

# IDMi

Information + Document Management International

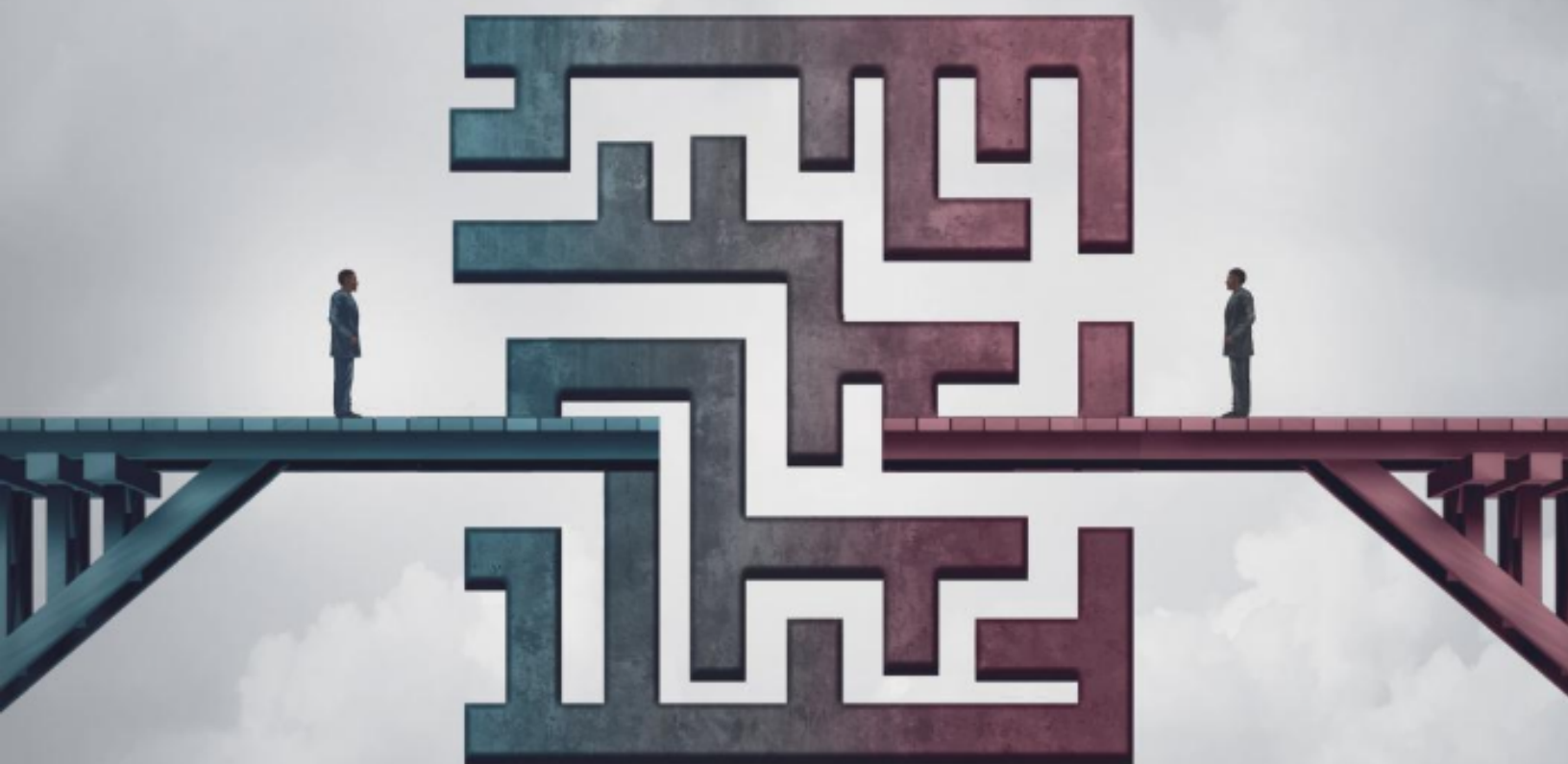
Keeping You Informed  
Since 1969

[www.idmionline.com](http://www.idmionline.com)

Issue 117

ISSN:

2040-3097



# Testing Positive: The Crowley Company Stays Healthy

By Cheri Baker, Director of Communications, Crowley

Despite some difficult interruptions over the past two years - including the loss of a well-loved brother, company president and notable industry expert and, oh, just a tiny little global pandemic - Pat Crowley, current president of The Crowley Company, projects positivity when speaking of his company's stability and the future of the digitization industry. "I can't say the last eighteen months have been easy," admits Crowley, "but the foundation of the company first set by my Dad, Jerry, and then enlarged by my brother, Chris, has set a strong stage for us to move forward in these extraordinary times. Across the company, our staff hasn't missed a beat and I'm more than proud of the teamwork they have exhibited in difficult times."

## Background

Founded in 1980, The Crowley Company is headquartered just outside of the nation's capital in historic Frederick, Maryland, USA. It has manufacturing facilities on the U.S. west coast in San Dimas, California and across the pond in Basingstoke, UK, with sales offices and resale partners throughout the world.

The only firm in the industry to manufacture, sell, utilize and support its production-level scan systems, Crowley manufactures or represents Avision, Crowley, InoTec, Mekel Technology, Qidenus, Wicks and Wilson and Zeutschel brand scanners, among others. Additionally, the firm operates one of the United States' largest digitization services bureaus, digitizing millions of images each week from microfilm, microfiche, aperture cards, books, documents, maps, photographs, glass plates, slides and all other still media. "One of our biggest advantages over the years," says Crowley, "has been that we actually use the scanners in our service bureau that we make and sell. This allows us to view the equipment from the client side - we experience the same material, image accuracy and workflow challenges that our clients face. Having a services division also allows us to remain current with best practices from the many outstanding archivists, librarians, records managers and digital collection specialists for whom we work." He continues, "We are able to take

these combined experiences from our services division and use them in our scanner installations to ensure that the end-user is able to best marry the scanner functionality and production advantages with their media and efficiency requirements and in our manufacturing and software engineering operations to tweak hardware, software and other elements critical to the enhancement of archival digitization and operational efficiency in real time." These "tweaks" then become new products, standard offerings or upgrades in the company's scanner offerings.

Although this may seem to put the hardware and services divisions at odds, Crowley is quick to point out that instead, other service bureaus - one of the company's main capture verticals - are among the first to benefit from the nuances that are built into Crowley-manufactured scanners. "We are sometimes asked why we'd sell a scanner to the competition or why a competitor might purchase a scanner from us. We just think of it as Crowley having a stamp on a job well done no matter who does it; there is plenty of work to go around and we're happy to be a part of it on either side."

## Partnerships and Image Accuracy

In addition to a talented in-house team, Crowley credits several decades-long partnerships as being key to the company's consistent success. "We've been partners with Zeutschel for over twenty years and have worked closely with InoTec and Qidenus for more than a decade each. I think this speaks well of our mutual respect for both the equipment offerings and the way we seek to do business internationally."

Over the years, Crowley has worked with Zeutschel GmbH to develop scanners, such as the OS 14000 in 2004, which met specifications set forth by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that had not yet been achieved by any scanner on the market. No longer being manufactured, the OS 14000 led to Zeutschel's new generation of high-end archival scanners, the OS Q and ScanStudio lines, which can achieve highest image standard ratings, including FADGI 4-star. Zeutschel has also been a leading

reseller and OEM manufacturer of Crowley-manufactured products throughout world less the United States, Canada and the UK.

As imaging standards such as FADGI and Metamorfoze become more widely demanded, these partnerships become critical as Crowley's service bureau becomes a testing ground. In the case of InoTec GmbH, the Crowley-InoTec team has been able to reliably output FADGI 3-star rated images from a rotary sheet fed document scanner that had previously been known primarily for capture speed, accuracy and minimal maintenance requirements. When added to the FADGI 3-star capabilities of the Mekel Technology microform scanners, this trio of highly capable scanners allow Crowley and its partners a unique set of image-accurate offerings across all still media types.

iGua, which now manufactures the Qidenus Technologies brand scanners, has also partnered with Crowley as a reseller outside of the U.S. for nearly twenty years. The companies intimate knowledge of each other as co-workers will be a plus for both firms with the relaunch of the Qidenus scanner line. These partners, along with a long list of other multi-year relationships such as those with Mikrotek (Japan), First Coast Technologies (South Africa), Yankee 3 Exports (South America) and MES Hybrid Document Systems, Inc. (Canada), add credibility and stability in a sometimes-volatile worldwide market. "For us in the U.S.," notes Crowley, "these strong partnerships have led to increased sales and preferred pricing opportunities that we can pass to prospective customers who have come to trust these capture product lines. The same holds true for the partners who carry our products internationally."

## Viral Opportunities

Although The Crowley Company has not been immune to the threat of COVID-19, the company has continued to operate with a combination of remote and on-site operation. "Our digitization services division took the biggest initial hit as it is the most personnel-intensive part of our operation," says Crowley. "The spatial logistics were definitely not conducive





to physical distancing." The company took advantage of Frederick's ten-week mandatory business shutdown from late March through early June to reorganize the layout of the scanning facility using a skeleton crew – a task that had been on the division's task list anyway. Today, everyone is back to work on staggered shifts, masks in place and with plenty of room to work safely. The backlog of digitization projects has been sufficient to keep staff busy and new work is being delivered weekly as outside firms begin their re-openings. "As a result of the virus lockdown, we're seeing increased interest in the digitization of records of all kinds – from rare archives to daily paperwork," notes Crowley. "One of the COVID lessons for all of us have been that we can work remotely when necessary, but that there's a lot of material not yet digitized which folks need to access. With no quick end in sight – and as disaster preparedness for the future becomes a more realistic notion – it makes sense that archives, universities, libraries and corporations are taking a second look at the materials which may require digital access to in the future. This bodes well for service bureaus."

Likewise, Crowley thinks scanner sales will rebound, although perhaps a bit more slowly. "Production scanners of any type have always represented a significant investment for the purchaser. Right now, entities are just trying to keep doors open and staff on the payroll; the competition for dollars is understandably tight. At the same time, with most organizations looking at some degree of a remote workforce and patron service provision, digitizing archives and records is becoming essential. It's a delicate balance, but we've already seen a steady increase of scanner quote requests and – in some cases – a shorter sales cycle than is typical." Crowley points to the company's technical services division as another bright spot. "The fact that we're diversified – scanners, services and support – has been a good source of balance for us. Although our technicians have been limited in their ability to travel because of the pandemic, we've enhanced our web support efforts and have taken advantage of the enforced downtime to reach out to scanner owners to ensure that their maintenance needs are being met and that they are up-to-date on software contracts and more." Crowley's technicians have been working with customers remotely to consult on color and image accuracy needs, aid in self-installations and software upgrades and provide the software refresher training that many scanner operators have not previously

had the time in which to engage. The lack of travel has also allowed the team to become more intimately familiar with Zeutschel's newest line of scanners and to update service manuals and parts inventories – tasks that are normally more difficult to complete when the team is on the road four days out of five.

### Forging Ahead

In closing, Crowley maintains his positivity. "I can't pretend to predict what tomorrow will bring and I'd like to think that the worst is behind us. We have a team of 100 – and their extended families – and thousands of scanner and services customers who count on us to be here for the future. Right now, it's one foot in front of the other and one day at a time, but we're moving forward and I'm hopeful for our industry as a whole as digitization becomes a more clear and critical step for long-term business survival." ■

More: [www.thecrowleycompany.com](http://www.thecrowleycompany.com)

### PHOTO CAPTIONS:

All Images © The Crowley Company or associated companies

*Previous Page:* Face masks and individual workstations are just a few of the steps the Crowley team has taken to avoid COVID risks.

### Top Down (This Page):

The Crowley Company has manufactured Mekel Technology microfilm and microfiche scanners since 2003. Their use in Crowley's digitization services division spawned the creation of the Quantum software suite, which sets its capture and production capabilities apart from competitors.

*This playful take on the company logo has been used in-house as a reminder and encouragement to stay safe while working.*

Crowley brothers Kevin, Chief Operating Officer (L) and Pat, President (R)

Crowley's long-term partnerships, including that with Zeutschel GmbH, has resulted in numerous opportunities as the partners work together to ensure the highest-rated image accuracy and maximum production efficiency.

