

Case Study

How Bexar County Clerk, Lucy Adame-Clark, Protects History and Modernizes Government

Preserving, digitizing, and providing access to critical records with Kofile to build community value and make a difference for the citizens of Bexar County, TX



Lucy Adame-Clark
Bexar County, TX
County Clerk

Lucy Adame-Clark's commitment to serving the citizens of Bexar County, TX, spans over 26 years. After starting her career at the Sheriff's office, Mrs. Adame-Clark became the first Latina and first woman elected as Bexar County Clerk in 2019. Bexar County, TX was founded in 1836 and is the fourth most populous county in Texas and the 17th in the United States.



Inspired to run for county clerk to make a difference in county government and her community

Lucy Adame-Clark's inspiration to run for Bexar County Clerk came after 22 years of working for the Sheriff's department. Having experienced first-hand the inefficiencies of processing judicial records using manual and paper processes, Mrs. Adame-Clark recognized the need to digitize and modernize county government. But one case involving a young victim stood out in her mind and inspired her to run for office so she could make a difference for her community.

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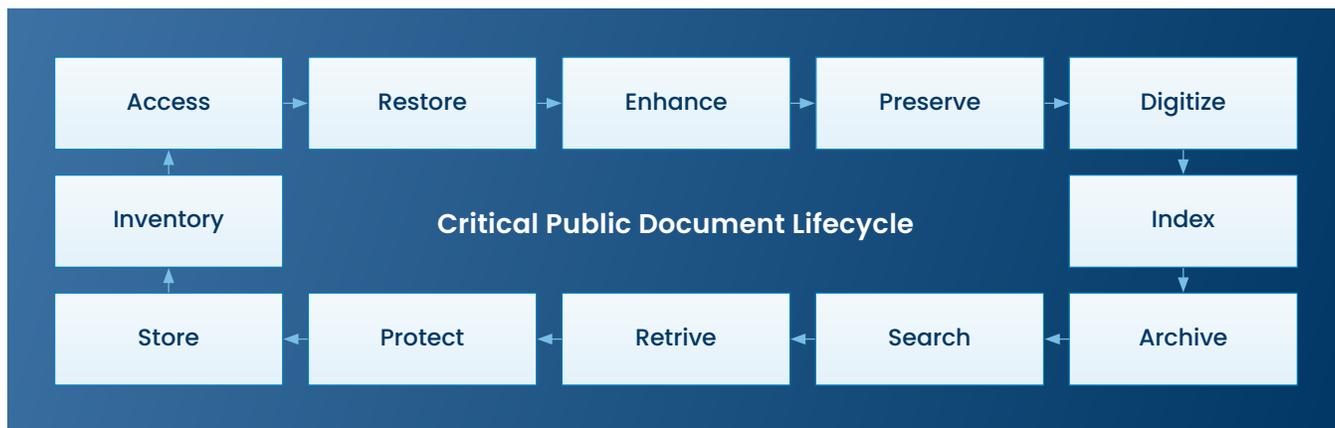
When I worked in criminal investigations on forensic evidence, I would always remember one child sexual assault case in particular. A little girl, who must've been about two years old when it happened. Her case didn't go to court until she was six or seven years old. All that time, she and her family had to live with the trauma and a long pending court case. If the case had gone to court sooner, she and her family could have focused on the child's care and treatment, without the fear and uncertainty of resolution in an extended judicial process. I didn't understand why it took so long for the judicial system and for the records to be obtained, digitized, and prepared for court. It inspired me to run for county clerk so I could modernize the process,” said Lucy Adame-Clark.

Assessing the state of critical records under her watch

Those experiences alongside Mrs. Adame-Clark’s family history and upbringing fuel her passion for preserving history and modernizing county government and improving public access. When the citizens of Bexar County elected Mrs. Adame-Clark to become the county clerk, the first order of business for her staff was to perform a holistic assessment of the condition and volume of records under her watch. Additionally, Mrs. Adame-Clark asked her staff to consider the constituent’s experience working with the county clerk’s office.

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When I came into office, we analyzed and audited all of the records and workflow in the county clerk’s office. Many of the records were in dire need of preservation and digitization. So we began the work to protect these documents. I directed my existing staff with over 200 years of experience, who are driven and passionate about history and modernization as I am, to evaluate and observe what has been abandoned in our own county clerk’s office. I asked they consider the customer’s point of view. What does a customer need? They did an amazing job and realized there was a strong need for improved customer service, digitalization, and more accessibility for the public to all of the county clerk’s official public records,” said Lucy Adame-Clark.



Partnering with Kofile to protect history and modernize Bexar County, TX

In 2021, Mrs. Adame Clark spearheaded an initiative to restore and preserve the Bexar County Spanish Archives dating back to the 1700s, detailing Spanish and Mexican government activities. The archives hold significant historical value for county government, researchers, and the community. For this critical project, Bexar County commissioners approved Mrs. Adame-Clark's recommendation to acquire Kofile services to perform the project scope.

Kofile's secure facilities and attention to detail impressed Mrs. Adame-Clark

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My parents were migrant workers. As a 4th generation Texan, born and raised in Bexar County, the Bexar County historical records are important to me. The Bexar County Spanish Archives are historic so securing the records has great importance to me. When I visited Kofile, I recognized it's a very secure facility where they do preservation. The vaults where records are stored are climate controlled and provide added protection for the records. Kofile's record tracking system supports our business and customer service processes through prompt access to fulfill customer copy requests. The attention to detail of the work was also very impressive. They didn't use machinery, it's all hands-on to restore every detail for every single piece of documents that are centuries old.”

Kofile employees care for and treat the records as their own

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I met some of the Kofile employees at their facilities. There was a mother and daughter and it just caught my attention how passionate they were about preserving the history of Texas. I could see they took pride and cared about what they were doing. I told them I'm proud of what you do for these records and I trust that they'll take good care of our Bexar County records” said Lucy Adame-Clark.



Making Texas history and county records more accessible to the community

Before the preservation project, few constituents knew of or had access to view the Bexar County Spanish Archives. As the project has gained momentum, it has attracted the public including historians, scholars, and researchers from around the world. Local school groups, and many other organizations, also frequently take field trips to visit the gallery, learn about the early history of Texas, and cultivate community pride.

Building community pride through the records and access to history

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The number of people that come to view the Spanish Archives has increased significantly since we advertised that we did the \$18.5 million preservation project with Kofile. We're having at least 10 to 30 people a day coming in to view the collection from Texas internationally. We also regularly host school trips from all over the county to teach the next generation about our history” said Lucy Adame-Clark.

But Mrs. Adame-Clark’s ambition and commitment to modernizing government and making records more accessible to the public doesn’t end there. As one of the largest counties in Texas, Bexar County comprises large rural areas that don’t have easy access to the courts or offices. And traveling to one can be burdensome for her constituents. That’s why Mrs. Adame-Clark continues to be an innovator in records accessibility.

She’s now undergoing a project with Kofile to digitize and index the records to create an online repository. Rather than requiring an in-person visit or searching through records book-by-book, the digital repository enables constituents and researchers to search the entire catalog of documents online based on events in history.

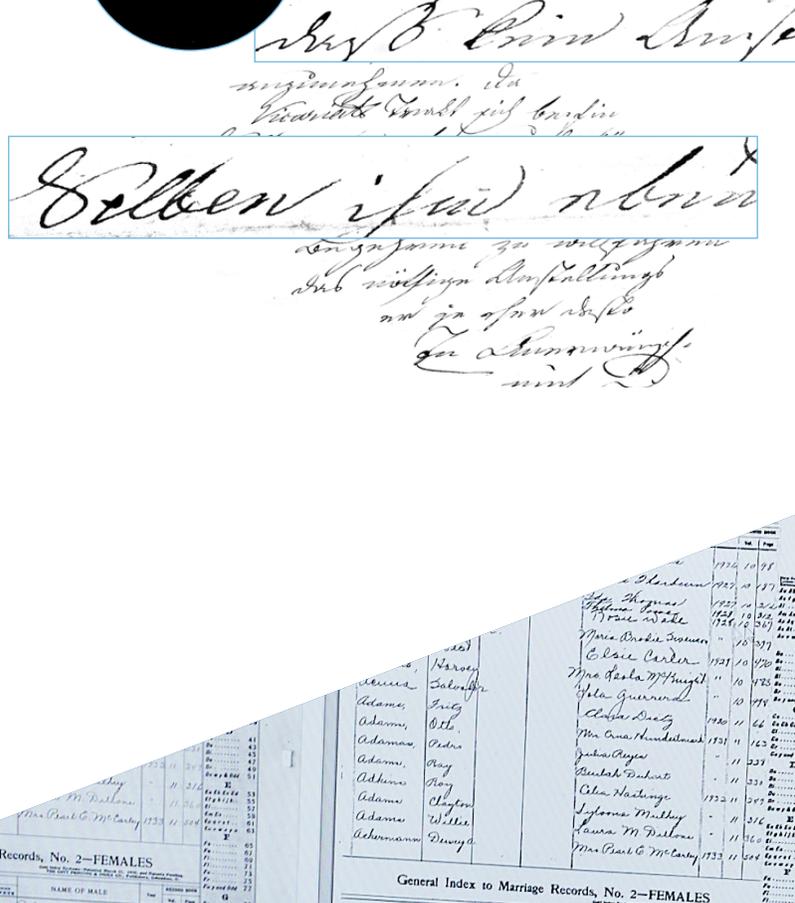
Creating greater digital access for constituents with Kofile’s digitization and indexing solutions

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We’re working with Kofile on building a digital repository collection on our website so people can access history from home. Instead of people coming into the office or searching book-by-book, we want to make a repository collection online and index it by events in history. It’s not something that can be done using just Optical Character Recognition (OCR) technology alone. It requires the expertise that Kofile has to be able to precisely index the records across so many things that have happened in our history,” said Lucy Adame-Clark.



Optical Character Recognition for reviewing and identifying cursive handwriting.



What's next for Lucy Adame-Clark? Helping other clerks preserve Texas history.

County clerks and other elected officials have a big responsibility as the guardians and champions of history through the records in their care. Mrs. Adame-Clark believes it's a position of pride. Elected officials shouldn't be afraid to ask for assistance as she was assisted by many seasoned county clerk mentors.

Mrs. Adame-Clark's commitment to protecting history spans beyond those under her watch. Through Mrs. Adame-Clark's strong partnership with the District County Clerk, she continues to help preserve more of Texas' history including the Republic of Texas collection.

Forging new partnerships to protect critical records of Texas

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My team and I have a strong partnership with the District County Clerk and her staff. Our teams are working to identify what needs to be preserved in the District Clerk's collection. The District Clerk's Office has the Republic of Texas historical collection, which is incredible! This is the first time the Bexar district clerk and the Bexar county clerk work together to identify documents to be preserved, digitized, and made available to our constituents online. As a result, we've located important historical documents we've never seen in Bexar County that are in dire need of preservation,” said Lucy Adame-Clark.

And Mrs. Adame-Clark is finding unknown treasures along the way, including John W. Smith's will (Bexar County's first County Clerk) and a land grant from Sam Houston (former President of the Republic of Texas). She now plans to expedite the preservation and digitization of these historical documents for the citizens of Bexar County to enjoy.

County clerks are guardians and champions of history finding unknown historical treasures for their citizens.

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If you become a county clerk, first assess the records under your watch. Every county clerk in Texas is here to assist as so many have already preserved history, so seek their advice. Be proud of the position you're holding because it's a big responsibility and privilege. You hold the key to the history of the county you serve,” said Lucy Adame-Clark. “When we walked into the District Clerk's cage, we found so many historical collections and archivable work that belongs to the County Clerk. You just don't know what you'll find. We found the probate record for John W. Smith, the first County Clerk elected in Bexar County in 1837, and a land grant record from Sam Houston, recorded while he served as President of Texas. We'll bring those back to the Bexar County Clerk's Office, add it to our gallery, and make it accessible to the public. It's been amazing how much the community has embraced the work we've done. Bexar County once included territory that is now part of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico and Wyoming. My goals, as Bexar County Clerk, are to preserve and trace the history of Bexar County and Texas through the land and court records. We're halfway done here in Bexar County,” said Lucy Adame-Clark.

Schedule a consultation to address your critical records challenges and obligations

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Kofile is the leader in Critical Records Management working closely with county, local, and state government organizations and their leaders. Our commitment to preserving, safeguarding, and modernizing access to history and the public record drives everything we do. Trusted by over 3,000 government organizations and officials earned from decades of service and innovation, we apply the right mix of expertise, technology, and processes to empower leaders to increase the impact of government services more efficiently.

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