicial duties, including the Office of the County Recorder.

The Need:

Miami-Dade County has the fourth largest traffic court system in the United States. The Clerk's Traffic Division processes all traffic citations issued within Miami-Dade by every municipal, county and state law enforcement agency. The Clerk's ministerial duties include fine and fee collection, filing and storage, maintaining calendars, maintaining public records, providing case files to the traffic judges (criminal) and Hearing Officers (infractions), and custodial duties. Clerks also support the judiciary in court and with case processing.

The Customer

Miami-Dade County was formed in 1957, as a two-tier system of government. Under this system, Miami-Dade is comprised of a large unincorporated area and 30 incorporated areas or municipalities. An Executive Mayor and the Miami-Dade Board of County Commissioners govern the county.

Computing Environment:

AIX, FileNET, Oracle, Windows 95 and NT

CIC Products:

InkTools®

Result:

The SPIRIT Project (Simultaneous Paperless Image Retrieval Information Technology) is an innovative venture intended to launch the Miami-Dade County, Clerk's Office and the Court into the twenty-first century.

The Traffic Court in Miami-Dade County has grown substantially over the past five years. The number of citations issued annually within Miami-Dade County has increased from 576,805 in 1995 to 763,224 in 1999. In 1999 alone, over two (2) million documents were filed in the Clerk's Traffic Division along with the more than 760,000 citations issued. This is a huge volume of paperwork to compile, file, store, monitor, process, access and provide to the court when necessary. In 1995, the Clerk's office had over 300 employees handling and processing this tremendous amount of traffic-related paper documents.

The volume of traffic cases, the actions taken on each case, and the number of documents that must be handled for each case create a paper trail that is monumental in size and volume and quite difficult to handle. The Imaging and Workflow Management functions in SPIRIT(Simultaneous Paperless Image Retrieval Information Technology) have directly addressed this issue.

The Solution:

The Clerk of Courts has been involved in co-operation with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) and Miami-Dade County in the design and implementation of imaging technology. SPIRIT (Simultaneous Paperless Image Retrieval Information Technology) is a series of technology-based information systems developed for the Traffic Division of Miami-Dade County Courts. These projects were initiated to provide improved service to the judiciary and the various agencies that process traffic cases, to attorneys and the public. SPIRIT was developed and implemented for the Traffic Division; however, many of the core architecture and application components were built with the intention of expanding the capability to other case types.

In developing SPIRIT, CIC's software developer kit, InkToolsä was used to enable handwritten electronic signatures by judges, clerks, prosecutors, defense attorneys and defendants.

SPIRIT provides the Clerk's Traffic Division staff with an efficient way to manage the hundreds of thousands of traffic cases filed each year; and allows the Clerk's Office and the Courts to meet the following goals:

- Improve the level of service to the public
- Provide simultaneous access to hundreds of thousands of case files
- Provide job enrichment to Project Team members and Clerk's employees by reengineering the workflow (typical paper citation was handled 37 times)
- Provide better case file and document security
- Improve efficiencies in the Clerk's Office and the Courts
- Reduce storage needs
- Reduce overtime and reduce dependence on part-time and temporary employees
- Improve working conditions of Clerk's personnel
- Meet mandated legislative and judicial compliance requirements

The Implementation:

SPIRIT has been implemented successfully in the Miami-Dade County Traffic Courts since January 1998.

Major Functions of SPIRIT:

Calendering Workbench - a client / server application that schedules all traffic cases for the 14 criminal traffic divisions and 23 traffic courtrooms within Miami-Dade County.

Imaging and Workflow Management - the function of SPIRIT that directly addresses the document/paper management. The applications include:

Scanning, reviewing for scan quality (QA) and document indexing: All documents related to a traffic case are accepted on paper through US Mail or in person (and soon by electronic means as well). These documents are batched by major document type, scanned by a central processing group, Quality Assured (QA'd) for legibility and indexed to the appropriate case. Once a batch is accepted in QA, it is stored; the documents can then be retrieved and/or displayed simultaneously throughout the SPIRIT system by anyone with appropriate security approval.

Data Entry: Citations, witness lists, arrest forms, and direct filings by the State Attorneys Office (SAO) are electronically sent from the QA function directly to the centralized Data Entry unit. The case information is entered by one key data operator and verified by a second operator. Cases can be electronically routed to a supervisor for assistance, if necessary, and is then returned to the original operator for entry completion.

Information Processing: Other document types such as motions, completion of traffic school, etc. are submitted to the clerk's office for processing. Immediately following acceptance in the QA function, these imaged documents are electronically routed to specific workflow queues (electronic "in boxes"). The electronic documents are placed into the queues by priority and then assigned to specific personnel.

Front Counter Processing: Defendants and attorneys may come to one of the clerk's seven court locations county-wide to request action on a Traffic case, such as to pay a fine, or to request a trial. Clerks access information on the case using SPIRIT, process the request and obtain the requesting party's signature via an electronic pen. The requesting party's signatures are captured via electronic pen and affixed to the appropriate forms. More than 8,900 defendant signatures are captured per week via electronic pens at both our front counters and post judgment rooms.

Calendar and Motion Setting: In some cases, the calendaring workbench, (explained above) does not automatically set a case. For example setting a motion on a case that will be heard the next day . The calendaring unit staff can accomplish "special setting" tasks as well as create, print and forward personal service packets.

Public Viewing: Workstations are provided so that attorneys and the public can make direct inquiries into the case files without clerk assistance.

Utilities: These are functions that are provided under secured control to customize the actions the system takes. This includes the types of documents identified during the indexing process, routing rules, access privileges and the reporting functions.

Courtroom Processing - The Courtroom Processing functions in SPIRIT directly address the following issues.

Courtroom Download: On a nightly basis, data and the electronic case files set for the following two days are extracted from permanent storage and electronically downloaded to servers that are dedicated to court operations. Two days of data are available in case of any network outages, and not more than 3 courtrooms are on the redundant courtroom server pairs to limit impacts.

Precourt Processing: The court clerk can change the order of the cases on the calendar based on a judge's requirements or an attorney's request, post messages to the judge related to a particular case, and capture the signature of the State Attorney hearing cases in that session to be affixed on any applicable forms that might be created.

Judge's Workbench: At the start of the session the judge logs on with a user id and password. A summary calendar is displayed from which the judge selects the appropriate session. Each case for that specific session is displayed in alphabetical order or as ordered by the judge and modified by the clerk. The judge can hear the cases and enter his/her actions as appropriate, such as issuing bench warrants, suspending licenses, continuing the case, hearing motions, or disposing of the case along with assessing the appropriate fines, fees and costs.

Post Judgement: After the case is heard in the courtroom, the defendant leaves the courtroom and goes to a post judgement room to receive documents related to the actions taken on his/her case. Any orders created by the judge are electronically generated in the post judgement room and have the judge's signature affixed to the document. The clerk reviews and accepts the forms and captures the defendant's signature via an electronic pen. Forms are then printed and a copy of each form is given to the defendant and a is automatically placed in the electronic case file.

The Result:

The various components of the SPIRIT technology has transformed the Traffic Court Division into a "paperless court" significantly improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness of this court. The Courts and the Clerk's Office Traffic Division have the first comprehensive courtroom application of imaging and paperless Traffic Court in the world. In addition, SPIRIT has eliminated many manual redundant non-value added tasks providing a more efficient and satisfying work environment for all traffic personnel. In fact, the SPIRIT system has provided the Miami-Dade County Clerk's Office and the Courts with the following benefits:

- Reduction of the number of clerks in the Traffic Division's calendaring unit from 40 to 15
- Utilization of calendar and existing courtroom space has been maximized
- Timely setting of cases within the "Speedy" trial rules has been maximized
- Significant reduction in police officer court overtime and increased officers' hours on the street through improved setting schedules and efficiencies · Provides various reports for more efficient caseload management
- Over the past 5 years, the Clerk's Traffic Division has returned 15 full-time and 15 part-time positions to the budget office and transferred many vacant positions to be used in other areas of the Clerk's Office, for a total reduction of 38.25 full time (equivalent) positions, to date, from the Traffic Division
- The Clerk's Traffic Division is now handling and processing 32% more citations than in 1995, with a 167% increase in infraction cases scheduled for court, all with 10% less staff.
- Vast improvements in data quality and major reductions in data errors as a result of SPIRIT's on-line courtroom processing and automated Return Court Information; from an approximate 15% error rate to less than 1%
- Has reduced the Traffic Division's use of overtime from a high of \$412,649 in FY 96/97 to a projected \$207,442 in FY 99/00

- Increased revenues, while partly due to an increase in the volume of cases, can also be associated with the more efficient SPIRIT Traffic system - an increase of over 60% in traffic related monies collected (from just over \$21 Million in FY '94/95 to more than \$35 Million projected for the current FY.)
- Eliminated time spent looking for lost or misplaced files and cases requested by judges or others · Queue Summary Reports provide the supervisors with an important management tool to constantly monitor and redirect the staffing requirements as the incoming workflows change
- SPIRIT courtroom case “emergency downloads” allow the Judges to hear all of a defendant’s pending cases (without having to search various locations for paper files) making the courts more efficient
- All documents are listed chronologically by date in the case file docket for easy access (especially during court) · All actions taken by the judge in the courtroom are listed in a system-generated and legible case history, which is presented in chronological order (case history was handwritten on the back of citations prior to SPIRIT)
- Only one clerk is required to work in each traffic courtroom (reduced from two clerks with paper), allowing the District Courts Division (outlying locations) to move many clerks back to the public service counters and other necessary back office functions
- The Tallahassee driver license history accessible in the SPIRIT electronic case file in court is less than 24 hours old, where paper copies provided prior to SPIRIT in the case file could be 30 or more days old · With the touch of one button, the “Disposition Summary” icon (which is available on all traffic cases) the judge can see monies owed for all traffic related cases for each defendant-thus allowing Collection Court to be held without additional staffing or data collection
- Disposition Report errors returned to Miami-Dade County by Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (DHSMV) have turned into a mere trickle (prior to SPIRIT these errors were returned by the boxful)
- With the recent completion of implementation of the District location courtrooms, many other anticipated benefits will be possible (considering further consolidation of various working units in the Clerk’s Central Traffic Division requiring less supervisory personnel)

Non-Quantifiable Benefits:

- Improved Quality of Life - Incredible back office changes from paper-driven office to a much cleaner and more manageable paperless environment; and improved quality of life in the courtroom as Judges don’t have to shuffle through paper, case files and forms don’t have to be manually completed in court; and judges, state attorneys, defendants, and clerks have their signatures electronically affixed to the appropriate forms.
- Expanded access to Court facilities - Better decentralized quality of public service which allows the public to use district locations for all traffic-related business (public service counters, attorney rooms, courtrooms, etc.) and not have to go to the downtown location to review and process files
- More efficient Public service Counter activities have been vastly improved with all forms being system generated (less possibility of human error) and fewer return aside driver license customers (after DHSMV visit)

- Streamlined courtroom processing - Defendants receive their system-prepared (no longer handwritten and hard to read) court orders and instructions to fulfill their sentences in a post judgement room where clerks can fully explain the details (outside of the courtroom environment)

According to Judge Slom, Administrative County Criminal/Traffic Court Judge: "The implementation of the SPIRIT system has resulted in the improvement of many of our courtroom operations. A few of these benefits are:

- In our paperless courtroom, we now have the ability to have a case placed on the calendar without having to search for the paper file. This has improved our courtroom efficiency dramatically.
- We can instantaneously locate all of a defendant's pending cases and resolve those cases immediately. This results not only in greater efficiency but also in dramatic savings in time and expense.
- We no longer have to decipher another judge's handwriting. Now, every notation a judge makes in the SPIRIT system is clearly printed and delineated.

It is my pleasure, as the Administrative Judge of the Criminal Division of County Court, to be part of this innovative leap into the future of the paperless courtroom."

Dr. Thomas James, Support Manager of the Clerk's SPIRIT system said,

"Before installation of the SPIRIT optical imaging system, numerous individual documents needed to be completed by hand, signed, processed, filed and stored for even the simplest traffic offenses. The Clerk's office replaced all the paper with electronic documents, which are signed electronically by judges, attorneys, and defendants. The system has improved productivity, saved significant dollars, and provided the public high quality documents with appropriate signatures in place."

Communication Intelligence Corporation 275 Shoreline Drive.
Redwood Shores, CA 94065. 800-888-8CIC or WWW.CIC.COM
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Redwood Shores, CA
94065
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