
CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT (AND WHAT'S NOT) IN LAW OFFICE SYSTEMS

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LASERFORM TAKE SCL AWARD

At an awards reception at the Law Society Hall in Chancery Lane last Monday, it was announced that Laserform Law had won the 1995 Society for Computers & Law Award for the most outstanding application of IT to the law in the UK and the Republic of Ireland.

Laserform's winning product is a new Windows-based 'intelligent' forms system, which the company estimates will reduce the typing element in form filling by around 90 percent.

According to awards committee chairman John Irving: "We felt Laserform was a worthy winner for a number of reasons. It is an application that can be, and is, used in the largest and smallest of firms. The system demonstrates clear benefits. It is easy to use and understand. And, we were impressed that Laserform have continually updated the system to utilise new technology developments so that the product remains fresh and innovative."

Accepting the award from Lord Woolf, Laserform managing director Barry Hawley-Green said: "This award is for the most outstanding application of information technology to the law. Not only have over sixteen hundred practices chosen Laserform, but the judges have recognised the software as innovative. It conforms to exacting industry standards, and is always up-to-date.

"Laserform Law are dedicated to providing the legal profession with excellent software at reasonable prices. To ➔

➔ this end we are about to release three more programs.

"This award, by the Society for Computers & Law, not only gives us pride in our existing achievements, but encourages Laserform's entire staff to work harder to produce new products that will further benefit the legal profession."

The awards reception was hosted by the SCL president Mr Justice Brooke and among the 70 guests attending were Lord Justice Neill and English Law Society president Martin Mears.

Along with John Irving, who is director of the professional practices unit of management consultants BDO Stoy Hayward, the 1995 judges panel consisted of Philip Mudd, a partner with Walker Morris in Leeds, James Stevenson, the marketing director of Hewlett-Packard UK and **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** editor Charles Christian.

The Society for Computers & Law will be announcing details of next year's award in June, which SCL general manager Ruth Baker says will be in a revamped format. And as John Irving adds: "I would urge any software or system supplier to the legal profession to enter for this award, as it provides a showcase and concentrates the mind on just what are the benefits of the system to their chosen marketplace."

AND THE RUNNERS-UP?

In the words of John Irving: "The committee were very impressed by the standard of all the entries this year, which is a reflection of the general improvement in the quality of software and computer systems now available to the legal profession." ...continued on page 2 ➔

PC BUYERS GUIDE

PC manufacturer Carrera Technology has launched a short guide on what to look out for when buying a personal computer for home or office use. Copies are available free of charge by phoning Amanda Moore of Carrera on ☎ 0171 830 0586.

SCOTLAND IS MILES BETTER

Unsolicited, a supplier recently contacted LTi to sing the praises of the guidance manual published by the Law Society of Scotland on *Better Client Care & Practice Management*. "It really is excellent," he said, "far more solicitor-friendly and less bureaucratic than the heavy weight publications from Chancery Lane and the LAB." Interestingly, the guide, which costs £15, is sponsored by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

COREL DEAL SAVES WORDPERFECT

Concerns among lawyers about the longer term future of the WordPerfect wordprocessing system should now ease following last week's announcement that the Canadian graphics software company Corel Corporation had agreed to purchase WordPerfect and a number of other office software applications products from Novell Inc in a cash + shares deal worth just under US\$116 million.

Under the deal Corel - probably best known in the UK for its CorelDRAW software - will acquire WordPerfect plus the PerfectOffice applications suite, Quattro Pro spreadsheet and related software from Novell. Novell however will retain both the GroupWise office automation and Envoy electronic publishing applications it acquired when it purchased the WordPerfect Corporation in June 1994.

☞ **Comment...** Considering Novell paid \$1.4 billion for WordPerfect just 20 months ago, Corel seemed to have picked up a remarkable bargain. However, it is a bargain that seems likely to also benefit users of WordPerfect software.

To begin with Corel are a software company and so the WordPerfect applications can only enhance their product range. Whereas if Novell had sold to, say, IBM, who were rumoured to be another bidder, there was a very real risk that the WordPerfect range would have been merged with or otherwise swallowed up by IBM's own rival Lotus products range.

The sale price is also good news (Corel actually only paid \$10.75 million in cash) as it means the company is not going to be hindered by repayment worries, which could have been a problem in the case of an MBO.

Nevertheless, with PerfectOffice currently only rating a 4% share of the suite market - Microsoft Office holds nearly 80% - Corel has its work cut out ☐

THE SCL AWARDS

➔ *continued from front page...* From the nominations, the committee wittled down the entries to a shortlist of four. In addition to **Laserform**, the other short-listed entries were:

Legal Technologies with their **ShowCase** multimedia courtroom presentation system. This system has already been used in anger in the recent Maxwell fraud trial as a way of managing and displaying the enormous volume of documents in evidence.

The award judges were particularly impressed with the demonstration which converted a 'black box' recording into a visual representation of the last fatal minutes of an aeroplane's flight - so much so that I doubt if any of the judge's will travel by air again. However, it was felt that - unlike Laserform - this was an application of still limited practical relevance to most lawyers.

It was a similar concern about its limited applicability that primarily weighed against the **ExeComp** redundancy and wrongful dismissal compensation calculator from Cadence Europress.

While it could complete a calculation in 10 to 15 minutes that might otherwise take several hours, the judges felt this was an area of practice even most employment lawyers only encountered a handful of times each year. But, it was clear from comments made during the demonstration that a more advanced version is under development. Perhaps Cadence should be renominated next year?

This was also the view formed of the third contender: IBM's **VoiceType** system. Again the product was impressive in terms of the speed and accuracy with which it converted the dictated word into on-screen text and so on into a WP document. But, it was also felt some of the voice commands were still a little clunky and that some aspects of operating the system would be quicker by keyboard. Perhaps the new AllVoice WordExpress system, which is based on VoiceType, should also be nominated next year? ☐

DEBTCO MAKES PROGRESS

Although the original Law Data Debtco debt collection system created a stir when it was first launched in the early 1980s, the last few years have not been so happy. However, with new owners, new management and a new product, the company believes this year will see real progress made...

Debtco 2 was probably the last 'great' version of the software – and in fact it is still being used by over 100 law firms in the UK. After that, the Law Data company got into difficulties, called in the receivers and was sold to the AIM Holdings Group. But to little avail, for AIM Law Data, as the company was renamed, continued to be dogged by rumours that it was about to be put up for sale.

Then, last year, the company found in Stephen Taylor Parker a new managing director of sufficient calibre to do it justice. And last week it launched its first major new product for several years: Debtco Progression.

As its name implies, the new system is based on the Progress fourth generation language (4GL) – in this case Version 8 which was only released in November 1995, and combines workflow methodologies with full Windows (including Windows 95) functionality, making it compatible with Microsoft's office applications software range.

The new workflow element is aimed at high volume arrears management operators and is claimed to provide "effective pre-litigation procedures with the capacity to take control of the arrears management process from the moment a debt arises on the ledger". Stephen Taylor Parker says the system can "dramatically increase caseloads and recovery rates, while giving management improved data access and greater flexibility".

AIM Law Data are demonstrating the system at a series of regional roadshows this month, call ☎ 0113-237 8500 for details. □

NEW SECURE DESKTOP LASER PRINTER

Rank Xerox has just launched a new 17 page per minute (ppm) laser printer that features a security 'mailbox' system so sensitive documents cannot be inadvertently read by other members of staff searching for their own print jobs in the sorter bin of a shared network printer.

Called the DocuPrint 4517, the printer can direct sensitive print jobs to 10 lockable bins that can only be accessed by someone with an appropriate security code. **Rank Xerox** (☎ 0800 787 787 or check the Internet site at <http://www.rankxerox.co.uk>) believe this is a cheaper solution than the alternative of having confidential documents directed to private printers located behind closed doors, such as in a senior partner's or head of department's office. □

ON TIME FOR AN UPGRADE

The latest version of the OnTime group scheduling system OnTime Enterprise 3, is now being shipped in the UK by its distributors **Prisma Office** (☎ 01753 810899).

Among the features are new day and week planners, resource scheduling (for meeting rooms & OHP projectors etc), improved levels of security and support for multiple windows, so a number of users' calendars can be viewed simultaneously. Version 3 is also compatible with Windows 95 and Windows NT clients and support the latest Windows software standards, including full drag & drop and customisable toolbars etc.

Prices for OnTime Enterprise 3 range from £52 per user for 100 users, to £30 per user for 5000 users.

☞ In a related development, Prisma Office have also released a *beta* version of the OnTime Web Server, which will allow anyone with WWW browser software to access their OnTime calendar information from anywhere on the Internet. *For more Internet news, see page 7* □

NORTON ROSE UP GRADE FAX

Norton Rose has replaced its stand alone fax machines with a FaxSwitch centralised fax management system supplied by Hexar Ltd (☎ 0181-563 9000).

NEW MULTI FUNCTION SYSTEM

Toshiba (☎ 01932 825052) has launched a multi-function colour and b&w printer, photocopier, fax machine. Called the TF 461 it will retail for £649 + VAT. Optional software for scanning to a PC and PC direct send/receive fax messages costs an additional £100.

CURAT LEX ON THE MOVE

The Curat Lex sales office has moved "from the dark satanic mills of Halifax" to the Vale of York. (*They said it - Ed.*) The new contact details are: Charles Daborn
1 Westlands
Bilton-in-Ainsty
York YO5 8LH
☎ 01423 359101

☞ There is also a version of the Curat Lex product configured for Scotland. Called Sovereign LAW Caledonia, it is available through local dealer: Harkins & Anderson Ltd
2 Hillview Drive
Clarkston, Glasgow
G76 7JD. Call Mike Harkins on ☎ 0141 621 0444.

PLUG AND PLAY IN PRACTICE

One of the supposed benefits of the Windows 95 system is its *plug and play* technology but what are its actual practical consequences? Amphlett Lissimore, a five partner High Street practice operating from offices in South London, recently found out...

The firm installed Curat Lex's Sovereign LAW accounts and practice management software in 1992 on a Unix system in their Sydenham office with a direct link to the Crystal Palace branch down a leased telephone line. Wordprocessing was already carried out on a network of proprietary PCs at each office. In addition a number of standard 386 PCs were purchased to access the Sovereign LAW database via terminal emulation, as well as being used for more wordprocessing.

During 1995 it became clear the proprietary PCs had reached the end of their working life and the partners decided the most cost effective route would be to replace them with Windows 95 Pentium machines linked together on a Windows 95 network running Office 95 software, with the Sydenham upgrade first.

Although it was not the intention to change the Unix system, it transpired that the disk on the Unix machine had filled up with data to a point where it would shortly need replacing. As this is a relatively expensive exercise with Unix, Frank Lissimore, the partner responsible for the system, consulted Curat Lex about the available options.

Because Sovereign LAW is a fully integrated module within the Sage Sovereign accounts product, which is itself fully compatible with a number of operating systems, the Curat Lex suggestion was to transfer directly from Unix to a Windows 95 machine.

Dell P90s were chosen for the network and in January 1996 they were delivered to Sydenham. These proved to be genuinely Windows 95 compatible so Frank Lissimore was able to install ➡

➡ them himself and create the network by making use of the intuitive Windows 95 interface and its *plug and play* capability. A few days later Dell delivered the P120, which had been chosen as the accounts machine, to Curat Lex in Derby and a tape containing a copy of Amphlett Lissimore's accounts data was sent from Sydenham.

The following steps were then taken to perform the transfer:

- Installation of the P120 on the Curat Lex network – literally a matter of connecting it up, entering the network name and watching it perform a set up routine.
- Installing the appropriate Sage Sovereign System Manager on the P120 together with the remainder of the Sage and Curat Lex software, the object code of which was identical on both the old and the new systems.
- Loading the data from the tape onto a Unix machine and then copying the data from that machine onto another on the network via a serial link – this was fully automatic but took 21 hours.
- Copying the data across the network to the P120 – this took only a few minutes such is the speed of the Windows 95 32-bit networking.
- Disconnecting the P120 from the network and shipping it via courier to Sydenham.

On arrival at Sydenham, Frank Lissimore was able to take it out of its box, plug it into the network, watch it set itself up again, and then start playing – playing that is with a fully configured and operational system. All that was then needed was to set up Curat Lex icons on the other machines for it to be accessible to everyone on the network.

And of course the whole operation had been performed without anyone from Curat Lex going near the site.

Early indications are that the new network runs at "blistering speed". The staff have taken well to Windows 95 and the Office 95 applications – and the Curat Lex software is exactly the same as it was under the old ...continued on page 6 ➡

HELP!

This edition sees the start of a new monthly technical section for buyers and users of legal IT, whether novice or advanced. Planned features include: readers' questions answered, advice on technology issues, hot tips by consultants, developers and other users, buyer's guides and explanations of some of the latest technologies now emerging...

WINDOWS NT VERSUS 95

The debate about 32-bit computing continues to rumble on. Is Windows NT a stable platform? Or, should users go for Windows 95 now and then face a further upgrade to NT later?

Digital Equipment has said it feels NT is still "immature" as an enterprise wide operating system and that NT will not overtake Unix until at least 1999.

Novell meanwhile quotes a recent report from US analysts Forrester Research suggesting NetWare is set to remain dominant in the network operating systems market, not least because NT is based on an "unfinished architecture" that will not be ready until 1998.

Here in the UK legal technology market, opinion appears to be more pro NT. For example, Graham Anderson of Videss says his company "sees NT as a very important platform, both in terms of an application server and desktop client environment.

"Our GUI applications work across all PC Windows platforms but when used in conjunction with the NT 32-bit server products and Microsoft 95 applications, such as Word 7.0, increased performance gains can be achieved."

This view is echoed by Ian Wim-bush of Peapod Professional Solutions, which recently helped two firms migrate from Windows for Workgroups networks to Windows 95 plus NT sites. "We are extremely pleased with the reliability ▶

▶ and stability of the product. If the customer has good hardware, there are very few problems in upgrading. Difficulties only arise when hardware is not up to scratch, such as with older 386 systems."

But what of Progress Software, whose 4GL development and database technology is to be found at the heart of many of the legal systems products on the UK market and who were one of the original members of Microsoft's NT *alpha* test programme two years ago?

Progress agrees with Microsoft's view that NT is primarily a server platform for enterprise level applications and networks, and only secondarily as a high end client. The company "believes NT is an important platform for the development and deployment of mission-critical, client-server applications" but nevertheless has 'certified' its current 16-bit client products as suitable for running with NT on the desktop. Although Progress say most users with NT on a server currently run it with Windows 3.1 or 95 clients.

Progress does not yet support NT on non SMP/Intel based CPUs, such as RISC, MIPS and PowerPC, because "it is not yet clear whether (they) offer enough price-performance advantage to gain a significant share of the overall NT market and warrant additional investment on our part". Progress does intend to support NT running on Digital's Alpha chip although "the vehicle and timing for this product has not yet been determined." □

THE COST OF EXPANSION

Putting a PC on every desktop may sound a good idea, but how much does it really cost? IT consultant Delia Venables does some arithmetic...

"Many law firms often think that to extend their network to fee earners they 'just' have to add extra PCs at around £1,000 a time but it often costs more than two or three times that amount after all the factors have been considered. ...continued on page 6 ▶

HOT TIP

Kaye Tesler & Co partner Michael Kaye, a keen advocate of the use of voice recognition technology, says most lawyers will find these systems easier to master if they invest in hand held microphones to replace the "head clamps" normally supplied. "But, get a good quality mike," he warns, "not something from a karaoke set. And, if you work in a noisy environment, buy a directional mike."

"When you think of it, it makes sense. After all, most solicitors spend so much time giving dictation, they could have been born with a microphone in their hands," he adds.

DO I HAVE TO BACK-UP DATA FILES EVERY DAY?

Ask the comedian Harry Enfield. It is reported that he has just had a new situation comedy series dropped by the BBC after thieves stole a PC from his home. The PC contained the scripts for the show and Enfield had not kept any back-up copies of the files.

IF YOU NEED HELP! with an IT problem. Or if you have views on a technology issue, advice or a hot tip you would like to share with readers, send it direct to **LTI** via post, fax, DX or email. The contact details are on the back page.

THE COST OF EXPANSION

➔ *continued from page 5...* "The list of hidden extras," says Venables, "goes something like this:

- The PC itself usually costs between £1200 and £1400 by the time the firm decide to go for a good Pentium model with 12 or 16 megabytes of RAM, a network card, a large hard disk plus Windows or Windows 95.
- On a pro rata basis, Novell network software costs around £100 per PC.
- Anti-virus software costs around £60 per PC.
- GroupWise, to go with the Novell, allowing internal email, shared diaries and scheduling facilities etc costs around £85 per PC.
- A runtime licence of the underlying data base or 4GL (most leading suppliers use one or other of these) could well cost £100 to £200 per PC.
- Multiuser accounts, time recording and management information software from the main supplier usually has some kind of marginal cost, say £100 to £200.
- Wordprocessing software typically costs around £200 per PC.
- For 'fee earner desktop' software to view accounts and time recording information in a Windows environment, and enter time directly to the PC, expect to pay around £200 per user.
- There may be a separate charge for a client and marketing data base with a per-PC charge of £100 to £200.
- Case management software requires modules for the particular work in hand, typically £200 per PC.
- Electronic forms software can add around £200 per PC.
- If the main accounts system is Unix, then there will be a need for some kind of terminal emulation software at around £100 per PC.
- A rule of thumb for cabling (assuming that the basic network is already in place) is around £100 per PC.
- The new PC needs to be delivered, installed and configured with all this software. This is likely to add at least £100 ➔

➔ per PC, possibly more depending upon the amount of assistance you need.

- And finally, if it is to be used properly, there has to be adequate training in how to use all this new software. This is a 'how long is a piece of string' question, but budget for between £200 and £500 per fee-earner. □

PLUG AND PLAY

➔ *continued from page 4...* system, so no retraining has been necessary. Acting on a tip from Curat Lex, the firm has even been able to install the old 386 PCs (running Windows for Workgroups) on the network where they co-exist with the Windows 95 machines.

As an interim measure, communication between the two offices is via the dial-up networking facility in Microsoft Plus! (a Windows 95 add-on) which allows one Windows 95 PC to dial into the accounts machine at Sydenham. The next phase in the project will see a Windows 95 network at Crystal Palace linked via leased line to Sydenham.

Considering the scope of the project, all this state-of-the-art technology has proved extremely cost effective. The hardware was bought by Amphlett Lissimore direct from Dell with Windows 95 and Office 95 pre-loaded. Because of the *plug and play* capability, the firm was able to do the installation itself. Sage charged £100 for the new set of disks. Curat Lex charged for one day's work to cover their involvement plus a nominal sum for data transfer. And the copy of Microsoft Plus! cost £30.

Amphlett Lissimore is now considering further enhancements in conjunction with Curat Lex, including a case management package integrated with both Word 7.0 for the production of documents and the Schedule+95 diary system. As for the longer term, the firm has the security of knowing that if it ever outgrows the Windows 95 network, it can always add either a Netware 4.1 or Windows NT server to the system. □

INTERNET UTILITIES... THEY'RE HERE

The explosion of interest in the Internet and the World Wide Web over the last twelve months has resulted in a corresponding boom in server systems, software and utilities for the Internet legal business user. Here are some of the latest to hit the market.

☎ **Novell UK** (☎ 01344 724000 or <http://www.novell.com>) has announced the first customer shipments of its new NetWare Web Server, a complete software system for NetWare 4.1 servers that incorporates full WWW technology, security and Internet publishing facilities. Novell say the system can be installed in 10 minutes and requires no knowledge of Unix. The suggested price is £670.

☎ **Digital Equipment** (<http://www.altavista.digital.com>) say its new Alta Vista *superspider* technology has become the fastest growing information search and indexing software on the WWW. Digital will announce third-party licensing terms within the next few months.

☎ **Psion Dacom** (☎ 01908 261686 or <http://www.u-net.com/p-dacom/>) has cut the price of its Internet compatible Gold Card V32bis + Fax modem from £199 to £169 but expects the device to sell for a street price of just under £140. All prices are ex-VAT. The Gold Card is BABT approved and has local PTT approvals in 13 European countries.

☞ **Technical Note...** The Gold Card is a PCMCIA card but most suppliers now call them by the more user-friendly name of *PC card*, not be confused with *PC expansion* cards which are an entirely different device. Psion, incidentally, no longer manufacture battery powered *pocket* modems for laptop computers and a recent survey by **LTi** found that high speed internal modems are increasingly rare. ➡

➡ ☎ **Progress Software** (☎ 01256 816668 or <http://www.progress.com/>) has announced it will be using the WWW to securely sell and deliver its 4GL application development software to users throughout the world. Developers will be able to place orders for delivery of shrink-wrapped software and documentation or download code directly from the Web site, 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week.

☎ **Grey Cell Systems** (☎ 0181 902 8998) has announced a new Internet evaluation package to go with its multi-function cards. The company's V.34 Gold Card 3, which is a combined fax, data modem and ethernet device, is now being supplied complete with CompuServe software to allow users to access the Internet whilst hooked up to an ethernet network. Grey Cell say the package makes sense because "the Internet is rapidly becoming the standard communications medium of the business world"

☎ **Performance Technology** (☎ 01344 382020) has added ISDN support to its Instant Internet 3.0 NetWare-to-Internet connectivity system. The new version, which is intended to increase the range of connectivity options open to small LANs and remote offices, also includes support for Microsoft Windows 95 and NT with the addition of a *Winsock* 32-bit Windows socket. ISDN prices start at £2995. ☐

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER AND THE INTERNET

A number of organisations have asked if we have any objection to them providing a *jump off* point from their Web site to the **LTi** home page. The answer is "no", feel free to create a hyperlink to <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/insider.htm>

☞ **LTi** will shortly be expanding its coverage for lawyers of the legal, practice development, marketing and technology issues associated with the Net and World Wide Web. More details to follow. ☐

DOING BUSINESS ONLINE

A one day conference in central London on the law and regulation of online services and the Internet has been organised by the Society for Computers & Law in conjunction with the IT Law Unit, QMW University of London and the Houston University Law Center. Speakers include John Browning from *Wired UK* magazine. The date is 12th March, the event carries CPD points, admission is £230 +VAT for SCL members. For details call the SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393.

NEW NET SITE

Lowestoft solicitors Norton Peskett have moved their Web site. It is now to be found at <http://www.compulink.co.uk/-justiciar/norton.html>

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COMPUTER LORE

So, has our old friend the Duke of Edinburgh finally taken leave of his senses?

To read some of the newspaper reports that followed the recent 'sad man with radio scanner overhears Prince Philip's mobile phone conversation with posh lady and tries to sell tapes' incident, you could be forgiven for thinking the Duke was totally unaware of the relatively poor security associated with analogue cellphones.

It was as if the 'Squidgy-gate' affair had never happened.

In fact the truth is rather more prosaic, for the Royal estate at Sandringham is located in one of East Anglia's many communications black holes that are still poorly served by the digital phone networks.

So, if you need to use a mobile phone in that part of the world, then it has to be an analogue model.

Indeed, in a moment of garrulousness, a Cellnet dealer in Norwich recently admitted to me that he has a steady stream of customers returning their digital phones and cancelling subscriptions because the quality of transmission and reception is so poor.

The problem seems to be that Cellnet, Vodafone and Orange have not yet been able to secure the necessary

▶ planning permissions throughout the UK to erect the necessary relay masts. Hence the gaps in their services. Although it is rather galling to think you can use a digital handset to make and receive calls in places as far apart as Estonia and Portugal - but not yet in Norfolk.

Probably the biggest disadvantage of being stuck with analogue is you cannot take advantage of the GSM mobile data services available on the digital networks - services that allow you to transmit and receive email and fax messages through a laptop computer linked to a mobile phone.

"But," you say, "hang on, what about security?"

Well it is certainly true that the Royal Family have come in for more than their fair share of snoopers but for the rest of us mere mortals, is the apparent lack of security on analogue systems really such a problem?

In fact, if there is a security issue at all, the problem lies more with the users than the technology.

For example, have you noticed the way that if someone is using a mobile phone on a train, they always shout into the handset using such piercing tones that everyone else in the carriage can hear their side of the conversation. With loudmouths like that, who needs a scanner?

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