

# Paper Scarcity\*

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**E**STIMATES throughout the paper and publishing industry now lead suppliers to believe the United States will be approximately 300,000 tons short of paper during the coming year. Paper production costs are skyrocketing rapidly and, in certain selected areas of the industry, have risen as much as 70 per cent in the last eighteen months. Postal rates are conservatively estimated to reach 30¢ per ounce for first class mail by 1984. Rising costs of clerical help have increased as much as 20-25 per cent over the past two years and are a fact of everyday life. All of these problems, and more, are creating a tremendous pressure on paper users to begin examining microfilm as a potential cost effective alternative.

We all know the average law firm's space problems—books, files, etc. Most professional people are spending in excess of \$10.00 per square foot for their floor space. Therefore, each file cabinet occupies at least \$60.00 worth of floor space per year. Multiplied by the number of file cabinets you presently have in use, and your cost becomes a very real figure for your office.

Obviously, many lawyers dislike the thought of using microfilm for a number of reasons:

- (1) It requires special equipment.
- (2) A possible bad experience with past equipment on the market.
- (3) It does not appear feasible for active records since, in the past, most files were placed on roll film and retrieval and indexing were extremely difficult.

With the advent of microfiche, which is a four by six inch sheet of film with eye-readable titles, some of the drawbacks of microfilm have been overcome. Fiche is handled like paper and can be filed like paper. It is a unit record and can contain from one to 300 frames (or pages) of information. It, therefore, performs the same function as a

file jacket does in a present file system in giving you record file integrity.

Various publications are now available to the legal industry on microfilm. For example, court reports of all fifty states from colonial times to the first volume of the "National Reporter System" are available from Trans Media Publications on 35-mm roll film at a cost of one penny per page.

West Publishing Company in Minneapolis has published the "National Reporter System" on 75X, high reduction microfiche. Cost of approximately three and one-half million pages from West Publishing is under \$12,000.00.

To make a comparison, one file cabinet would house both systems mentioned above, while 350 shelves would be required to house the books containing this information. The drawback is that each system of records would require different equipment to display it.

I feel it is incumbent on associations such as the Commercial Law League to begin a standards committee, at the earliest possible date, whose objective would be to establish microfilm records standards to eliminate the need of the members to buy multiple variations of equipment in order to display the various records available. A single, small law office could save as much as \$5000.00 by standardization of record types within the legal field.

For other areas of interest to lawyers, Information Handling Services, Denver, Colorado, has made available the "Legislative History of Internal Revenue Acts from 1906 to 1950", on microfiche. This should be of special interest, since these publications are now out of print.

Commerce Clearing House is publishing a tax library on 75X microfiche, similar to that of West Publishing. These include Tax Court Reports, Cumulative Bulletins, and the U.S. Tax Cases. Congressional Hearings, House & Senate Reports, and Committee Prints are available from the Congressional Information Service Company. Patent attorneys can now purchase the "Official Gazette of the U.S. Patent Office" on 16-mm roll film. University Microfilm, a division of Xerox Corporation, is publishing the Serial Set of House and Senate Reports, together with many law reviews. U.S. Supreme Court Records and Briefs are available from Scholarly Resources, Inc., on 35-mm roll film.

These are but a few of the many and varied types of current legal records available to lawyers, and it but scratches the surface. There are larger applications within any legal office, over and above reference materials or closed case records.

Should the pressures of the various forces mentioned continue to grow as they have over the past ten years, we should all be better prepared to plan systems and utilize microfilm for our active records.

I can only add, "Come on in, the water's fine!"

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