

CLIENT: National Archives • MEDIA: Microfilm Collection • SOLUTION: Cabinets

The Challenge

The National Archives at College Park, Maryland is informally known as Archives II. It provides the nation's most advanced archival storage, reference and laboratory facilities. The substantial microfilm storage facilities demonstrate that microfilm is a very active, useful tool in today's business and government applications.

The care and scrutiny that went into the initial planning of the building was rewarded with big dividends. The National Archives Office of Management and Administration, which was responsible for the overall direction of the design and construction of the facility, determined that all contracts for the new building and associated equipment and systems must ensure the highest quality standards.

One area of specific concern was mobile storage. The goal was to provide for maximum storage density to meet storage needs today and for many years to come. This goal was influenced by site restrictions, financial considerations, and aesthetic concerns.



150 Russ Bassett microfilm cabinet sets are mounted on this mobile system.



National Archives II – The World's Largest Archival Facility

solutions

The Solution

National Archives staff worked with the project designers – a joint venture of Hellmuth, Obata & Kassabaum (HOK), Architects, and Ellerbe Becket, Inc., Engineers – to determine the shelving requirements. It took another joint venture to bring these requirements to reality. H & S Constructors – a joint venture of Harnischfeger Engineers, Inc. of Brookfield, WI. and Spacesaver Storage Systems, Inc. of Fort Atkinson, WI. – were awarded the contract to manufacture and install the world's largest high-density mobile system. Particular shelving elements of the mobile system were custom designed by Russ Bassett. A number of storage components in the system were custom made to meet the Archives' specifications.

Because of the design and elements chosen, the mobile system compacts almost two million cubic feet of storage capacity into an area of 691,572 square feet. Of the 809 Russ Bassett cabinets purchased for Archives II, more than 150 microfilm/microfiche storage cabinet sets were installed on the mobile system.

To assure durability, all components of the mobile system had to satisfy stringent criteria for strength, rigidity, resistance to seismic forces, and conformance to deflection requirements.

NARA required all vendors to submit each component of their system for an exhaustive battery of tests by independent laboratories to determine that the components were stable, inert, chemically resistant, and did not emit substances that might damage archival materials. In addition, NARA required that all metal storage equipment be covered with electrostatically applied, heat cured, inert, odorless, dry polyester powder coat paint free of and requiring no organic solvents or drying oils for application, curing or clean-up. Any finishes that contain materials or formulations that could emit vapors during any part of the life span of the system were prohibited. The restrictions also applied to adhesives, lubricants and cleaning solutions, wall paint in the stack areas, concrete floor hardener, pesticides, and other common reagents. Russ Bassett met all of these stringent requirements.

Oversized map cases, designed, engineered, and manufactured by Russ Bassett for the storage of documents as long as 20 feet, rest on top of three map case cabinets. Russ Bassett designed and fabricated 2,860 roller drawers to fit onto the mobile shelving carriages. Outfitted with both mechanical compressor plates and file support plates, these drawers house heavy glass photographic negatives.

The Microfilm Research Room contains 75 sets of Russ Bassett cabinets for microfilm and microfiche.

In the Cartographic and Architectural Research Rooms there are Russ Bassett cabinets for self-service microfilm and microfiche. In the Cartographic and Architectural records storage area, Russ



This custom mobile cart is used for transporting oversized documents.



These oversized map cases accommodate documents up to 20 feet long.

Solutions

Bassett cabinets house federal agency archival records on roll film, fiche and aperture cards.

Mobile carts, custom made by Russ Bassett to transport oversized drawings to the Archives laboratories and research rooms, have a special curved top to protect the corners of oversized documents from being damaged.

A second records storage area houses Russ Bassett cabinets on the Spacesaver mobile units. Approximately 198,000 35mm rolls are stored here, including the microfilm publications of the National Archives, State Department records, and World War I records, including captured German records.

The Special Media Laboratory contains Russ Bassett cabinets that house duplicate copies of NARA's microfilm publications.

The Result

Archives II was designed and built for the future – not just for microfilm storage and retrieval, but for information gathering and dissemination in a timely, cost-effective and efficient manner. Because of the design and stringent specifications, the products and systems used at this modern reference facility will enable Archives II to be a valuable and effective resource for years to come.