

Mail from the Arctic Circle

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With the establishment of a central print center in Kiruna, the Swedish Police Authority (Polismyndigheten) laid the foundation for transparency and cost reduction in document processing. One central technological component is the DocBridge Pilot solution.

The Swedish Police Authority sends out approximately 1,000,000 statements a year from its main criminal register. The statements are comparable to the standard police records maintained in Germany. Many companies in Sweden also require these documents from their employees. The documents are printed in Kiruna, north of the Arctic Circle. The city known for its iron ore mine has also long been home to the nation's criminal register. All police departments transmit data to Kiruna, where it is saved and printed and sent in document form as needed. But not only criminal records are generated there. The site is also tasked with radar camera analysis. Anyone in Sweden who is flash-photographed for speeding is guaranteed to receive his fine notice from Kiruna. Nearly 100,000 are sent out each year.

In addition, copies of the citizen police reports including updates as well as mail arrives from the public prosecutor's office, because the Swedish judicial system also has its correspondence printed in this city in Lapland. Today, the Polismyndigheten is the established output management service provider for various agencies, even though the police force remains its principal client. Approximately 3.7 million mailings or 17 million pages are sent out annually. And the trend is growing.

Paper dominates the output management

The government is working toward making electronic delivery more attractive. Data security, valued highly in Sweden, is the sticking point, as it so often is. Some of the departments in the Swedish government has launched several campaigns. Regarding the Swedish police, they are aiming to support digital inboxes in the near future.

But paper still sets the tone for output management in Kiruna. One central technological component is the DocBridge Pilot solution, which receives all pending documents from the different specialist applications and "homogenizes" them based on input format. Plausibility checks are also run. Then DocBridge Pilot generates print jobs with bar codes and separates them based on type/size of mailing and zip codes.

Future plans include simplifying response and returns processing by applying an additional machine-readable code to the document. The software developed by Compart was chosen for two reasons: One is that DocBridge Pilot can presort mailings based on the rules of different mail service providers.

Automatic presorting is worth money

This IT-supported consolidation of bulk mailings is worth saving money, not only because it better utilizes the postage discounts guaranteed for presorted mail. Bundling correspondence into a single mailing also offers potential savings from which the authorities will profit in future.

Executive Summary

The Swedish police (Polismyndigheten) prints and mails approx. 3.7 million pieces of correspondence from its Kiruna site: fine notices, police records, legal correspondence, etc. The individual departments send the data to Kiruna, where DocBridge Pilot processes it into finished mailings. The authorities are hoping for significant cost savings from centralization, especially through better utilization of postage discounts.

Centralized printing and delivery

This DocBridge Pilot function is much-appreciated in Kiruna, because the print center used to receive countless batch files that were sorted neither by type of delivery, recipient, nor zip code. Any possible discounts slipped through their fingers. The Polismyndigheten therefore expect considerably lower costs in the future.

Furthermore, the staff in Kiruna appreciates how effectively Compart software deals with the different document formats, especially PDF. This is extremely important for output management in Kiruna, because in future the data will be delivered from the specialist applications as PDFs with index files. This format was intentionally chosen because the employees find PDF files easier to deal with than other formats. In any case, countless specialized applications had already been using a PDF generator all along and were already printing their documents in this format locally. It made sense to make PDF the default format.

Where this was not initially possible, in a transition phase the raw data from the specialized applications was converted into AFP files using a separate application – a tedious process because the workflow for accepting the raw data had to be manually programmed for each application. During later restructuring, PDF was gradually implemented in all locations.

There was no central output instance

DocBridge Pilot accepts the PDF files, prepares them appropriately and converts them into AFP, the standard format for bulk printing. The Compart software also assigns the mailing to the appropriate postage classes. Correspondence without a zip code is automatically weeded out. The documents designated for dispatch are then sent to production via the Ricoh Process Director (RPD), control software for printing and correspondence creation, where they are also placed in envelopes, stamped, and ultimately picked up by the postal provider.

The Ricoh solution in combination with DocBridge Pilot is also able to split high-volume jobs and distribute them to various machines based on their capacity. Kiruna regularly has to handle extremely large AFP files that usually cannot be processed on a single printer. Splitting of an individual AFP file into several smaller ones is therefore an important feature for Polismyndigheten output management.

The categories (dispatch types) include:

- A-Post (traditional letter: next-day delivery)
- B-Post (traditional letter: within five days)
- Correspondence from the Justice Department/public prosecutor's office (Aklagaren)
- Customs (Tullen)
- Protected persons/anonymous mailings (Skyddad)
- Registered mail (Rek)
- Foreign (Utland)

A great deal of discussion surrounded the classification, as well as such questions as:

- In what formats are the raw data from the specialized applications?
- In what format should the documents be handed over to the output management system (OMS)?
- What delivery categories are necessary

The discussion was always carried out in close cooperation with the departments.

In addition to automatic presorting, another valued DocBridge Pilot feature is the ability to control print jobs for optimal capacity utilization. Another benefit is extreme transparency with an overview of document processing in its entirety. What jobs are pending overall in the agency? Where are the bottlenecks? Were all jobs processed correctly? This control did not exist in the past, because every office printed and sent out its own correspondence. What was missing was a central output instance with the necessary control over all outgoing documents.

And there was another downside: Although printing was done locally in the individual offices, the IT department in Kiruna was solely responsible for changes to the document-generating systems – a mammoth undertaking, with staff constantly pushed to their limits. Even the smallest release change was a major feat.

Today, however, all modifications to the specialized applications are the responsibility of the individual offices, i.e., they have to verify the documents for formal and technical accuracy as well as compliance with legal requirements. Kiruna is responsible only for production and mailing.

Considering the benefits that centralizing output management delivers, Polismyndigheten is already planning the next steps. In the near future, documents that are still being produced locally will be centrally printed and sent. This includes all Office correspondence such as writing a letter without having to struggle with the local printer and envelopping the document. At the same time, they will concentrate more on expanding digital channels as an alternative to traditional (paper) mail.

Output management facts

- Fees for various permissions (incl. police reports)
- Customs invoices
- 3.7 million mailings of approx. 17 million pages per year
- Significant cost reduction expected through centralization (incl. postage discounts, automatic presorting)

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