Case Study
**Processing of Registration Forms and Check Donations for
The American Cancer Society**

Overview

The American Cancer Society is dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by saving lives, diminishing suffering and preventing cancer through research, education, advocacy and service. Founded in 1913 and with national headquarters in Atlanta, the Society has 13 regional divisions and local offices in 3,400 communities, involving millions of volunteers across the country.

The American Cancer Society sponsors several initiatives that increase cancer awareness and raise money for research and programs.

- Relay For Life is a fun-filled overnight event designed to celebrate survivorship and raise money for research and programs of the American Cancer Society. During the event, teams of people gather at schools, fairgrounds or parks and take turns walking or running laps.

- Making Strides Against Breast Cancer is a noncompetitive walk to help fight breast cancer and provide hope to people facing the disease. Participation supports the American Cancer Society's lifesaving research, prevention, early detection, and support programs for thousands of patients and their families.

A2IA recognition tools will save the American Cancer Society thousands of dollars annually in manual data entry costs alone.

Both of these initiatives, as well as other Society-developed programs, require participant registration. Registration forms are completed by the participant and sent to the American Cancer Society for processing. The registration form used for Making Strides Against Breast Cancer, for example, contains fields for the registrant's name and contact information as well as boxes that can be checked to further identity the participant as a team captain, a cancer survivor, a breast cancer survivor, etc.

Like most registration forms, the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer registration form contains checkboxes, constrained handprint fields and fields for freeform cursive handwritten words. The American Cancer Society has developed an application, based on *a2ia FieldReader*, to automatically extract information contained in all form fields and checkboxes.

The American Cancer Society's National Cancer Information Center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week to help those touched by cancer. Operators answer calls from cancer patients, family members and friends of cancer patients, and others who have questions about cancer-related issues. Approximately 400 checks are received at the Center daily, primarily consisting of donations made by family and friends of those individuals whose cancer is in remission and in remembrance of those whose lives have been lost to cancer. Donations received at the Texas-based NCIC are sent to the Shared Services Center in Oklahoma City for processing. The American Cancer Society has developed an application, based on *a2ia CheckReader*, to reduce data entry and speed up check donation processing.

Challenge

Administrative tasks in any nonprofit organization cannot entirely be avoided. However, they can be alleviated through the use of technology. "We are committed to keeping administrative costs down so that we can apply as much of our budget as possible toward activities that are devoted to our mission of fighting cancer," said George Manos, director of project management at the American Cancer Society's Shared Services Center.

To keep administrative costs down, the American Cancer Society needed solutions that would lend automation to certain tasks, especially those tasks related to the routine processing of forms and checks.

Solution

The American Cancer Society employs A2iA's leading recognition engines for use wherever handprint, machine print and cursive handwriting need to be extracted from forms and checks. *a2ia FieldReader* and *a2ia CheckReader* are integrated into Society-developed applications for forms processing and check donation processing.

For Forms
Designed to streamline the processing of registration forms, the Society's new forms processing application automatically extracts information from paper-based registration forms used for fundraising and community events, including Relay For Life and Making Strides Against Breast Cancer. In the past, the Society has used an Intelligent Character Recognition (ICR) engine, which recognizes constrained handprint – fields containing a separate box or "comb" for each individual character.

a2ia FieldReader strengthens the Society's ICR solution through its advanced recognition capabilities, including Intelligent Word Recognition (IWR) and cursive handwriting recognition. *a2ia FieldReader* does not require character separators; the absence of all constrained handprint boxes enables the registrant to complete the form faster. Furthermore, *a2ia FieldReader's* ability to recognize entire words results in improved accuracy because character-based recognition errors are eliminated.

a2ia FieldReader combines the most advanced OCR, ICR, IWR and proprietary cursive handwriting recognition technology to capture data from any paper form. The information contained in all areas on the American Cancer Society's forms is easily extracted using *a2ia FieldReader*. The result is faster throughput and a more efficient workflow.

> The result is a faster throughput and a more efficient workflow for both handwritten forms and check donations.

For Checks

The American Cancer Society's new check processing application is designed to eliminate the double-keying previously in use and reduce manual intervention. *a2ia CheckReader* is deployed in the Society's Shared Services Center to process check donations received at the National Cancer Information Center.

"One way we can keep administrative costs down is to increase productivity and streamline business processes by automatically capturing amounts and other information from donation checks. *a2ia CheckReader* is used to eliminate the redundant data entry previously in use," said Manos.

a2ia CheckReader eliminates the double-keying by automatically extracting each check's courtesy (CAR) and legal (LAR) amounts, and comparing the two amounts for verification. Data entry is only used in the event an amount correction is required.

a2ia CheckReader automatically reads freeform cursive handwritten and machine-printed information on business and personal checks, and other payment documents. *a2ia CheckReader* can locate and read:

- Courtesy and Legal Amounts (CAR+LAR)
- Address of the Payer
- Date of the Check
- Payee Name
- MICR Codeline
- Presence of a Signature
- Memo Line
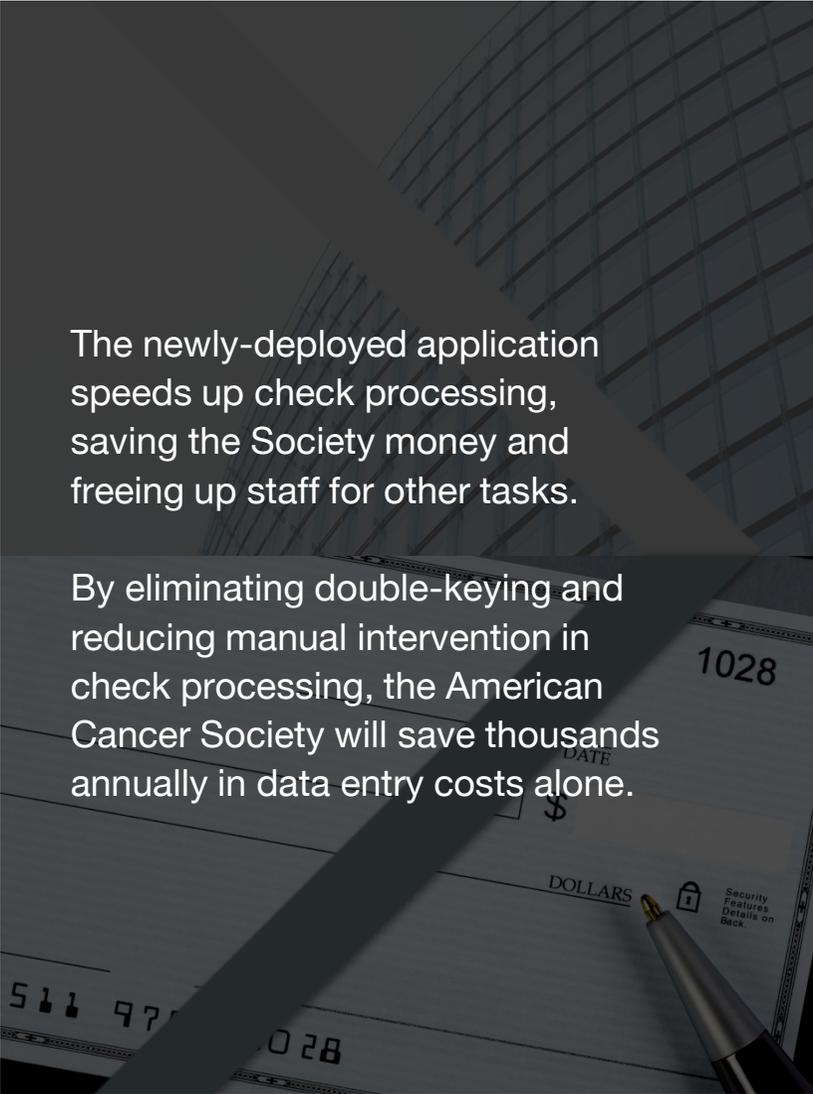
The newly-deployed application speeds up check processing, saving the Society money and freeing up staff for other tasks.

By eliminating double-keying and reducing manual intervention in check processing, the American Cancer Society will save thousands annually in data entry costs alone.