



A Lesson in Preserving History

How the fourth-largest school district in Texas kept historical building documents alive with document conversion and archiving services from ARC



Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District Profile

- **Students:** 116,000+
- **Staff:** 12,600
- **Buildings:** 100+
- **Square feet of document storage**
Before: Approx 3,000
After: 0
- **Construction plans converted:** 130,000+
- **Office documents converted:** 2.5 million

When most people talk about the legacy of Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District outside of Houston, Texas, chances are they'll talk about milestones in the sports programs, college entrance rates or academic awards that have been awarded over the district's 81 years of existence. But if you asked Assistant Superintendent of Maintenance Matt Morgan to tell you the story, he'd point you to 130,000 blueprints and more than two million other documents that make up his design, construction and maintenance archive.

"It's our entire history," he says.

A year ago, that archive was housed in its own 1,200-square-foot building full of racks, shelves and file cabinets, as well as two other spaces that were nearly as large. Today, most of the paper is gone thanks to Morgan's careful planning, and the capabilities and guidance of its archive management partner, ARC Document Solutions. Now, when Cy-Fair's staff need to view a document for maintenance, construction or design, they reach for an iPad. No matter where they work within their 186-square-mile territory, any construction drawing, equipment specification or change order can be found in seconds and viewed on screen.

An understated, but obviously effective administrator, Morgan says, "I don't really like paper all that much."

The district knew it had a document management issue when Morgan took it over in 2018. The staff had been discussing potential solutions for years by the time he got there, but the budgetary, workflow and preservation concerns had always overcome the proposals for how to manage the archive differently.

Morgan had faced such administrative challenges before. A 20-year veteran of the district, he had managed a number of the ISD's departments, including transportation, children's nutrition, and purchasing. "I have a business background. Anytime I can make things more efficient and improve the process, I do," he says.

As he got to know his new staff, he watched them drive back and forth from their work sites to pull a necessary document from the archive, killing productivity and inevitably affecting job schedules. It made him wonder how the district could better access and track the documents, and he sweated about what would happen if documents were lost. He started exploring the best ways to ensure their preservation and create some reliable form of redundancy.



“ We had to be thorough... it was our whole history, but with ARC, there were no hiccups. Anywhere in the district, our people can have access to any document they need. ”

— Matt Morgan

*Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District,
Houston, Texas*

By the middle of 2019, Morgan had convinced the district’s administrators that a digital solution was required. Early on, he had been approached by ARC’s Houston Team who also came highly recommended by long-time customer and well-known education, sports and corporate architect, PBK.

With the first estimate in hand, funding was approved in late spring, and a pilot project began in August.

“When I first visited the site, I’d never seen anything like it,” says Abdul Shabankareh, an archive and information management consultant with ARC, and a veteran of the archiving industry. “I was thinking we might have underestimated the job as Richelle Jones, Matt’s ‘go-to’ assistant was showing us around. At one point she said, ‘Hey! Let me show you something. There’s more!’ Documents kept turning up in places we just couldn’t see. It became very clear we had to think out of the box on this one.”

Within a short time, Shabankareh and the Houston archiving team had placed Albert Cantu, an ARC document specialist, in Cy-Fair’s document facility. His job was to organize, pull, tag and closely track the documents going offsite to ARC’s archiving and information management center in Houston for conversion. ARC takes stewardship of customer work extremely seriously in all of its regional AIM centers around the country. Albert and the Houston staff barcoded each document box and tracked it every step of the way through

a secure onsite storage locker, to the scanning and processing department, and on to the quality control staff before returning the documents to Cy-Fair personnel.

The process dovetailed with Morgan’s document control procedures. “We had a basic analog file structure in place and a database. We had to make sure we knew where each document was during the scanning process in case we had to pull it for maintenance reasons and get it back in the field,” he said.

Once each document box had been scanned and checked by ARC, the school district did a lot of random checking of the new digital documents to ensure everything was legible, in the right format and filed correctly in the database. The importance of the job left Morgan with a few sleepless nights because the documents were to be destroyed after they were scanned. If any were overlooked, it could be years before anyone realized they were gone.

“I think ARC was a little surprised at the volume of documents we checked,” Morgan says. “But our biggest fear was missing something. We had to be thorough. Again, it was our whole history, but with ARC, there were no hiccups.”

“These are the best people I’ve ever worked with in any industry,” says ARC’s sales consultant, Shabankareh. “They were open to new ideas, asked for guidance, and were incredibly thorough. I think that’s why the job has been such a success.”



“ Have lot of discussions and meetings to determine workflow and how the process will transpire. Pay attention to the details.”

— Matt Morgan
*Cypress Fairbanks Independent School District,
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As the job wound up, and the final document boxes were destroyed, the documents began their new life in a well-managed school district database, as well as being indexed on SKYSITE, an archiving platform developed by ARC with powerful and intuitive search capabilities to facilitate access to any document within the collection. The building that used to house documents is now being converted into a district design center with mock classrooms and offices where school administrators and vendors can review finishes, furniture, flooring and more – a significantly more valuable use of real estate than housing boxes of paper.

As the new archive starts to earn its keep, Morgan is continuing to educate his staff. “Getting our people to go digital is a big thing,” he says. “We’re bringing ARC back in for additional training.”

Even so, he says, with 91 campuses and more than 100 buildings across the district, he’s convinced it was the right move and ARC was the right partner to help preserve the history his staff cares about the most.

“Anywhere in the district, our people can have access to any document they need.”

Digital Documents During a Pandemic

“I’ve got several people out or in quarantine, and everybody’s working from home,” Morgan said. “But now we can all work with the documents without human contact, share plans with architects, and get our work done since we can get access from anywhere. We’ve even got the use of digital signatures in process. These are big changes.”