

## Case Study

# Arkansas Supreme Court

“Going from a time-consuming, paper-intensive system to a digital eFiling and case management system has been an achievable goal with the help of Conduent. Thanks to the technology, statewide collaboration and productivity has increased.”

– Timothy Holthoff, Director of Court Information Systems Division for the Arkansas Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Courts



### The Challenge

The state of Arkansas serves nearly three million citizens from small, rural towns to large, urban cities. The wide variance of communities with different needs and programs cause the court system to be inundated with massive quantities of citizen requests for information and a wide range of cases statewide. Timely and accurate reporting is critical to the success of any court system. However, when dealing with a non-unified court system like Arkansas, information and data comes in many different forms. A non-unified court system means that locally elected judges and clerks are responsible for making decisions on how each court will report, store and manage case information. Therefore, neighboring cities, counties, and even state policy makers, rarely have access to all necessary information.

In an effort to satisfy all the courts' needs and improve data access, accuracy and the speed of reporting, the Court Information Systems (CIS) Division of Arkansas Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), identified a need for a new technology system that would centralize court functions leading to statewide improvements and greater efficiency. The system would include case management across all the jurisdictions and three levels of courts – from limited, general and appellate cases. AOC aimed to improve statewide integration, data storage and recovery, and public access to critical information. The state also wanted a solution that would be the core platform to launch supplementary systems like online public access, electronic filing (eFiling), electronic citation (eCitation), electronic payment, and document and jury management.

At project onset, the AOC could only dedicate two employees to the implementation process – not enough infrastructure or manpower to successfully deploy a new program by themselves. Since this type of endeavor and goal was very rare for a state with a non-unified court system, the AOC looked for a long-term, strategic partner with the manpower and resources to build a solution that was scalable and customizable to meet their evolving needs. Additionally, the AOC wanted a vendor that could also provide counsel and direction along the way.

### The Solution

The AOC contracted with Conduent in June 2002 and work immediately began to enhance the core system and customize it to Arkansas's needs. During the course of customization, both organizations worked closely together to develop enhancements in a way that would meet Arkansas's requirements but be general enough to be used by any Conduent customer. This required us to not only work with Arkansas, but with all of our customers, identifying Arkansas-required enhancements that would benefit the entire customer base. An implementation plan was also developed for the rollout to district and circuit courts systems across the state. Another priority for the team was taking the state's disparate content management systems and moving to our centralized system and database. This centralized database will give the courts better access to information and ultimately save the people of Arkansas time and money.

The state exceeded its goal of having 85 percent of the state circuit court caseload in the system by the end of 2015. To date, 100 percent of the circuit court caseload information is available in the centralized database.



“One of the main reasons we decided to work with Conduent was because of their expertise and experience, and the fact that their technology was the only one we could customize to meet our needs. They were willing to work with us for major customizations and gave us the tools we needed to complete minor modifications,” said Holthoff.

Our joint team began the project with a pilot court and deployed a uniform, electronic case management system that allowed them to track and file cases across the state. Based on real-time feedback from the court using the technology, Together, we continued to modify, develop and change the solution to meet the pilot court’s needs. This feedback was critical to the implementation throughout the entire state.

The new technology was a massive undertaking that required the courts to re-engineer everyday paper-based processes to more efficient digital workflows. To ensure the execution ran smoothly, we developed a thorough training plan and team to support the implementation, mitigate any potential problems and counsel courts throughout the entire process.

Since our technology could be customized by the state, the AOC could develop and deploy additional features and tools. As a result, the state has added on features including eFiling in 2012, an online payment system with the ability to pay court assessed fines and fees over the Internet, public access to court records, image enabled filing, eCitation, jury management and electronic case assignment for court clerks.

### **The Results**

To date, 65 of the 75 circuit courts are using the court management system. Seven more are reporting statistics, and the remaining circuits are still reporting to AOC using paper systems. Three circuit courts are using eFiling, nine additional circuit courts are actively implementing eFiling, and the rest will be implemented in coming years.

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“The growth and success of this project was mainly from word of mouth between courts. Since we took the time to deploy a pilot program, and customize and develop the solution further based on their feedback, we were able to successfully implement and deliver the technology the state needed,” said Holthoff. “Once the courts started to see immediate results, other requests started flying in.”

Arkansas has realized a variety of efficiencies and improvements including timeliness and accuracy of reporting data. Court clerks, judges and law enforcement personnel can now access and view vital citizen information like arrest warrants, protection orders, and many more critical public safety issues – eliminating redundant data entry, and improving collaboration and information sharing between jurisdictions. Additionally, the data stored in the system helps the AOC discover meaningful insights and patterns to analyze cases,

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uncover process inefficiencies and provide sound advice to lawmakers.

The court's workforce has seen one of the biggest impacts from the new system. In the past, courts required workers for data entry or scanning incoming paper documents and verify data quality – a very time intensive, manual process. The eFiling system and eCitation system integration allows law enforcement, state agencies, judges, clerks and attorneys to submit, manage and access court files easily, securely exchange legal documents faster, simultaneously review case documents from anywhere and better service constituents and clients. The system improves efficiency and productivity throughout the court process and frees up staff to focus on more important tasks.

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Together, Conduent and the AOC are bringing uniformity to a non-unified court system and fulfilling the Arkansas Supreme Court's goal when it created the Supreme Court Committee on Automation in November of 1990. The Court noted:

"In recent years, our judicial system has made great use of modern equipment, but our technical systems are incomplete and incompatible with would provide compatible equipment throughout the judicial system. It is our intention, ultimately,

to develop a comprehensive plan that would provide compatible equipment throughout the judicial system."

The Arkansas partnership with Conduent is helping Arkansas move towards this vision. It's improving cost effectiveness, court efficiency, and the quality of justice available to citizens..

"Ultimately, our relationship with Conduent has been a key factor in the success of the program. Their expertise, counsel and willingness to help us develop solutions to meet the courts' needs is very unique and has continued to drive the expansion of this program," said Holthoff.

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