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RINGTAIL 8.4 BALANCES SCALABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

FTI Technology has updated two veteran technologies and weaved them into a competitive document review platform.

By Brett Burney

For document review platforms, it's difficult to find the just-right balance between massive scalability and fluent accessibility. FTI Technology recognized the importance of these two concepts when it acquired the Ringtail platform in 2005 and the Attenex technology in 2008.

Over the next several years, FTI attempted to marry the two products through several methods including the awkward "A2R Connector." With Ringtail 8.4, released in February 2014, both technologies have been fully integrated together into a powerful and useful document review tool.

FTI even made Ringtail friendly and approachable. That's not a knock on Ringtail; it's just always been one of the most intense review platforms on the market boasting an overwhelming number of options, choices and features. All of that complexity is still there under the hood for the Ringtail traditionalists, but the front-facing interface is approachable for anyone who just needs to look at documents.

Attenex was a trailblazer in visual analytics for the e-discovery world. Its unique and extraordinary "petri dish" visual grouped similar documents together for quick access and coding decisions.

SEARCH IT

When you first enter Ringtail, three tabs at the top let you jump directly into Review mode, Search or Transcripts.

If you need to pick up an assigned set of documents for review then you'll click into Review mode. For everything else, the Search tab is where you'll go to examine and analyze documents.

A dropdown menu in the Search tab offers the following options: Quick Search, Advanced Search and Search History. Just type a word or phrase in the Quick Search box

and use the checkboxes to determine whether your search is run against the document "Content" or "Coding" or both.

The Advanced Search panel is split into two parts: the top section with tabs to search on document aspects (Fields, Binders, Issues, etc.), and the bottom section lets you easily build a complex query. Any search created here can be added to your Saved Searches for later retrieval.

LISTING DOCUMENTS

The Document List appears in the middle pane after a search. It's refreshingly simple and straightforward. By default, the first two columns show the number of hits in the document content vs. the document coding. This quickly shows you how often the search word appears in your returned documents.

In the top right of the Document List, an additional "Find" tab allows you to refine your search results by adding another search term or phrase that can apply to Content, Coding or both.

Checkboxes in the Document List let you select documents for further actions: coding, applying issues,

printing, optical-character-recognition processing, etc. Once documents are selected, clicking the "Coding" button pops up the Coding Palette so you can apply "Quick Codes" or copy the documents to binders. The oddly-named Extensions tab in the Coding Palette (which is NOT for changing file extensions) offers batch printing, OCR processing or TIFF production.

E-DISCOVERY CARTOGRAPHY

The Document List is only one grouping feature baked into Ringtail. Clicking the "Map" tab coils your search results into a visual constellation based on the concepts found in the documents. Each dot in the Document Mapper represents a document, and documents with similar concepts are grouped together in a circled "concept cluster." The center dot in a cluster is the "key document" and similar clusters are found nearby. Related clusters may also be connected via a "spine" to help you find similar documents.

It's difficult to describe with words, but once you see it, you get it. You can zoom into relevant clusters, re-cluster different documents, or drag the focus to a separate, related group. Once you select a cluster, the "Working List" on the right populates with the list of selected documents. Last, you can right-click on a document in the Document Mapper to apply a coding decision.

The Document Mapper is not the only analytical tool offered inside Ringtail. There are "Mines" and "Cubes" too.

Mines uses the same technology from Document Mapper but instead displays the concepts and clusters in a linear list that can be clicked and re-focused. The Mines tool takes nouns, noun phrases, people names, companies, etc. extracted from the documents and lists them as clusters along with associated documents.

Cubes is another tool extremely helpful during early data assessment exercises—when you're trying to get a handle on exactly what kind of data that you're viewing. While Mines looks at the content of your documents, Cubes analyze the document metadata and database fields.

Cubes are useful for analyzing the domains in an e-mail collection, and you can compare that list with a date range or custodian. Once you find the group of relevant documents, you can send them to the "Working List" for further viewing. The information you use to build a Cube can also be copied to an Excel spreadsheet.

TRANSCRIPT SUPPORT

You can view, read and search transcripts in Ringtail, and annotate transcripts with issues and notes. You can even link an exhibit reference in the transcript to a document in the full database, much like we all used to do in older document review platforms.

The search and filtering tools for transcripts are excellent, and I also like the one-click export to Microsoft Word. I wish I could "free-scroll" through the transcript instead of clicking through one page at a time.

FTI Technology gives you plenty of options for deploying Ringtail. You can retain full-control of your e-discovery with an on-premise option or connect through a software-as-a-service model, which is what I used for this review sans the SaaS administrative functions. If all you want to do is look at documents, FTI can manage everything for you.

Ringtail pricing is dependent upon the deployment model and options. Options include per-user licensing, a subscription model based upon hosting volumes, and even task-based billing for on-demand engagements.

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