Phoenix CSI Choose Plasmon to Ensure the Authenticity of Their Chain of Evidence

QuickView

Organization
> Phoenix Police Dept. CSI Unit

Industry:
> Government — law enforcement

Application
> Image Storage

Solution
> Plasmon® G-Series™ Library

ROI
> Efficient and cost-effective recording, safe archiving, and quick accessibility of crime-scene photographs

> Availability to more than 500 users at six locations in the Phoenix area

> *...it was crucial that we found a comprehensive archival storage solution that would ensure the integrity of each and every CSI photograph, so that the detectives and attorneys serving the city would be better equipped to do their jobs effectively."*

Phoenix CSI
Arizona
USA

Since its incorporation in 1881, Phoenix, Arizona has grown to become the nation's sixth-largest city and one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the country. The city's police department includes more than 3,800 officers and support personnel who protect a population of more than 1.55 million and patrol almost 516 square miles.

In recent years, police department crime-scene investigators (CSI) have gained attention through popular television shows and movies that dramatize the work of these labs in photographing, analyzing, and recording evidence from crime scenes. Crime-scene photographs are considered to be evidence and are admissible in court, so it is crucial that police departments protect photos and ensure they haven't been modified or altered. The Phoenix CSI unit recently completed a project to help the organization efficiently record, safely archive, and quickly access photographs from crime scenes, thus helping the police department to be more efficient and cost-effective.

Business Challenge

In 2002, the CSI unit of the Phoenix Police Department upgraded from traditional film photography to digital photography. The department had previously done its own film processing, which was expensive and time-consuming. It required detectives and attorneys to place requests every time they needed a physical copy of a photo.

The upgrade project was led by Lori Rhyons, computer services bureau administrator. One of Rhyons' primary considerations was to obtain a storage solution capable of delivering a WORM (Write Once, Read Many) technology that preserves the credibility of the image in court by protecting it from any modifications. In addition, Rhyons required a solution that could handle the high volume of photos being stored — without a large price tag.

"As a government agency, finding the most-effective technology solutions with the most-reasonable price points is always important," said Rhyons. "However, despite our financial considerations, it was crucial that we found a comprehensive archival storage solution that would ensure the integrity of each and every CSI photograph, so that the detectives and attorneys serving the city would be better equipped to do their jobs effectively."

In addition, record-retention laws regarding evidence in the state of Arizona often require photographs to be held for decades. For example, in a homicide case that ends with a conviction, the evidence needs to be saved for at least two-thirds of the convicted felon's sentence. If no arrests are made in a case, the records are saved indefinitely. Long-term data retention is required — in a form that preserves image integrity.

Solution

Phoenix's CSI unit selected the Plasmon® 638 G-Series™ archive library to address its archiving storage needs. Plasmon's UDO™ (Ultra Density Optical) media format satisfied the department's need for a WORM technology, as well as providing it with a cost-effective solution that delivers safe, long-term storage for highly sensitive images. The department also selected the solution because it had been successfully using Plasmon's magneto optical (MO) library for document management and archiving needs, and Rhyons understood and trusted the company.

"Since we had a working relationship with Plasmon, it was a natural progression for us to adopt the UDO technology for our project," said Rhyons. "We looked at other systems, including EMC and other hard drive solution providers. However, while these solutions offered fast image retrieval, they were too costly to justify purchasing when the UDO technology answered all of our needs. Ultimately, our experience with Plasmon was so positive that we had no reason to involve any other brands in our environment."

Through investment in the Plasmon solution Rhyons drastically increased her archival storage capacity in order to accommodate digital photography. The department was able to migrate existing data on the Plasmon MO library to the UDO library, through a fairly simple, internally managed process that preserved the CSI's prior investment, as well.

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Results

Today, the Phoenix CSI unit imports roughly eight gigabytes of photographs a day, with each photo running between one megabyte and two megabytes — depending on the photo's purpose and camera. Photo archives are available to more than 500 users at six locations in the Phoenix area. Most of these users are detectives accessing the images through their workstations as they investigate crimes.

As for future plans, Rhyons is looking forward to extending the system's availability to more members of the district attorney's office. Rhyons sees future applications where the Plasmon archival solution would potentially be helpful, including the archiving of documents created by crime lab technicians and used for investigative efforts.

"Currently, our annual capacity is at three terabytes per year, and we expect that to grow by two to three terabytes annually," Rhyons added. "We look forward to continually expanding our capacity with our Plasmon solution, and are confident in the record authenticity and media longevity that it delivers. Plasmon has helped the Phoenix Police Department and its CSI be more efficient and productive with their ongoing investigations."