

Sample Digitization Pricing

Pricing structures for digitization vary significantly from vendor to vendor, which can make it difficult for agencies to conduct a precise apples-to-apples price comparison. For some vendors, pricing is based solely on skilled hourly labor while others may utilize a mix of task-based pricing (e.g., price per image), volume-based pricing (e.g., tiered pricing for higher volumes) and hourly labor categories. Moreover, vendors often have their own definitions for specific tasks and labor categories that frequently differ from other vendors, which can further muddle efforts to accurately compare pricing. For example, one vendor may list a price for “scanning” that includes black and white paper scanning, basic document prep work and basic image clean-up. Another vendor may also list a price for “scanning” which includes similar specifications plus basic indexing. A third vendor may simply provide an hourly rate for a Scanning Specialist to complete the same task. While agencies may encounter a variety of pricing structures and/or bundles, the components of a digitization project and pricing can generally be organized under the following broad categories:

- Paper Scanning
- Data Entry/Indexing
- Quality Assurance
- Scanning Output
- Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
- Microform Conversion

The following chart summarizes price ranges observed on various vendors’ GSA Schedule36 for Special Item Number 51 506—Document Conversion. This is not a complete analysis of every current contract holder’s rates, but serves as a starting point to understand what price ranges agencies may expect to see for the following digitization services.

Category	Sample Hourly Pricing	Sample Task-Based Pricing	Comments
Paper Scanning - Standard Sized Paper— Black & White	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.04–\$0.07 per image	- Typically includes: B&W paper scanning up to 8.5 x 14”, up to 300 dpi, TIFF file output - May also include: Option for TIFF or PDF file output, basic prep, basic QA, basic image clean-up, basic indexing - Often assumes records are in good quality and require little to no prep and/or special handling (aka in “scan-ready condition”); more extensive prep or handling may impact rates - May impose a minimum image volume requirement, and may also offer discounted pricing for higher volumes

Category	Sample Hourly Pricing	Sample Task-Based Pricing	Comments
Paper Scanning— Standard Sized Paper— Color	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.05–\$0.15 per image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typically includes: Color paper scanning up to 8.5 x 14", up to 300 dpi, TIFF file output - May also include: Option for TIFF or PDF file output, basic prep, basic QA, basic image clean-up, basic indexing - Often assumes records are in good quality and require little to no prep and/or special handling (aka in "scan-ready condition"); more extensive prep or handling may impact rates - May impose a minimum image volume requirement, and may also offer discounted pricing for higher volumes
Paper Scanning— Large/Oversized Paper	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.90–\$1.80 per image	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typically includes: Paper in excess of 8.5 x 14", up to 300 dpi, TIFF file output - May also include: Options for higher image resolutions >300 dpi, color scanning, basic prep, basic QA, basic clean-up - Often assumes records are in good quality and require little to no prep and/or special handling (aka in "scan-ready condition"); more extensive prep or handling may impact rates - May have a maximum paper size, or may offer tiered pricing for increasingly larger paper sizes
Data Entry/Indexing	\$26–\$40/hr for Data Entry Specialist	\$0.005– \$0.019 per keystroke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Typically includes: 99% accuracy, single pass - Typically priced on a per keystroke basis or per 1000 characters, occasionally priced by Data Entry hourly labor only - Often assumes indexed fields can be easily located within a document and are legible - May offer different methods (such as OCR) for capturing data entry fields to reduce manual keystrokes required
Quality Assurance/Control	\$35–\$55/hr for QA/QC Specialist \$80–\$140/hr for QA/QC Supervisor	\$0.01–\$0.04 per image	Typically includes advanced clean-up services such as page rotations, blank page deletions, and additional quality control measures to ensure 100% accuracy

Category	Sample Hourly Pricing	Sample Task-Based Pricing	Comments
Scanning Output	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.00–\$30.00 each	- TIFF and PDF are the most common file formats and are provided at no additional cost; some vendors may offer enhancements such as hyperlinking or bookmarking - Some vendors provide images via CDs, DVDs, other media, or FTP file transfers at no additional fee, while others charge a fee
Optical Character Recognition (OCR)	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.004–\$3.00 per image	OCR levels may vary resulting in a wide price range; some vendors offer basic OCR while others offer OCR coupled with additional image clean-up services
Microform Conversion	\$30–\$50/hr for Scanning Specialist \$40–\$100/hr for Scanning Supervisor	\$0.01–\$0.26 per image	- Microform pricing varies based on type (e.g., microfilm or microfiche) and other factors such as film width (e.g., 16, 35, 105 mm) or format (e.g., positive or negative microfilm; COM, jacketed or step-and-repeat microfiche) - Typically includes: up to 300 dpi, TIFF file output - May also include: Option for TIFF or PDF file output, basic QA, basic image clean-up, basic indexing

In addition to the hourly labor titles previously mentioned, some vendors may also provide other custom digitization services utilizing additional hourly labor pricing such as those listed below:

Additional Hourly Labor Titles	Sample Pricing
Program Director	\$100–\$130
Program Manager	\$85–\$120
Production Supervisor	\$40–\$55
Production Specialist	\$30–\$40
Document Preparation Specialist	\$25–\$35
Systems Engineer	\$75–\$125
Network Engineer	\$65–\$100
Programmer	\$60–\$80
Driver/Courier	\$35–\$50

Sample Digitization Use Case Analysis

To illustrate how an agency may assess whether initiating a digitization project would be cost-effective, sample scenarios are shown below with high level cost-benefit analyses comparing digitizing and physically storing records:

SCENARIO 1: HIGHLY ACCESSED RECORDS STORED FOR 5 YEARS

- 1,000 standard file boxes (average of 2,000 pages per box)
- 75% of boxes are retrieved from storage, 2 times per year

5 Year Storage at FRC				Digitization with Destruction of Hardcopy			
	Qty	Rate	Cost		Qty	Rate	Cost
Storage	1,000 boxes	\$0.24 per month	\$14,400				
Reference¹	7,500 boxes	\$4.40 per box	\$33,000				
Refile¹	7,500 boxes	\$4.75 per box	\$35,625	Scanning & Indexing²	2,000,000 pages	\$0.07 per single side of page	\$140,000
Shipping¹ (Level III)	7,500 boxes	\$13.00 per box	\$97,500	Disposition	1,000 boxes	\$5.50 per box	\$5,500
5 YEAR STORAGE TOTAL			\$180,525	DIGITIZATION TOTAL			\$145,500
Storage Cost Per Box			\$180.53	Digitization Cost Per Box			\$145.50

¹ Reference, Refile, Shipping Qty: Volume calculated at 7,500 boxes = 1,000 boxes x 75% retrieved x 2 times per year x 5 years

² Scanning/Indexing Qty: Volume calculated at 2,000,000 pages = 1,000 boxes x 2,000 pages per box

SCENARIO 2: INFREQUENTLY ACCESSED RECORDS STORED FOR 5 YEARS

- 1,000 standard file boxes (Average of 2,000 pages per box)
- 5% of boxes are retrieved from storage, 1 time per year

5 Year Storage at FRC				Digitization with Destruction of Hardcopy			
	Qty	Rate	Cost		Qty	Rate	Cost
Storage	1,000 boxes	\$0.24 per month	\$14,400				
Reference¹	250 boxes	\$4.40 per box	\$1,100				
Refile¹	250 boxes	\$4.75 per box	\$1,188	Scanning & Indexing²	2,000,000 pages	\$0.07 per single side of page	\$140,000
Shipping¹ (Level III)	250 boxes	\$13.00 per box	\$3,250	Disposition	1,000 boxes	\$5.50 per box	\$5,500
5 YEAR STORAGE TOTAL			\$19,938	DIGITIZATION TOTAL			\$145,500
Storage Cost Per Box			\$19.94	Digitization Cost Per Box			\$145.50

¹ Reference, Refile, Shipping Qty: Volume calculated at 250 boxes = 1,000 boxes x 5% retrieved x 1 time per year x 5 years

² Scanning/Indexing Qty: Volume calculated at 2,000,000 pages = 1,000 boxes x 2,000 pages per box

Understanding that these sample scenarios have been simplified for illustration purposes, agencies are encouraged to complete their own assessments tailored to the specific storage and scanning rates available and expected records activity levels. It is also worth noting that other cost-benefit considerations such as lost productivity costs from handling physical materials and setup of necessary document management systems are not included in these samples.