

## The Common Application



### The Common Application safeguards its online offering with Iron Mountain's SaaSProtect Escrow Service™

**CUSTOMER:**

The Common Application is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping students streamline the college application process by providing a single application.

**CHALLENGE:**

Having reached the milestone of one million applications processed in a year, The Common Application is finishing development on its next-generation online application.

**SOLUTION:**

The Common Application required the protection afforded by technology escrow. Since they are delivering their product via a Software as a Service (SaaS) model, Iron Mountain's SaaSProtect Escrow Service™ and verification services were the right fit.

**BENEFIT:**

With the SaaSProtect Escrow Service in place, The Common Application has the ability keep its system up and running in case of problems.

**THE CUSTOMER**

The Common Application was founded 30 years ago as a not-for-profit organization that enables high school students to submit one common application to its over 300 member colleges and universities that use a holistic, qualitative selection process for admission. For the first 21 years, this was handled manually, with a paper process, but nine years ago the Common App Online® debuted as a web-based service.

When the Internet exploded, The Common Application began making its application form available online in a web submission version. In the first year, they had 1,248



applications submitted overall; this year they have passed the mark of one million annual submissions. Executive Director of The Common Application Rob Killion explains, "There has been a sea

change in people's comfort-level with the Internet, particularly among the high-school age population. As recently as two or three years ago, many still found it unimaginable to trust something as important as a college application to the Internet. And, now many people believe the reverse – to trust something this critical to the vagaries of the mail seems hard to imagine."

To provide the best user experience and stay true to its goals of equity, access, and integrity in the college application process, The Common Application decided it needed to build a next-generation online service. They hired a third party technology partner, AY Software Services, a subsidiary of AY Recruiting Solutions, to develop the new Common App Online.

AY will also host, manage and maintain the service after its launch. An important element of the new Common App Online will be added protection for its users, including technology escrow.

*"The primary benefit is the security that we get. We know that if catastrophe strikes – either catastrophe in terms of a deteriorating business relationship, a natural or personal catastrophe – there is a now a 'plan B' with Iron Mountain, and that's something we haven't had before."*

— Rob Killion, Executive Director, The Common Application

Jennifer Wagener, President of AY Software Services states, "We were pleased to have been selected by The Common Application for this project, based on our extensive industry experience. From the perspective of The Common Application, we understand that they certainly want to have some level of protection. Hence, their requirement to use an escrow service for the purposes of this system that we are developing for them."

# CASE STUDY

## IRON MOUNTAIN | THE COMMON APPLICATION

### THE CHALLENGE

The next generation Common Application Online has many differences that will enhance both the student user experience and the ability for member schools to work with the data submitted. Killion explains, “The front-end user interface has been entirely re-thought and designed from the ground up; it will be a very modern, user-friendly interface. We will also be incorporating a search engine that students can use to more easily and accurately locate which of our schools meet their search criteria. And, high school counselors and teachers will now be able to transmit their recommendation forms and high school transcripts online.” On the back-end, the new system will now use Microsoft ASP.net and there will be many more tools for the member colleges to be able to manipulate the data.

Killion adds, “As part of the added security in the new service, we decided it would be prudent to consider digital escrow services for the first time. Our intellectual property attorney recommended we look at Iron Mountain, and so we did.”

Wagener echoes his sentiments, “From a practical business perspective, their volume surpassed a million applications this season. That’s really starting to get to a level where you need to make sure you have good business plans. As they continue to promote the Common App Online and expect to see significant growth, the protection of an escrow strategy is now part of the service that they need to provide to their users.

### THE SOLUTION

The Common Application selected Iron Mountain’s SaaSProtect Escrow Service™, especially designed to protect applications and data in Software as a Service business models. With SaaSProtect Escrow Service, applications are protected with both source code and object code escrow deposits. This provides all the components necessary to recreate the live production environment

for the application – either on the customer’s premise or at a fail-over site – and to restore service to end-users. The Common Application will also use Iron Mountain’s verification testing to ensure the application can be re-built quickly.

Killion elaborates, “When our new application year starts, AY will be doing twice a month escrow deposits. And, once a year, we will also be taking advantage of Iron Mountain’s verification service, where Iron Mountain will be verifying the system for us to make sure that what has been deposited is actually fully functioning replicable code.”

From the service provider’s point of view, Wagener of AY Software Services states, “We have been hired to provide a reliable system that is available 24 by 7. In the event that doesn’t happen, for whatever reason, the Iron Mountain service provides a back-up solution for The Common Application to utilize to ensure system availability. We would never expect it to be needed, but it is a safeguard for them.”

As The Common Application examines risks and decides on protection strategies, Iron Mountain’s SaaSProtect Escrow Service has been integrated into the Common App Online as part of the company’s “best practice” business continuity strategy. “We are fortunate that the online application generates sufficient revenue to continue providing best practice security measures for our members,” he continues. “And, digital escrow and digital verification services are certainly an important part of that.”

© 2007 Iron Mountain Incorporated. All rights reserved. Iron Mountain and the design of the mountain are registered trademarks and Iron Mountain Digital is a trademark of Iron Mountain Incorporated. The Common Application and Common App Online are registered trademarks of the The Common Application, Inc., and are used with its permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.



745 Atlantic Avenue  
Boston, Massachusetts 02111  
(800) 899-IRON

Iron Mountain Digital, the world’s leading provider of data backup/recovery and archiving software as a service (SaaS), offers a comprehensive suite of data protection and e-records management software and services to thousands of companies around the world. For more information, visit our Web site at [www.ironmountain.com/digital](http://www.ironmountain.com/digital).