
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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THE LOTIES

What do Carpe
Diem, AIM, Norwel,
Hexar, Quill and
Information for
Lawyers all have in
common ? They,
and others, are all
winners of awards
in the 1996 Loties.
For the full story
turn to page 4.

LASERFORM BREAK PRICE BARRIER ...AGAIN

Not content with Kestrel being one of the lowest priced solicitors' accounts systems available in the English market, this week at the Barbican Exhibition in London, Laserform Law formally launches its ultra low cost Intelliforms case management system.

This is a user-configurable system that combines sets of electronic forms with workflow routines - such as debt collection, conveyancing and probate - to produce a case management application.

Although this sounds like something the market has seen before, where Laserform expects its system to stand out from the crowd is on price, with an entry level of just £200 per user per year.

As to the specific workflow applications, these and their associated forms are available on an annual rental basis, for as little as £7.50 per form. For example a single user version of the probate package, comprising the core software and 10 forms, would cost £275 a year. It is also worth noting that there are no limits on the number of matters that can be processed during the course of the year.

Laserform is also showing the latest developments with its Kestrel accounts system, which is now fully integrated with a Microsoft Access client matter database. Originally developed for sole practitioners and small firms, in the light of sales leads from 25 and even 50 fee earner practices, Laserform has adapted Kestrel's design so prospects ➔

➔ can be offered the choice of the more powerful SQL Server database.

➔ **Related Developments...** Gavel & Gown (☎ 01242 243344) has produced an interface between its Amicus Attorney software and Kestrel Accounts, so users can combine financial records with diary dates, activity lists and project planning. Pricing is very competitive, with a single user version of a combined Amicus and Kestrel system retailing for £899.

Amicus Attorney will be on show on the Laserform stand, where visitors can also see the new Amicus Team system, which provides a central networked database Attorney users can access. ☐

MOUNTAIN GOES SOLO

Long established legal systems supplier Mountain Software (☎ 01476 73718) is celebrating its 20th anniversary in business with the launch of a new accounts and time recording package for sole practitioners.

Called Mountain Software Solo, it retails for £1995 and includes an extensive range of financial controls (including nominal ledger), management reporting (including credit control and profit & loss balance sheets), audit trails and billing guides etc over and above the basic office and client accounts plus time recording usually found in "entry level" systems.

➔ **Comment...** As readers of the recent **LTi** survey on low cost systems will know, there are cheaper products for sole practitioners but many of the features Solo includes as standard are either chargeable "extras" or are unavailable on some of the other systems. ☐

BANKING ON QUILL

The Group Legal Services (Property) department of the NatWest banking group has installed accounts and case management software from Quill Computer Systems (☎ 0161 236 2910) to handle residential conveyancing, primarily on behalf of NatWest staff. The Quill software will run on the department's 30 user Windows NT network.

IS THIS A RECORD ?

Legal technology suppliers may complain the partnership structure of law firms delays decision making when it comes to buying new IT but Wyn Melville-Jones of Lawbase believes his company has set a record, with a recently placed order from a firm that originally expressed interest in the product back in 1986.

DELPHI TO BE BASIS OF NEW ALLIANCE ?

Following February's announcement of a joint marketing and development agreement between Solicitec and Solicitors Own Software (SOS) comes news that Lawbase Legal Systems is also exploring the possibility of an alliance with other suppliers.

According to Lawbase managing director Wyn Melville-Jones, "rather than reinvent the wheel, as primarily developers of case management software, we have always favoured collaboration with other suppliers over complementary products such as accounts systems."

But with Lawbase (☎ 0181-579 5599) putting the finishing touches to its next generation of client/server case management systems (☞ Scheduled for a launch in September, eventually these will replace the existing Unix product range.) it is now talking to other suppliers about possible partnerships.

Interestingly, Lawbase sees the key element as technological rather than commercial compatibility. And, with its new systems based on the increasingly popular Borland Delphi development tool, Melville-Jones is optimistic about finding suitable partners with complementary accounts, practice management and fee earner support products.

As yet no deals have been signed but LTI understands discussions have been held with Peter Walker of Solace, David Stonehouse of Law Systems, who developed the Probate Plus package, and ex-TFB and Avenue tech guru David Webber of Legato, whose new Paragon system is shortly coming onto market. In common with Lawbase, all three have based their new products on Delphi.

☞ **Technical Note...** As a halfway house between C++ and Visual Basic, Delphi is attracting a lot of interest as a software development tool in the legal market. Timeslice is also rumoured to be using Delphi in its development work. ☐

ARMS TO EMBRACE WINDOWS NT

Debt recovery specialists The Beaver Corporation (☎ 0171 936 2828) is unveiling its new Windows NT-based Arms Power range of legal and pre-legal debt collection software at this week's Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition in London.

Beaver managing director Mike Willstrop envisages the software appealing to local authority legal departments as well as solicitors' practices.

☞ **Comment...** Windows NT has not proved the runaway success Microsoft may have originally hoped for. In 1992 it was predicted it would have 37% of the UK operating systems market by 1996 whereas today it actually holds nearer 2%. But, as more applications come on line and more firms replace older *legacy* systems, it is clear NT is emerging as a serious challenger to both Unix and Novell/PC LAN platforms. ☐

ADMIRAL CAST OFF AMICUS

Admiral Legal Systems will this week upgrade and re-brand its practice management system, with the name Amicus being dropped in favour of LegalMIND.

The change follows the debut of Gavel & Gown's US developed Amicus family of legal software, with Alan Roberts (formerly with Admiral) heading UK operations. Gavel & Gown has also secured the Amicus trademark in the UK.

☞ **Technical Note...** Admiral (☎ 01276 682268) was one of the first legal suppliers in the UK to commit to Windows NT (Pilgrim was also ahead of the game in Scotland) and over the last 12 months Amicus has gone into a dozen firms. These include Welsh giant Morgan Bruce in Cardiff, who threw out an Avenue Unix offering in favour of NT, and Clarke Willmott Clarke in the West Country. After an extensive pilot, the latter is now rolling out Amicus over a 250 user network running in the firm's eight offices. ☐

PHILIPS CHANGE ACCENT ON SPEECH TECHNOLOGY

Philips Dictation Systems has signalled a change of emphasis in its speech processing strategy, with a move away from voice-to-text speech recognition so as to concentrate in the immediate future on digital dictation and "transcription workflow management" systems.

At a recent interview at the group's Colchester offices (☎ 01206 755555), general manager Roger Holmes told **LTi** he believed that while Philips' "continuous" speech recognition system was technically the most sophisticated on the market, the key to its success was the availability of language files called "contexts".

These contain application specific vocabularies which in turn greatly reduce the time it takes users to get up to speed working with the system. However, while these have been relatively easy to develop in medical disciplines like pathology and radiology, which have their own distinct languages, it has been harder to develop suitable contexts for more general business and office automation applications.

Philips is still working on the development of legal market contexts, primarily in conjunction with Technology for Business, and anticipates the first being commercially available in 1997.

In the meantime Philips is focusing attention on its new *SpeechFlow* dictation and transcription system.

From the point of view of giving dictation, the user has a handheld microphone with almost exactly the same controls as a conventional mike. Instead of dictating onto tape, the voice files are stored digitally.

However, and this is the key element, these files are actually stored on an existing PC local area network and are transcribed by a secretary sitting at a Windows PC linked to that network. Philips say that as well as the by now ➡

➡ familiar benefits of digital dictation, (new text can be inserted without over dubbing, playback can be slowed down without distortion) there is the added attraction that a user can utilise a firm's existing computer installation rather than having to invest in a dedicated digital dictation network.

Philips is currently working on *SpeechFlow* related trials with a number of legal market suppliers, including Berry's of Holborn (who will be previewing the system at the Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition this week), TFB and Axxia Systems. In addition, the system is also being beta tested in a number of law firms around the UK, ranging from Masons in London, to small county practices like Rollin & Co in Norfolk.

SpeechFlow is scheduled to be commercially available later this summer and will be followed in the final quarter of 1996 by the complementary *SpeechPad* "digital pocket memo" system which adds the portable element to *SpeechFlow*.

☞ **Related Developments...** IBM has announced that the next version of its OS/2 operating system - code named *Merlin* and due to ship in the latter part of 1996 - will be "speech enabled" so that operating functions can be controlled by voice as well as the keyboard and mouse.

The beta version runs on a SoundBlaster card - as this is a standard feature on new Pentium "multi media" PCs, it should mean the hardware specification is cheaper than for voice systems still requiring special audio cards.

✓ **SOLEX '96...** Dragon Systems UK (☎ 01242 678575) makes its debut at the Barbican showing the new "British English" version of *DragonDictate* for Windows 2.0. As well as voice-to-text transcription, the system also offers command and control functions so you can operate the computer by voice and is compatible with a range of Windows applications including *WordPerfect* and *Microsoft Office*. □

PUNCH ROBSON LINKS UP

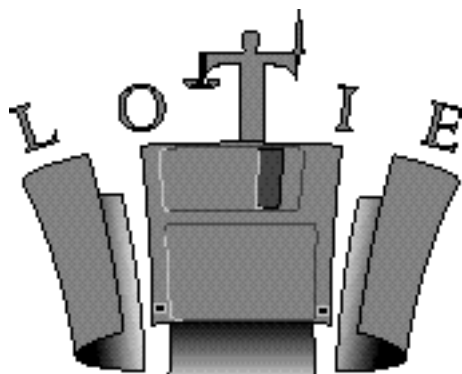
Tees-side solicitors Punch Robson has linked its Stockton branch to the accounts and database systems in its Middlesbrough office via a modem and an 8 channel multiplexer. As well as giving Stockton staff improved access to information, IT partner Alan Mottram says it has also minimised the amount of duplicated clerical work. The comms link was installed by Linetime (☎ 0113 250 0020).

AUTO SHUT FOR UNIX

Chloride Power Electronics (☎ 01703 610311) has launched a Unix version of its Vigilant UPS monitoring and automatic shut-down software for AIX, SCO, Sun Solaris, HP-UX and AT&T platforms.

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

The US electronics group Texas Instruments is previewing a new semiconductor technology that allows up to 125 million transistors to be built into one processor chip, compared with the average of 5 to 7 million transistors on today's chips. Called Timeline Technology, the dramatic leap in processing power allows the development of "systems and applications we have not even started to imagine" as a Texas spokesman put it. A major benefit is likely to be "significantly" increased battery life for mobile phones and laptop computers because more transistors on one chip means fewer chips are needed in a device, which in turn reduces power consumption.



THE 1996 LOTIES... THE WINNERS AND THE RUNNERS-UP

The ballot papers have been returned, all the votes counted and we are now in a position to announce the winners of the Loties - the 1996 Law Office Technology Innovation Awards...

CATEGORY

1. LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY PRODUCT OF THE YEAR: CARPE DIEM, the ProSoft Corporation's time tracking software

Runners-up: LINK, the Legal Information Network and LIX, the Legal Information eXchange

2. BEST LEGAL FRONT OFFICE PRODUCT: THE NORWEL DESKTOP, a Windows interface linking desktop applications to back office systems

Runners-up: QUILL CONVEYANCING, for residential conveyancing work and QNIX CASE PROCESSING, Sanderson GA's case management system

3. BEST LEGAL BACK OFFICE PRODUCT: QUANTUM, Quill Computer's latest accounts and practice management system

Runners-up: NORWEL EXECUTIVE INFORMATION SYSTEM, EIS from Norwel and THE SELECT LEGAL SYSTEM, a scalable client/server system

4. BEST LAW OFFICE AUTOMATION

PRODUCT: HEXAR FAXSWITCH, a system for managing desktop faxing on PC networks in larger firms

Runners-up: WORDPERFECT 6.1 FOR WINDOWS and KOLVOX OFFICETALK, speech recognition technology for lawyers

5. LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR: IN-CONTROL LEGAL, Mercury Computing's Windows workflow management software

Runners-up: SCP/CD, Sweet & Maxwell's Supreme Court Practice (the White Book) on CD-ROM and AMICUS ATTORNEY, Gavel & Gown's US developed PIM/case management/time recording system

6. THE QUALITY OF SERVICE AWARD FOR THE BEST LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY SUPPLIER: AIM PROFESSIONAL LTD

Runners-up: HEXAR LTD and QUILL COMPUTER SYSTEMS LTD

7. BEST LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY USER GROUP: AXXIA Systems Solicitors User Group

Runner-up: ACUA, the AIM Computer Users Association

8. BEST LEGAL WORLD WIDE WEB/INTERNET SITE: INFORMATION FOR LAWYERS

Runners-up: DENTON HALL and JEFFREY GREEN RUSSELL

☞ **Comment...** Congratulations to the winners and commiserations to the runners-up although they should not be too down-hearted as some of the voting was very close. The publishers of **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** and *In Brief* magazine, the two publications responsible for mounting the Loties this year, are now exploring ways to make the awards bigger and better in 1997. More details later.

MACKINTOSH SAYS TRUST IN TROIKA

Trust and tax law specialist Jimmy Mackintosh, a long time advocate of the benefits of computerisation in the law office, is putting his money where his mouth is as part of a team that has developed and is now marketing a new trust accounting and fund management software package.

Mackintosh, a past chairman of the Society for Computers & Law and a member of the Society of Trust & Estate Practitioners (STEP), says the project began when he was approached by users of a trust package who were "fed up with the performance of their supplier".

What was needed was a new system fully compatible with Windows office products, such as spreadsheets, wordprocessing and databases, that could also automatically convert and transfer data from some existing DOS trust accounting systems, thus avoiding the need to rekey data.

The solution involved Mackintosh and chartered accountant Tim Pierce, along with Mick Jones and Simon Hurst of IT consultancy The Knowledge Base, getting together to develop the product through a new company called FinApps Ltd (☎ 01403 270970).

Development work is complete and the product - called Troika - is now being evaluated by a number of potential customers. As well as direct sales, FinApps is interested in distribution agreements with vendors in the legal, accountancy and fund management markets. Plans are also underway for the development of an add-on module to handle probate accounting and estate administration.

On the technical side, Troika will run on all Windows platforms and PC networks (including Novell and NT) and Mackintosh says that because it has been written using industry standard development tools (Visual Basic and Microsoft Access) it is effectively future ➡

➡ proof, with a full 32-bit Windows 95 version planned "as soon as the market is ready for it".

Troika prices start at £2,950 and FinApps has financial backing from three City of London-based investment groups "committed to making Troika the leading package in this field." □

AMERICAN LITIGATION DATABASE NOW HERE

Concordance, widely rated as one of the leading American litigation support databases, is now available in the UK as a result of a distribution deal with legal services consultancy Elliott Slone (☎ 0171 929 5252).

✓ **SOLEX '96...** The product, which is officially launched at the Barbican this week, runs on DOS, Windows or OS/2 and is compatible with the Opticon image retrieval system. Prices start at £995 for a single user version of Concordance (£595 for Opticon). Elliott Slone director Howard Slone reckons that at £4000 for a 10 user version Concordance is "a long way ahead of its rivals in terms of price performance". □

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If there is already a subscriber in your office or organisation, you can have your own copy on the day of publication for only £55 per year (£65 overseas).

Complete the form on page 8 or send your business card and quote "Additional Subscriber". □

DART LANDS AT VARLEY HIBBS

West Midlands law firm Varley Hibbs has selected Dart Legal Systems (☎ 01480 470307) as its practice management IT supplier. One of Dart's first projects will be taking client and accounts information from Varley Hibbs' old Wang system and porting it to the firm's new Windows/Novell network.

✓ **SOLEX '96...** At the Barbican, Dart will be showing the Xerox Document Centre. This is a new document production and distribution system (handling printing, scanning, faxing and copying) that is accessed through a standard PC or Unix LAN network.

VIRUS ALERT
Solicitor Alexander Kleanthous, litigation projects coordinator at Cameron Markby Hewitt, reports finding a boot sector virus called Parity on a disk that accompanied a sample edition of the *International Litigation Digest*. The virus simulates hardware failure but Kleanthous says it was easily fixed by running the *Dr Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit*.

MINIMIS WINS L & G DEAL
Legal & General Assurance has awarded a contract to Management Interface Ltd (☎ 01992 788288) to install MIL's Minimis litigation software for High Court and county court money claims proceedings, bankruptcy and winding up work.

AND ANOTHER US SUPPLIER SET FOR UK ?

The US software industry's fascination with the UK legal market continues, with the recent announcement that Computron Technologies is expanding and upgrading operations in the UK.

Following the company's 1995 flotation on the US NASDAQ exchange, Computron has committed resources to beefing up overseas activities, including making its Watford (UK) offices (☎ 01923 474200) its European headquarters.

Mike Johns (ex-Oracle and Information Builders) has been appointed UK sales director and the company is now planning to recruit nine additional sales and support staff to build on recent orders - UK customers include the Bank of England and Ernst & Young.

Although Computron's "workflow enabled" accounts and financial management software is primarily targeted at commerce and industry, it also enjoys success in the US legal market and has one established user in the UK which it now hopes to build on.

At the forefront of these plans is the company's new Best Practice Object (BPO) library. This is a range of business process modules, now in beta testing, which Computron believes will substantially reduce the time and cost of workflow consultancy projects.

☞ **Comment...** Computron's renewal of interest in UK law firms is not as quixotic as it seems. One of the largest firms in the City of London, Simmons & Simmons, has been running Computron systems to look after accounts and financial information since 1992. Since then, the firm has migrated from Wang to a Unix plus Oracle platform and is currently installing Computron in its Paris and Hong Kong offices.

Steve Fox, the firm's systems and strategic accounting manager, cites the ability to tailor searches and have all ➔

➔ reporting online as a major benefit in strategic planning, as it has helped the firm "crack" some of the problems associated with departmental profitability by identifying fees "locked up" as unbilled work in progress. □

DIARY DATES

☉ **5 June 1996 - Day of Difference.** Informal mixture of seminar sessions and software demonstrations organised by Norwel Computer Services taking place *this Wednesday*. Speakers include Charles Attlee of Druces & Attlee and Withers' director of business development Philip Hall. Venue: Chiswell Street Brewery, London EC1, admission free, starts 11.00am. Call Deborah Stevenson on ☎ 0161 945 3511 for details.

☉ **June & July - Voice Recognition for Lawyers** Kaye Tesler & Co partner and long time voice recognition enthusiast Michael Kaye is running another series of lectures and demonstrations on the way lawyers can use the technology to improve their productivity. The dates and locations are 13 June - Canterbury, 20 June - Bournemouth area, 26 June - Manchester, 4 July - Leeds, 11 July - Birmingham and 18 July - West Country. Call Kaye Tesler & Co on ☎ 0181 809 6756 for details.

☉ **17 July - Information Strategy in the Law Firm** One day conference on the impact of information on modern law firms. The event is endorsed by the Law Society. Speakers from Bird & Bird, Masons, Wilde Sapte, Jeffrey Green Russell and the David Andrews Partnership. Chaired by **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** publisher Charles Christian. Venue: Strand Palace Hotel, London WC2. Fee £445 + VAT, various discounts available, including 15% off for all English Law Society members. Registration from 8.30am, starts 9.00am, closes 17.30pm. Call Elan Conferences on ☎ 01225 330312 for details. □

COMMUNIC@TIONS FUTURES

Web site operators are still welcome to create hyperlink jumps to the **LTi** site at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/> And don't forget to point your browsers at <http://www.ltl.co.uk> to take part in the interactive CyberForum hosted by **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** and Legal Technologies Ltd.

MASONS LAUNCH ONLINE NEWSLETTER

City of London IT law specialists Masons has launched a monthly online newsletter looking at the latest legal developments affecting the "new media" and online sectors.

Called *Masons New Media Law*, the publication is delivered exclusively by email and among the topics covered in the first edition are: proposed changes to UK defamation law, the general regulation of online content in the UK, including the ISPA's proposed Code of Conduct, Internet telephony in Europe and the EU Database Directive.

The newsletter will be sent free of charge to all clients, contacts and potential clients of the firm. Enquiries should be directed to Liam McNeive or Wendy Paige of the New Media Law Group at Masons via email: new.media@masons.com or fax: 0171 490 2545.

☞ **Comment...** Although there is no longer anything new about law firms having an Internet presence, most of these are still restricted to fairly dull "brochure-ware" sites on the Web.

In the UK, Masons is one of the first practices to spot the potential of email "news alerts" as a way of delivering up-to-the-minute information direct to a client or prospect's incoming mailbox on their desktop. (In fact Masons was pipped to the post by Jeffrey Green Russell with its series of "digital newsletters". Check <http://www.jgrweb.com> for details.) ☐

COMPUSERVE TO GO DOWN OPEN INTERNET ROUTE

Online information and email service provider CompuServe - which has around 300,000 users in the UK - has announced it is to phase out its proprietary architecture in favour of open standards Internet technology.

The "realignment" project (code-named *Red Dog*) should be completed by the end of 1996 and follows similar moves in recent months by Prodigy and the Microsoft Network (MSN). All started out as closed systems but have since switched over to the Internet. CompuServe members requiring further details should call ☎ 0800 000400. ☐

NEW DISTRIBUTION DEAL FOR DATABASE TOOL

Library software specialists Soutron Ltd (☎ 0115 944 1664) has signed a deal with Legal Technologies Ltd, whereby LTL will sell the DB/Text WebServer software for Windows NT in the UK legal market.

The software was developed in the USA by Inmagic Inc to provide an Internet/intranet front end to DB/Text Works databases, so they can be searched using standard Net browsers, such as Netscape or Microsoft Explorer. ☐

NOVELL ROLLS OUT NET SOFTWARE

Novell UK (☎ 01344 724000) has released two new products for Internet customers.

NetWare Web Server 2.5 allows users to browse information in Novell Directory Services (NDS). The second product - the Novell InnerWeb Publisher suite - builds on Web Server so users can turn internal networks into fully featured intranets.

The suite includes a 50 user licence version of Netscape Navigator and the HoTMetaL Light web page authoring tool. Novell say the £1665 list price is less than half the cost of purchasing the components individually. ☐

WINDOWS 95 TO FEATURE JAVA

Microsoft has announced it will integrate support for Sun Microsystems' Java technology in future versions of the Windows 95 and Windows NT operating systems.

AND JAVA TO FEATURE IN DOCUMENT MANAGER

Kinesis Products (☎ 01793 536291) has added a Java application to its Global Recall document management software. The company says Java will help users who are navigating and researching through Internet and intranet-based documentation.

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Don't miss the next edition No 17 out: 17th June

Alexis Byter's **COMPUTER LORE**

It is hard to imagine it now but back in *Ye Olden Days*, when knights were bold and all that, book publishers were at the forefront of the information technology revolution. Think of Caxton, Gutenberg or Wynkyn De Worde - the Bill Gates of their day - who almost single handedly put the 700-year old illuminated manuscript industry out of business.

Today by comparison, conservatism and lack of initiative seems to be the watchword with few legal publishers prepared to fully take advantage of the opportunities offered by new media and new formats.

Or, as one **LTI** reader described a set of commercial precedents on disk he once had the misfortune to buy: "...the software used has to be described, kindly, as rudimentary, and the way the project was put together showed signs of a lack of vision, foresight and marketing."

Yes, we have heard these arguments before and the usual response of legal publishers is to chant the mantra "Electronic publishing is a risky business, look at Butterworths - they poured millions into Lexis" before heading for an extended lunch at the Groucho Club.

Fair comment but at least Butterworths deserve some credit for being commercially brave enough to pioneer ➡

➡ electronic publishing. As for the rest of them? As their ideal authors would appear to be long-dead jurists from the Victorian era, perhaps their lack of interest in anything new is hardly surprising.

Having said that, we are now starting to see a new generation of legal publishers springing up.

Not being hampered by centuries of tradition, they are willing to seize the initiative and explore the opportunities offered by newer technologies. And of course not being run by corporate bean counters or men (and women) in suits wishing to become legends in their own lunchtimes probably also helps.

Look at CD-ROM pioneers Context who can deliver 130 years of law reports in a pocket sized format. John Pritchard's Legalease with its LINK online service. Information for Lawyers developing electronic forms to take advantage of HotDocs document assembly software. Or New Law Publishing with its "same day as judgment" law reporting available over the Internet. In fact even law firms, like Masons publishing newsletters via email, now seem to show more gumption than the average old style legal publisher.

The secret? Kenneth Bagnall of New Law probably put his finger on it when he said the key was "the realisation we were electronic publishers rather than conventional publishers trying to produce on-screen versions of law books." ☐

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