



A V E N U

INSIGHTS & ANALYTICS

MONROE COUNTY CORONER'S OFFICE

Digitizing 185 years of Records Saves
Money on Storage Costs and Provides Faster
Services to the Community & Law Enforcement



What to Do with Decades of Records that You are Legally Obligated to Retain?

Monroe County is nestled in the beautiful Poconos of eastern Pennsylvania, just 90 miles outside New York City. The county has a long history, having been founded in the first half of the 19th century. It has experienced significant population growth in recent decades.

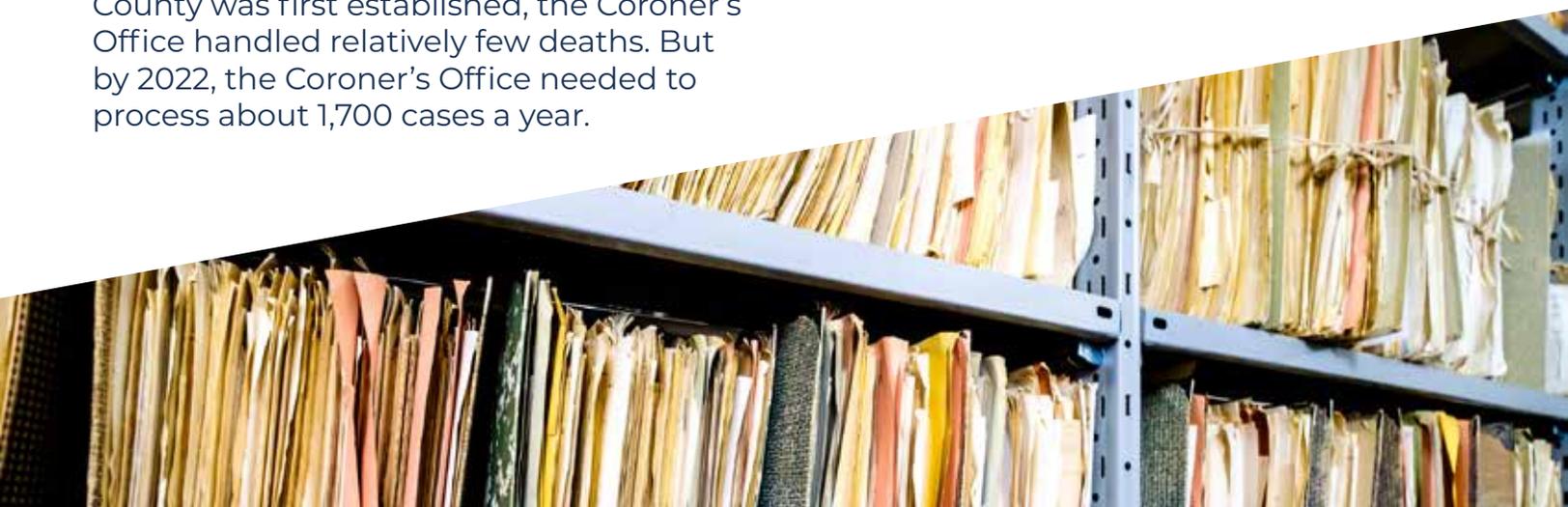
With that history and growth comes growing records storage challenges. Pennsylvania's retention requirements for coroners' records are among the longest in the country. To comply with its legal obligations and to serve those who might need access to them, the Coroner's Office stored all its original paper records locally. But the storage system it had was far from perfect.

The storage of old paper records was expensive. The records needed to be kept in rented spaces or in county buildings that could then not be used for other purposes. Furthermore, **without special temperature and humidity controls, the stored documents were subject to decay.** Every year, the number of documents that needed to be stored increased. When the County was first established, the Coroner's Office handled relatively few deaths. But by 2022, the Coroner's Office needed to process about 1,700 cases a year.

In addition, when a record was requested by law enforcement, the district attorney's office, or an interested member of the public, the turnaround time could sometimes be weeks. This was particularly true if the record was older. Older records were extremely difficult to find.

Finally, this system of storing paper records and retrieving them manually resulted in the possibility of records getting lost. Every time a record would be touched, retrieved, and put back in storage, the chances of it getting misplaced increased.

When Thomas Yanac, Jr. was elected as the Monroe County Coroner in 2017, he appointed Maurice Moreno as his Chief Deputy Coroner. One thing Thomas and Maurice discussed was the possibility of digitizing the Coroner's Office's records at some point in the future.



“At first, we thought it was such a daunting task to try to accurately scan tens of thousands of documents and get them to the point where we could just push a button and see them accurately. It seemed almost impossible.”

-Maurice Moreno, Chief Deputy Coroner, *Monroe County PA*



A New Opportunity

In the spring of 2021, Maurice learned that Avenu’s Digital Processing Services team was already doing document scanning work for other departments within Monroe County.

When he discussed the possibility of scanning all of Coroner’s Office’s documents with Avenu, he thought that perhaps it couldn’t be done because the Coroner’s Office had so many records.

Maurice says, *“At first, we thought it was such a daunting task to try to accurately scan tens of thousands of documents and get them to the point where we could just push a button and see them accurately. It seemed almost impossible.”*

But when the Avenu team assured him that they could do it, Maurice jumped at the opportunity. He recalls that he thought, **“Let’s go for it! Now or never!”**

The Process – Digital Transformation

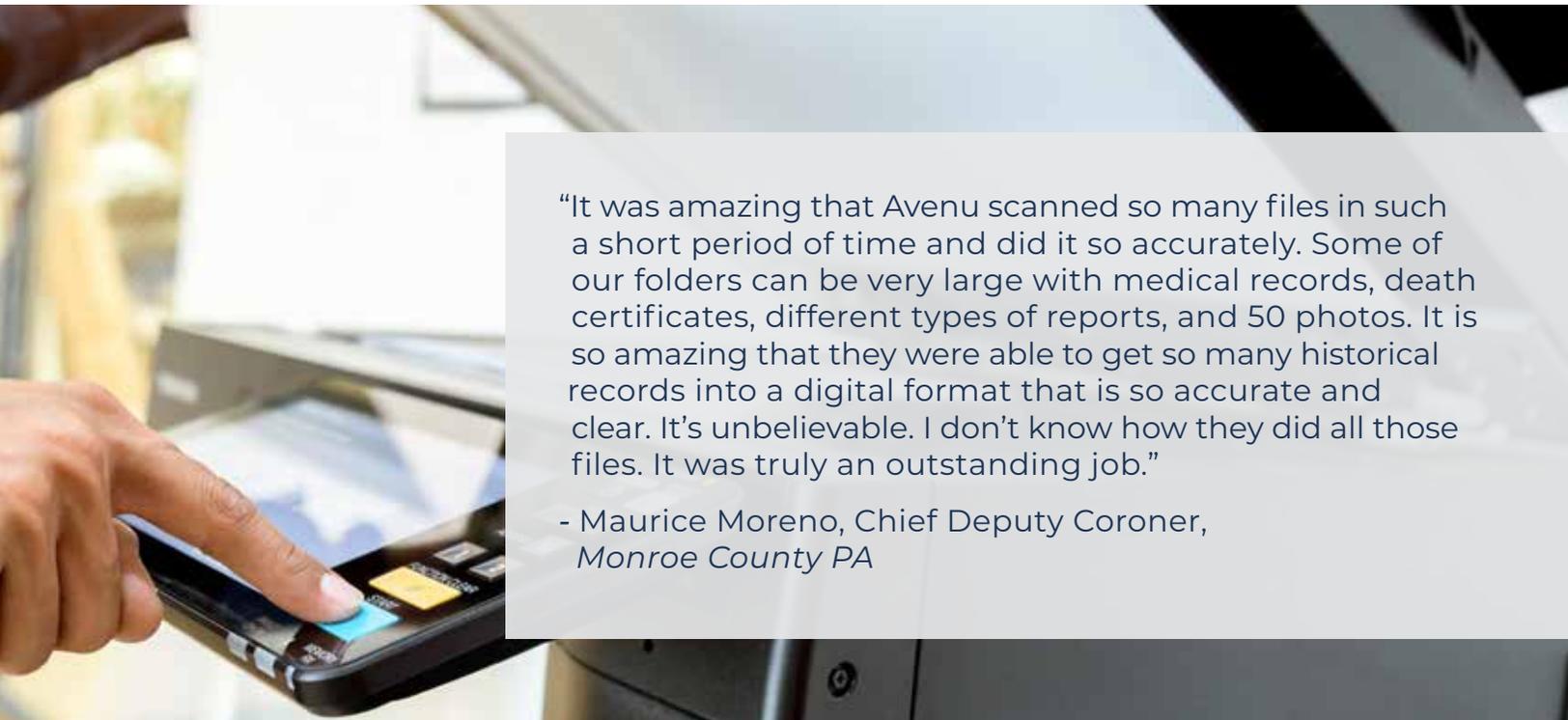
The Avenu team started by assessing the records and establishing requirements for scanning records that dated back 185 years to 1837. Some of these records had fragile pages, color photos, onion-skinned pages, and varying page sizes from small to oversized documents, all in a single case file. These records required special handling.

Avenu worked closely with the County Archivist to develop a plan to handle the older records that were stored offsite. **Avenu started with the offsite records to save storage fees** and staff time spent on managing these paper files. Later, the Avenu team worked more closely with the Coroner's Office to scan the records that were stored at the Coroner's Office itself.

During the project, the Avenu team worked with the County's Archivist to ensure that the scanned records met the County's requirements for storage, retrieval, and document security. In addition, the **Avenu team developed compression algorithms so that large, scanned files could be opened quickly without compromising document clarity.**

In total, Avenu scanned approximately **481,000 pages in 31,650 case files.**

And how does Maurice describe the quality of the scans Avenue did? "Phenomenal."



"It was amazing that Avenu scanned so many files in such a short period of time and did it so accurately. Some of our folders can be very large with medical records, death certificates, different types of reports, and 50 photos. It is so amazing that they were able to get so many historical records into a digital format that is so accurate and clear. It's unbelievable. I don't know how they did all those files. It was truly an outstanding job."

- Maurice Moreno, Chief Deputy Coroner,
Monroe County PA

Results of the Project

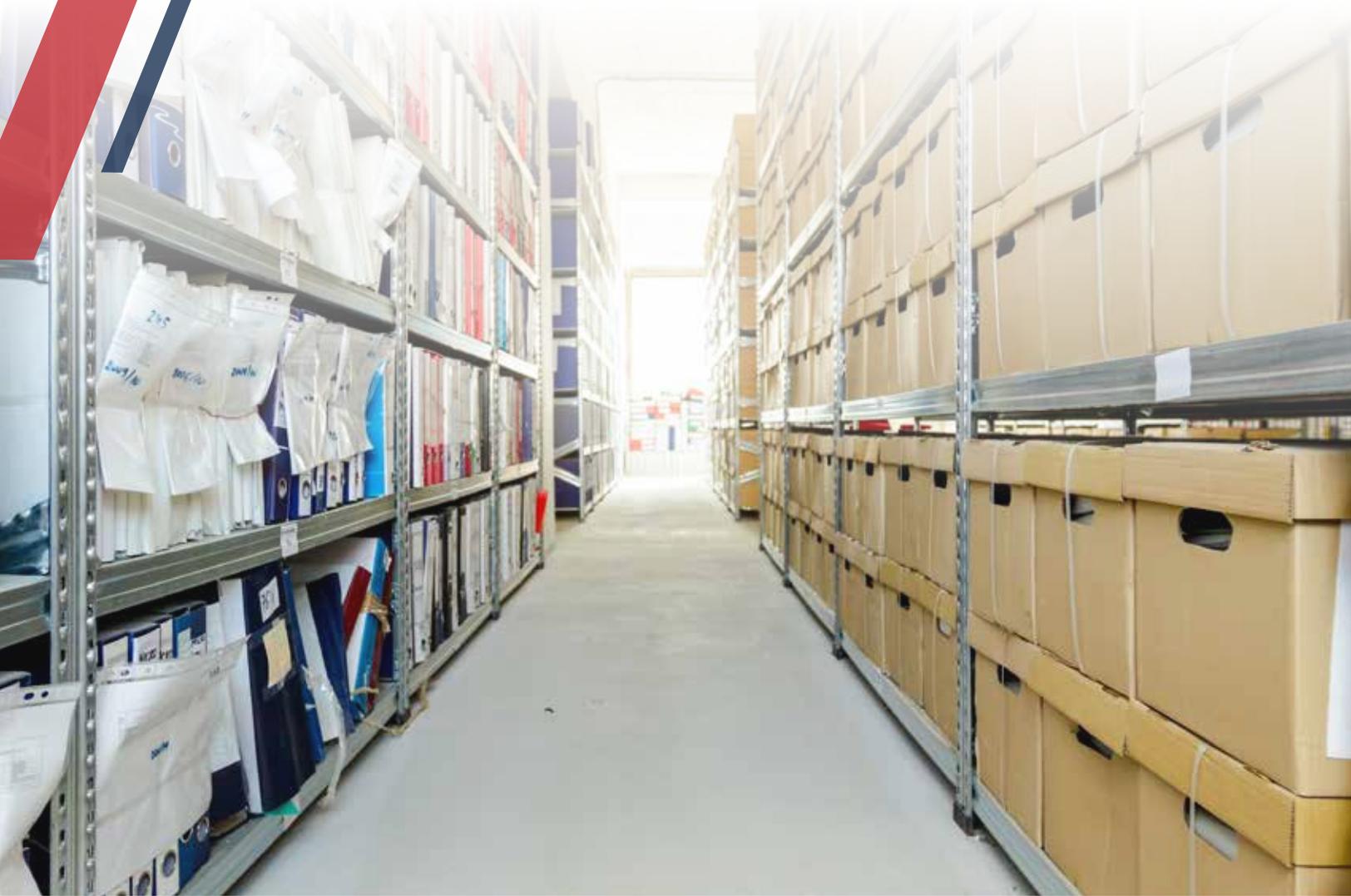
Avenu is still in the process of scanning documents from 2021 and 2022. But all the records for previous years are now complete. And the Coroner's Office is already enjoying the benefits of the project. Records are organized and can be easily accessed in seconds which makes a big difference for the families and law enforcement who are waiting for answers and justice.

“It is great to have instant access to our records. Before we worked with Avenu, when a family or district attorney asked for a record older than 10 years, it would take us days or even weeks to get that file. Now it takes seconds. I can pull up the record and email it to them while I’m still on the phone with them.

It is great to be able to get records to families, law enforcement, and district attorneys in an extremely timely manner. The Coroner loves it and the Deputy Coroners also love it.”

- Maurice Moreno, Chief Deputy Coroner, *Monroe County PA*





What Can Avenu's Digital Processing Services Do for Your Coroner's Office Historical Records?

A GovTech 100 company, Avenu has a long history of helping state and local governments optimize operations and deepen community trust. Avenu focuses exclusively on serving local governments. Avenu has deep expertise in local government that is unmatched by any other service provider.

Avenu's Digital Processing Services can help your coroner's office **preserve and safely store all its historical records in digital form. This reduces storage costs and the risks of document loss from fire or decay.** It also allows faster and easier access to them to better serve the public.

Parting Thoughts

By partnering with Avenu, the Monroe County Coroner's Office has been able to **eliminate old paper records and their associated costs**. It can also now provide a much better and more responsive service to its constituents seeking records.

Does Maurice recommend that other coroner's offices work with Avenu to digitize their old records? Absolutely.

“You’d be crazy not to do it. Why wouldn’t you want to be able to have all that information instantly instead of letting it collect dust and having the records break down over time? I don’t know why you wouldn’t do it. It’s definitely worth the investment.”



If you would like to learn more about how Avenu can help you digitize your coroner's office records, please request more information at succeed@avenuinsights.com.