

## Case Study

# How Bucks County Recorder, Dan McPhillips, Makes Government Work For His Constituents

**Restoring, preserving, and digitizing 700 historic deed books with Kofile to increase accessibility and transparency for the citizens of Bucks County, PA**



**Dan McPhillips**  
Bucks County, PA,  
Recorder of Deeds

Dan McPhillips has served his community for over 10 years—first as Warminster Township’s Supervisor and now as the Bucks County, PA, Recorder of Deeds. When the opportunity arose to expand his role and serve nearly 700K constituents countywide, Mr. McPhillips jumped at the chance. Bucks County, PA was founded in 1682 by William Penn—founder of Pennsylvania. It’s famous nationwide for its historic sites, including the Mercer Museum, Washington Crossing Historic Park, Pennsbury Manor, and the Pearl S. Buck House.



## An opportunity to serve the people of Bucks County, PA

“

I served as a local Township Supervisor in Warminster for seven years. Before that, I was appointed to and served on the local planning commission, hearing board budgets and finance, so I had experience with local government. Being the Recorder of Deeds for Bucks County gave me this opportunity to serve residents countywide. My local municipality in Warminster Township is 32,000 residents, and this is an opportunity to serve close to 700,000 people, which I thought was a great challenge,” said Mr. McPhillips.

As Bucks County’s Recorder of Deeds, Mr. McPhillips’ primary responsibility is to record, preserve, and protect real estate documents, including all county deed books, that represent the history of his community. But Mr. McPhillips takes a different approach to fulfill his oath of office—constituent services. While his office serves hundreds of constituents daily through accurate and timely recordings, Mr. McPhillips believes he can do more to make government work for the people. Every two weeks, Mr. McPhillips holds gatherings in his local community so constituents can get their questions answered, and he can inform them about what he and his staff are doing to better serve them. Attendees even receive a free copy of their property Deed.

## Building public trust through transparent access to public information

“

Elected officials should be transparent and accessible to their constituents. Every other Tuesday of the month I go out into the community so residents of Bucks County can come and ask me any kind of questions. They can also get free copies of their deed, and I have a free fraud alert program they can sign up for, so constituent services are a big priority for me,” said Dan McPhillips.

It’s that same commitment to making government work for the people with transparency and accessibility that led Mr. McPhillips to continue preserving the history of Bucks County and its people through its deed books. There are 700 deed books dating back to 1684 that require restoration and preservation. Each is in a different stage of decay. Eventually, they will decay away to nothing if left untreated. In them are the irreplaceable stories and documents from the people that lived and passed through Bucks County.

Stories like that of William Penn—the founder of Pennsylvania—whose original signature is in the very first deed book that Bucks County preserved. Or that of Lady Luxembourg—the princess of Luxembourg during WWII—who fled the war and lived in Pennsylvania. She purchased land and donated it to the people of Bucks County, which is now a park named in her honor.



## Every record tells a story and captures a constituent’s legacy

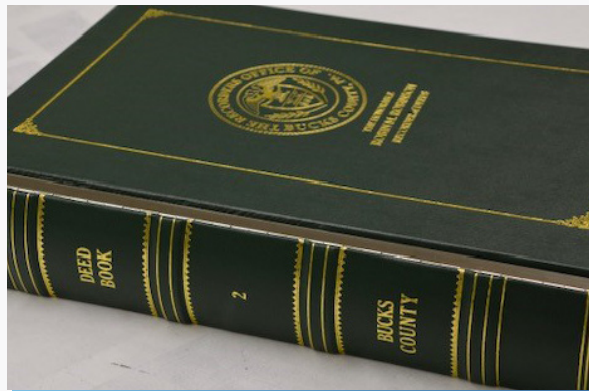
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It’s one thing to preserve a book but it’s another to tell stories of what’s in those books. Educating the public about the history you’re saving goes a long way towards getting support and funding to preserve these books that are decaying away and have so much value for communities,” said Dan McPhillips.

And the work doesn’t stop there. Citizens today expect greater and easier access to their records, so Mr. McPhillips is digitally capturing all deed records so staff and constituents can securely access them online without an in-person visit to the office.



Before



After



## Partnering with Kofile to restore, preserve, protect, and share Bucks County's history through its deed books

Mr. McPhillips' predecessors had begun the process of restoring and preserving Bucks County deed books with Kofile, and he was familiar with the transformation that occurs when treating record books.

### Public officials are guardians and champions of records and history

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Being a history buff, I was amazed with the history and stories we have in those deed books. And seeing the work that Kofile had done, I was very impressed with the transformation,” said Dan McPhillips.

Mr. McPhillips and his staff were blown away by the personalized service and care that Kofile put into ensuring the safety and security of every book, that made working with them a no-brainer.

### Kofile's expertise and high-quality Critical Records Management services deliver for Bucks County

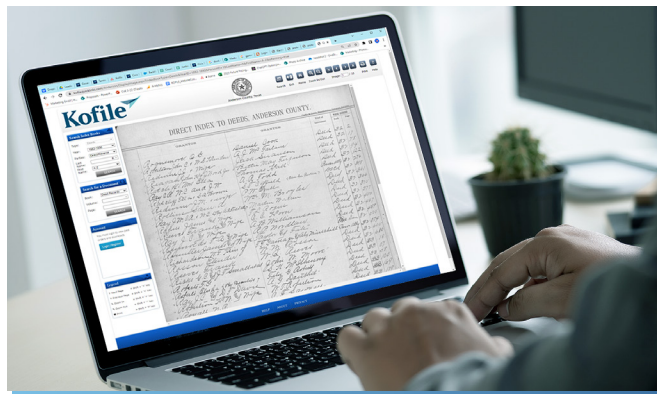
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My Kofile sales rep, Ryan, has been incredible. He explains the whole process and he's always there to answer questions. He was in the dirt and dust with us moving things around, stacking them on the pallet, and loading them in the truck. He's always right in there. He's the one that drops the books off when they're finished and helps us put them into our climate-controlled storage space. He's definitely hands-on and accessible, which is part of the comfort we have when working with Kofile, so it was a no-brainer to continue working with them,” said Dan McPhillips.

As deed books return, Mr. McPhillips prioritizes educating his community and the youth about their importance and the county's history. Through history socials at his office and guest lecturing at the local high school, he educates a new generation of citizens on the importance of deed books and the history of their community. These educational opportunities fuel additional funding to preserve even more books, primarily from donations and grants.

“

We have history event socials where we invite the public into my office. At the event, people can see the preserved deed books and learn about the different stories that are in them. When people see the history that we're saving, they want to be part of it,” said Mr. McPhillips.



## Making records more accessible and better serving Bucks County constituents with Kofile

While Mr. McPhillips' predecessors were early adopters of digitization technology to increase records' accessibility, many of the images online were poor quality and unreadable. So as part of Mr. McPhillips' preservation project with Kofile, he's digitizing all the deed books and re-imaging previous ones.



## Improving Bucks County's records accessibility with Kofile's quality digitization and imaging

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When these books were originally scanned in the 1990s, the technology was not as advanced as it is today. Because of this, the quality of current images online are very poor, sometimes unreadable,” said Dan McPhillips.

The enhanced digital images benefit constituents and staff, who can better serve the community through high-quality images and no longer have to retrieve heavy and fragile books from the storage vault.

“

It helps the staff with research or verifying information. Some documents and deeds are discolored so we didn't get a good image and had to go to the vault to get the original book. Kofile's digital imaging has definitely enhanced our ability to do what we need to do in the office, and ultimately helps constituents because either we're verifying something or someone has called to ask a question and we're helping them get those answers faster,” said Dan McPhillips.

And both he and his constituents are excited with the results of the project.

“

Working with Kofile on restoring, preserving, and imaging deed books has exceeded my expectations. When I'm out in the community, people are always coming up to me asking about our progress on these books, and I just love telling them about all the great work we're doing and that gets them excited,” said Dan McPhillips.

Schedule a consultation to address your critical records challenges and obligations

CONTACT US

## Dan McPhillips' advice to other government officials: start now and get the public involved

Democracy depends on transparency and access to history and public information. And Mr. McPhillips is halfway through preserving and digitizing the 700 deed books from Bucks County under his watch.

## Fulfilling the sworn oath of office and responsibility

“

If someone wants to see the original deed, we need to be able to provide that in a book. It's my responsibility as the Recorder of Deeds, and it's the responsibility of other elected or appointed officials,” said Dan McPhillips.

His focus on constituent services enables him to fulfill his oath of office and gets people to know and care for these irreplaceable books. Because once the public understands the history and stories told in these books, they get on board.

His advice to other elected or appointed officials: start now and get the public involved.

## Show the history and importance of deed books to build community trust

“

Time is not on your side. Do your homework and get started on preserving and digitizing your records sooner rather than later because the books are literally decaying away. You need to put together a plan and get the public involved. When the public knows the history that's being lost in those books, they're incredibly supportive and will want to be part of it and contribute to your project,” said Dan McPhillips.





## Your Trusted Partner for Critical Records Management

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.

**Kofile**  
Critical Records Management

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