



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
San Bernardino County - Information Services Department

Organization URL:
www.sbcounty.gov

Project Name:
Property Evidence Tracking System (PETS)

What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address? What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?

The Sheriff's Property Evidence & Tracking System (PETS) is used for gathering, receiving, tracking and distributing property evidence obtained in support of crime reporting, suspect booking, and court procedures. The property evidence division has the responsibility for accurate tracking and dispositioning of evidence to the responsible parties in a timely fashion. PETS was a mainframe COBOL-based system that had been in existence for more than 15 years and was responsible for all daily business functions that were required in the operation of all San Bernardino County property rooms. The Sheriff's Department, in conjunction with the Information Services Department, determined this legacy system needed substantial upgrades if it was to meet the future needs of property room staff. The solution was the new PETS for the Web, an application designed to replace the entire legacy text-based 3270 COBOL application with a richer .NET web GUI front end and redesigned database using SQL Server. Different processes are used to track property and evidence at the patrol station vs. the Scientific Investigations Division. Rewriting the application streamlined and tailored the processes specific to the needs of the location using it and increased chain-of-custody accuracy. The ability to track, locate, disposition, and report on property and evidence was enhanced. Measurements: Savings in personnel costs due to streamlined and improved input and tracking of all types of evidence. Enhanced reporting and auditing provides a greater level of security than existed before. Added ability to integrate with other systems further extends the functionality of the base PETS system.

Save valuable resources, trees, by eliminating the printing of millions of documents by using mobile devices for inventory instead of paper.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

IIS, HTML, ASP.NET, Web Services, SQL Server Database, SQL Reporting Services, JavaScript, AJAX, XML, signature pads, barcode scanners, mobile devices. The architecture of this application allows information to be readily shared with other system. Patrol officers can access this information from the units, dispositioning evidence for release or destruction.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

The main goal of the PETS system is to accurately track and disposition evidence to the responsible parties in a timely fashion. This results in the proper use of evidence in court cases to prosecute those that are accused of a crime and exonerate the innocent or wrongly accused of a crime. It is also important that property is precisely tracked to ensure it is properly returned to its rightful owners.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

Significant improvements have been realized on the rewritten system with users being much more efficient in dealing with and tracking property information. No longer are users required to access multiple systems to gain the information they require. The Sheriff has been able to maintain a stable operational environment due in part to a complete conversion of the existing data to the new system, including multiple test conversions to ensure accuracy of the converted data. The system was implemented to all facilities at the same time with day one being business as usual because so little training was required before property officers were productively using the system. The Sheriff staff is already looking at ways to take advantage of the new technology. They see the possibility of tying in other applications directly into PETS. They are also taking advantage of the new reporting service to create reports that were difficult to create under the mainframe system. For example, the new property room audit report was being generated in some cases prior to go-live for pending audits because the new system generates the report in a few clicks rather than the considerable lead time required to generate the report in the old system. Signature pads have eliminated the need for paper forms to track certain chain-of-custody events and are now tracked within the system. The creation of the online Disposition (Batch) Report allows Sheriff deputies to update the status of the property online without the use of a lengthy paper report, ensuring timely release/destruction of property without property officers "tracking down" the deputies. Property room audits are much more efficient with online generated audit reports and results tracking.