
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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TFB IN NEW VOICE LINK UP

Leading legal IT supplier Technology for Business (TFB) has "entered into a relationship" with Kolvox Voicewriter Ltd to sell the LawTALK for Windows speech recognition system to the legal profession.

Sales director Simon Hill said that after extensive evaluation, TFB decided to adopt this application because of its ease of use, high recognition rate and the potential to integrate it with Managing Partner (TFB's case management system).

"The package," adds Hill, "is much more than a basic speech recognition engine that allows you to talk to your computer. You are able to talk to your application at a task level, for faster learning, ease of use and improved productivity."

As well as the sales relationship, TFB and Kolvox are working on a number of other projects and hope to announce "within the next few months" a fully integrated case management and speech recognition system". Hill describes this as "one of the most exciting developments in speech recognition" as it will be of direct benefit to fee earners.

TFB will be explaining more about the new systems at a seminar *Towards the Millennium* it is running in London on 13th November in conjunction with Coutts Bank and Coopers & Lybrand. Call Jacqueline de Gernier on ☎ 01932 781120 for details.

☞ **Technical Note...** LawTALK is based on Kurzweil voice recognition technology and runs on Windows 3.11 or Windows 95. LawTALK is compatible with the ➔

➔ latest versions of WordPerfect and Word, costs £745 per user and TFB suggest each fee earner would require one to two days of training. The recommended minimum hardware specification is a Pentium PC with 24Mb of RAM and SoundBlaster 16 card.

It is also worth mentioning that the system can only handle *discrete*, as distinct from *continuous*, speech recognition. Hill reckons continuous speech is still 18 months to two years away, not least because it will require very powerful desktop PCs to handle the processing. Hill suggests a high speed Pentium Pro or even the next generation of P7 machines.

In a related development Manches & Co has extended its commitment to speech recognition technology by ordering a further eight copies of the rival IBM VoiceType system for its London office. ☐

LAW FIRM RESCUES ICAS

Following the closure of software house F & F Systems with debts of nearly £100,000, the future of the company's ICAS case management system now looks secure as a result of intervention by a group of users of the software.

Some of the partners in Antony Hodari & Co in Manchester have formed a new company called Ultima Computing (☎ 0161 832 4781) to initially provide ongoing maintenance and support services for existing ICAS users but with the longer term objective of continuing the product's development path.

According to Andy Riley, who has been recruited to head the technical side of the project, although the immediate priority is to consolidate the Unix version of ICAS, because ...continued on page 2 ➔

MATTER CLOSED

The Beaver Corporation has settled its dispute with Miles 33 over alleged monies owed. Beaver managing director Mike Willstrop said the settlement was "to our complete satisfaction and we consider the matter closed."

"This commercial action has never affected Beaver's view of cooperating fully with Miles to maintain the integration of our respective software products. We look forward to continuing that cooperation with Miles and indeed any Open Systems supplier," added Willstrop.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY MARKET "BUOYANT"

Latest figures coming in from the trade suggest the UK legal technology industry is currently enjoying its busiest spell for several years.

Research conducted by Marketeer plc during June's SOLEX Exhibition at the Barbican found that over 13% of visitors were seriously considering the upgrade or replacement of their current systems over the following six months.

These findings have been echoed in both subsequent anecdotal and empirical reports coming in from legal IT suppliers. For example Solictec, which has been in the market since 1985, enjoyed a record July-to-September quarter, taking more than double the amount of business won during the same period last year.

Further evidence comes from Schroder Leasing, who are closely involved with financing many of the orders now being placed by solicitors practices. Schroder's Roger Farley describes the market as "buoyant" with the first 9 months to 30th September 1996 showing a 49% increase in the total number and a 79% increase in the total value of the deals completed, compared with the same period in 1995.

The average value of deals is 20% greater than last year, with "a steep rise" in the number falling into the £100,000 to £150,000 category, leading Farley to predict that for the full year Schroder will see a 100% increase in business. □

CONSULTANT DISAPPOINTED

The IT consultant working on the Lace Mawer project (see *Issue No 24 for first report*) says it is "big disappointment" that Norwel has declined to tender.

According to Andrew Levison, of the Grant Thornton/David Andrews Partnership, Lace Mawer is embarking on one of the largest and most exciting legal IT projects the NorthWest has yet seen. ➔

➔ Mr Levison adds that as the firm no longer runs Axxia software, it would be wrong to assume Axxia is a front runner for the contract. Keystone Systems and Elite Information Systems have also declined to tender but Levison reckons the Liverpool and Manchester firm is still at least two months away from making any decisions or placing orders. □

ICAS RESCUED

➔ *continued from front page...* the product is based on the Progress 4GL, the task of developing a full Windows 95/NT version "is already 75-to-80% complete".

Once this has been finished and a number of other enhancements made to the system (options being considered include: integration with email, desktop faxing and speech recognition, as well as improved reporting facilities so clients, such as insurance companies, can have direct access to records) Ultima plans to restart actively selling ICAS to new users.

☞ **Comment...** Although ICAS has always had a good reputation as a product (it was once a runner-up for the Society for Computers & Law IT award, while Antony Hodari says his firm was "very happy" with the system - which explains why he was prepared to rescue it) sales and marketing do not seem to have been the forte of F & F. Add to this a lack of working capital and a fatal cashflow crisis became almost inevitable.

At the time F & F collapsed, there were seven user sites including Davies & Partners in Gloucester and the Forest of Dean Council. The largest was Antony Hodari & Co with a 120 user network and most sites were primarily running ICAS in debt/insurance related case management applications.

Ultima has already renegotiated licence agreements and maintenance contracts with the majority of users. Brian Pittaway, who founded F & F after leaving the old Law Data company, no longer has any association with ICAS. □

NEW UPGRADE TO PROTECT FIRMS' INDEMNITY COVER

Mercury Computing last week unveiled the latest upgrade to its InControl Legal case and workflow management software which, says the company, offers additional protection against recent changes in professional indemnity rules.

The changes to the Solicitors' Indemnity Rules, listed in the English Law Society's Professional Standards Bulletin No. 16, came into effect on 1st September 1996 and link professional indemnity insurance to a requirement that solicitors are duty bound to provide better service levels.

"This is not scare mongering, this is sound commercial sense," says Mercury's commercial director Alby Smith. "From now on, missed key dates or critical functions will impact not only on a practice or individual's goodwill and reputation, it will bite a hefty piece out of that hard earned bottom line.

"We've deliberately increased the functionality of InControl Legal to suit these sector changers and as usual we've tested them with our existing user base. I believe the result is an exceptionally flexible, practical product the market will welcome, especially if you are involved in commercial property instructions and other aspects of commercial practice, which reputedly have the highest levels of professional negligence claims against them."

Among the various software enhancements introduced by Mercury Computing (☎ 01628 778222) are: higher levels of reporting and task prioritisation, "milestones" to assist in task management, simplified data entry, and summary views of a case or matter's status.

☞ **Related Developments...** The Attain Corporation of Massachusetts has announced it is closing down and now looking for a buyer for its In Control ➡

➡ software operation. For the record, this is a widely used diary/PIM program designed for the Apple Macintosh market and no relation to Mercury's InControl Legal product, which was developed here in the UK for client/server technology platforms - such as Windows NT - using Microsoft development tools, C++ and VisualBasic. (*Pressure on space has meant the Hatton Blue case management story has been held over until the next issue.*) ☐

SECURITY IS THE ISSUE

☞ Osborne Clarke has introduced a new visitor pass system to improve security at its Bristol offices. It was supplied by Safeguard Business Systems (☎ 01270 500921) and firm says that as well as helping meet fire and safety regulations, it also improves confidentiality for visitors.

☞ CCA Marketing (☎ 0161 429 7095) is now selling a low cost (£49.99 inc. VAT and p&p) alarm system to protect PCs and peripherals against theft. Called PC Protector, the device is mounted on a PC card that will plug into any 8 or 16 bit expansion slot and comes complete with battery and 110 decibel alarm. Developed by a company with a track record in designing anti-theft systems for High Street stores such as Dixons, the system can be extended to protect not only CPUs but also monitors and printers.

☞ AuthenTec International has just launched what it describes as a *forensic computing* service that can be called in to investigate computer hard disks for evidence of unauthorised or deleted files in cases of suspected fraud. The company even has mobile equipment for taking on raids or to use in inhouse investigations. AuthenTec say because the system creates an exact replica "image" of the disks without changing anything on the original computer, findings can be used as evidence in court. For copies of a free guide to the subject call Kathryn Thomas at AuthenTec on ☎ 01296 318813. ☐

FEWER BANK HASSLES

The NatWest Bank has launched a dedicated Clients Monies Service for solicitors which it claims will result in "higher returns and fewer hassles" thanks to reduced administration time and costs and higher rates of interest. The service provides users with a Windows software program so they can send banking instructions direct to NatWest via a telecoms link.

Barr Ellison in Cambridge was one of the firms to trial the system and according to partner Eddie Jones, the service "saved us an awful lot of time and simplified our own internal office procedures".

☞ **The software is free. Existing NatWest customers should contact their local branch otherwise call Bryan Hankin at NatWest on ☎ 0171 454 6524.**

THIRD TIME LUCKY

After its spat with the Law Society over what it can call its all-in-one low cost computer system for High Street firms, at the third time of trying Peapod Solutions (☎ 01753 581600) has finally settled on the name: One Stop Solution.

NEW ON CD-ROM

Macmillan (☎ 0171 881 8000) is expanding the portfolio of CD-Rom titles published by its Reference Division. The latest titles include *The World Academic Database* (RRP £225), *The Stock Exchange Year Book* (RRP £499) and *The Multimedia Yearbook & CD-Rom Directory* (RRP £175).

THE 1997 LAW OFFICE TECHNOLOGY AWARDS

This month sees the start of the build up to the 1997 Law Office Technology Innovation Awards (the LOTIES) which once again are being run by **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** in association with *In Brief* magazine. This is how the Awards' scheme will work...

The LOTIES provide the users and purchasers of law office systems with the opportunity to identify the most popular and highly rated systems through a two step process, beginning with nominating one product, service or supplier in each of the ten award categories.

Nomination forms are currently being distributed by **LTi** and *In Brief* and the closing date for entries is 11th December 1996. Next, a short-list of the four most popular nominations in each category will be published in February 1997 with readers being invited to vote for their favourites. The closing date for this final round is 10th April and the winners will be announced subsequently.

The major change to the LOTIES this year is that two new categories have been added to the Awards' scheme. The newcomers are *Best Legal Publication on CD-Rom*, which is open to legal publishers and law firms. And, *Best Legal Gadget or Utility Program*, which encompasses all those useful devices, such as handheld computers and electronic organisers, that help make legal practice a little easier.

Two other points worth noting are you do not have to nominate or vote for products in all ten categories and the Awards are open to not just lawyers in private practice but anyone working in the legal world (including in-house and local government legal departments) whether in a fee earning, management or support role.

A nomination form, containing full explanations of the rules and Awards' categories, will be included with the next issue of **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER**. □

DIARY DATES

☎ 23 & 24 October - **The Impact of IT on Legal Practice** Legal software supplier Linetime is commencing a series of regional seminars aimed at practice managers. The first two take place this week in Manchester & Liverpool. For details call Rachel Rowling of Linetime on ☎ 0113 250 0020.

☎ 28 October - **Internet for Professional Services** Conference on developing a competitive advantage through the Internet. Venue: Scientific Societies Lecture Theatre, London W1. Registration from 9.00am, for details call Amelia Tinsley of IBC UK Conferences on ☎ 0171 453 2709.

☎ Legal Admissibility of Electronic Documents Series of seminars looking at legal issues surrounding electronic documents. Fee £195 + VAT. Venues: Birmingham **28 October**, London **8 November**, Edinburgh **29 November** and Manchester **4 December**. For details call BSI-DISC on ☎ 0181 996 7408.

☎ 27 November - **LITigate '96** One day conference plus workshop sessions on legal IT, law firm re-engineering, case management and networks. Venue: Café Royal, London WC2. Fee £380 +VAT. Call Forum Conferences on ☎ 0181 445 8060 for details.

☎ 26 & 27 November - **Software for Solicitors** Technology exhibition features major legal systems suppliers, at the Queens Hotel, Leeds. Admission free, call Truemist on ☎ 0181 742 3399 for details.

☎ 10 & 11 December - **Advice & Information in the Community** Two day conference at Warwick University. Programme includes looking at the use of the Internet and *electronic kiosks* as a way for local authorities etc to deliver advice services. Fee £145 + VAT, for details call Ferret Information Systems on ☎ 01222 644660. □

REVIEW: NEW PLAYER IN CRIME COSTINGS MARKET

Despite various past initiatives, one of the more barren areas of the legal technology market has always been criminal practice. But this month sees the launch of a new system designed to handle the Legal Aid Board's billing and costs requirements.

Called CrimeTime, the software is the brain child of Martin Halliday, a partner with Gateshead-based Halliday Reeves. In true entrepreneurial fashion, he decided that as he didn't like any of the commercially available packages, he would develop one for himself – and has now gone on to set up his own company, Crimetime Ltd, to sell the system.

Rather than reinvent the wheel, CrimeTime takes the increasingly popular spreadsheet *add-in* approach, with all its file structure and mathematical functions handled by Microsoft Excel. (☞ The probate accounts system ProbateDesk from Excelsior LawDesk is another Excel-based product.) The less-than computer literate need not worry about this as the spreadsheet is well buried, with the result that operating the system becomes largely a matter of completing on-screen replicas of conventional LAB forms.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER has recently been reviewing the system and feels that any criminal lawyer already familiar with the likes of Green Forms, DSPS 1 calculations and the CRIM 13, 14 and 15 forms should have no problems coming to grips with CrimeTime.

As well as automating the completion of all the costs related forms a solicitor in criminal practice is likely to encounter in the course of work in a police station, magistrates' court and Crown Court, the system also contains some clever touches. For example, it can take into account higher standard fees, franchisee and non-franchisee rates, and record work-in-progress core costs per case for the Legal Aid Board. ➔

➔ CrimeTime is designed to run on Excel Version 7 (having a Windows 95 platform certainly makes for a simpler and more intuitive operating environment). However, the software will also run on Excel 5 under Windows 3.1.1.

The system currently retails for £499 + VAT, so in terms of fee earner time saved (by not having to fill in so much paperwork) and reducing the delay before a firm gets a completed bill out to the LAB, this is a system with the potential to pay for itself – even given the criminally low rates legal aid practitioners earn.

As an added bonus, because the system automatically performs the associated arithmetic, it should reduce the number of bills bounced back by the LAB because they contain errors – which in turn should help a firm's cash flow.

But, do bear in mind the software does not come complete with a spreadsheet. If you do not already have a copy, you also need to buy Microsoft Excel 7 (for Windows 95). Expect to pay around £225 + VAT for this.

☞ **The Competition...** CrimeTime is an attractive package but not the only option available. Most of the major legal accounts and time recording systems suppliers can offer modules to handle criminal and civil legal aid billing. And, in addition, there are also at least three stand-alone systems:

MCS (☎ 0181 882 8811) has DPS Criminal Case Management although this is not a directly comparable product for along with LAB billing it also handles franchise case management. Prices vary with configuration but MCS suggest an entry level of around £2000.

Paradigm Software (☎ 01424 212021) a division of Temple Lecture, has two offerings, both developed by Norfolk solicitor Julian Gibbons. Advocate is a simple (and cheap £179) billing program for the Psion Series 3, while CrimeFile is a more comprehensive billing and case management system for PCs. Prices start at £695 for a single user licence. ☐

INSIDER VERDICT:

CrimeTime from Crimetime Ltd
(☎ 0191 477 7728)
Price: £499 + VAT

Pros: On-screen help facilities and replication of paper LAB forms make it virtually idiot proof. Should improve speed and accuracy of billing process.

Cons: Price not as cheap as first seems when you add cost of Excel.

Verdict: Good, sound product with plenty of potential in the hands of the right lawyer.

INSIDER INFO SERVICE

Need a telephone number, a product name, a contact point or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology? We can help. As a free service - and only available to subscribers - you can call **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** on ☎ 01379 687518 and we will provide you with the facts you require.

INSIDER RATES

Subscription rates for **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** in 1997 remain unchanged at £95 (overseas £125) for 24 issues. However in response to reader requests a new two year subscription rate of £170 for 48 issues (overseas £225) - a saving of 10% on the normal annual rate - is now available.

ME AND MY PC

Bolt Burdon, a firm of solicitors in Islington, north London, has a private client, commercial and negligence practice. Earlier this year the firm celebrated its 10th anniversary, so we asked founder and managing partner Lynne Burdon about her experiences in the world of law office computing...

When did your practice first start using computers? Day One - in fact the accounts system was set up in my home and carried to our new firm in the boot of the car on 1st May 1996.

When did you personally first start using computers? A very long time ago - but not as long as my partner, who still talks about punchcards!

What systems does your firm use?

Currently Novell, WordPerfect, DPS case management and MicroTrial (for accounts and time recording). Like lemmings we are moving to Windows NT and Microsoft Office.

What is your main PC hardware? Our standard spec for desktop PCs for the office is at present a 166MHz Pentium processor, with 16Mb of RAM, a 1.2Gb hard disk and Windows 95. My main machine is a laptop - an IBM ThinkPad 755CX with 40Mb of RAM, a 1.2Gb hard disk and modem.

What is your favourite program? Visio (a business *diagramming* program that can be used for space planning). My worst job as managing partner is trying to cram ever more people into the same space.

What is the most disappointing system you have encountered? My new Psion Series 3 organiser - shouldn't I be able to update the diary on the Psion and then transfer the data to Schedule+ on my laptop? (☞ **Editor's Note...** The Psi-Win application allows you to take

☞ files from a Windows application, such as Microsoft Schedule+, running on a PC and convert them into a format that will work on a Psion. To actually synchronise and share data between Psion's Agenda PIM and Schedule+ you need a third-party software package called Agenda Synchronizer. Psion Customer Services on ☎ 0990 143050 can supply details.)

When is your PC turned on in the morning - and switched off again at night? In the office it goes on when I arrive and off when I go home. But I then plug my laptop in again at home in the bedroom just in case I think of something in the middle of the night.

What was your worst moment with a computer? Basically I'm totally in love with IT but it is a stormy relationship. My current nightmare is having upgraded my laptop to Windows 95, I now can't utilise the whole of the screen. I do remember a particularly unpleasant moment, when founding this firm, when I discovered I was printing letters to 800 clients with our wrong phone number.

Have you ever surfed the Internet and what is your favourite site? Yes, I've surfed the Internet but usually get bored after about half an hour - it's all so slow.

How many times a day do you check your email? Once a day I check LINK.

What do you never leave home without? My laptop PC, cigarettes, lipstick and a spare pair of tights.

Have you one piece of advice you would like to pass on to lawyers working with computers? No, but I do have advice I would like to pass on to lawyers who are *not* working with PCs - computerise now before you are obsolete!

From your experiences would you describe IT as being a benefit or a liability? It is simply essential. ☐

COMMUNIC@TIONS

FUTURES

Web site operators are welcome to create hyperlink jumps to the **LTI** site at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/>

NABARRO TAKE FAXSWITCH

Fax management system specialist Hexar has further increased its hold on the top end of the UK legal market with the announcement of a new order from Nabarro Nathanson.

The firm has ordered a 30 line, multi-server FaxSwitch system capable of managing the fax traffic generated by 1000 Nabarro Nathanson employees sending and receiving two million pages of faxes every year.

Initially installed as a centrally managed fax service with operator consoles and high speed scanner stations, Nabarro's plan to distribute Fax-Switch to the desktop, allowing fee earners to send and receive faxes direct from their PCs via the firm's internal email system. The firm, which is replacing its existing Cray fax management system along with its stand alone fax machines, also plans to integrate telex into the Fax-Switch network.

☞ **Comment...** Hexar (☎ 0181 563 9000) now has FaxSwitch systems installed in eight of the UK's largest legal practices and the company says it expects to announce orders from three more *Top 20* firms within the next month.

The FaxSwitch system was voted *Best Law Office Automation Product* in the 1996 *LOTIES* (see also story on p.4). ☐

NOVELL NOW SHIPPING

INTRANETWARE

Novell has now begun shipping its new IntranetWare system to its worldwide customer base. IntranetWare is being offered as an upgrade to the company's NetWare 4.1 network operating

☞ system and is designed to provide businesses of all sizes with a full service intranet and Internet (Netscape Navigator is the chosen browser software) access platform.

☞ **Comment...** In effect this is Novell's response to Microsoft's highly successful foray into this market with its browser, NT and intranet products.

Readers not interested in Internet or intranet technology might like to note Novell is offering the option of upgrading from 4.1 to a new stand-alone product called NetWare 4.11, as an alternative to the full IntranetWare bundle.

Pricing and licence stratification is broadly similar to NetWare 4.1 but Novell (☎ 01344 724000) is currently running a number of special promotions until 7th January 1997 to encourage upgrades. Contact your local authorised Novell reseller for details. ☐

EVEN FASTER MODEM

SPEEDS ON WAY ?

In a previous edition (see p.7 of Issue No 23) we reported that a communications protocol had been agreed for higher speed V.34 modems operating at 33.6 Kbps.

The first of these should be in the shops by the early New Year however a number of modem manufacturers, including Rockwell, Hayes and Motorola, are now talking about launching 56 Kbps by the middle of 1997.

☞ **Technical Note...** In theory these should be able to offer almost the same speed as ISDN (64 Kbps) but there is a catch because until standards are agreed, these new modems will only be able to offer high speed data transfer (if both modems are of the same model) from the same manufacturer. Also, the faster speed will only work in one direction: from a central server downloading to a remote client. Data going the opposite way will still only reach 33.6 Kbps. Fine for Web surfing but not an alternative to ISDN. ☐

THE TAXMAN

COMETH

HM Customs & Excise has issued a statement warning that telex relay, multi messaging and similar services are liable to UK VAT at the standard rate when provided by a UK supplier. Any UK suppliers currently providing these services without VAT will be required to change their practice by 1st January 1997. The change is most likely to affect firms operating "least cost" routeing systems.

CITISERVICE

RETURNS

Prestel Online has launched an updated World Wide Web version of its old viewdata CitiService corporate and financial news system. The heavily frames oriented site can be found at <http://www.citSERVICE.co.uk>

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For editorial & subscriptions...
Ferndale House
North Lopham
Diss, Norfolk
IP22 2NQ
Dx: 42519, Diss
☎ 01379 687518
Fax: 01379 687704
Email: jcxian@cloudnine.co.uk

Editor:
Charles Christian

Don't miss the next edition No 26 out: 4th November

Alexis Byter's COMPUTER LORE

Fear, uncertainty and doubt

Sowing the seeds of the FUD factor (fear, uncertainty and doubt) has long been a popular tactic among computer suppliers. You know the sort of thing: "If you don't buy our system you risk going out of business". But, it does seem that Eddie Desouza of Chloride Power Electronics has gone a little over the top in issuing a press warning that the National Grid is on the verge of collapse because it cannot keep pace with the growing demand for power in the south of England.

According to Mr Desouza, by the year 2002 the Grid will have to cope with a 12,000 megawatt deficit in the south and "that should not just alarm IT managers, it should terrify them". No prizes for guessing that Mr Desouza's division manufactures uninterruptable power supply (UPS) systems to keep computer networks ticking over when the electricity goes down.

Bearing in mind that earlier this month the Silicon Valley end of the Internet was out of action for 24 hours before it was discovered that rodents had gnawed through power cables at Stanford University, it can only be a matter of time before someone from Rentokil starts warning that we all risk computing disaster unless we buy rat poison! ➔

Not a dry eye in the house

Although it is still two months away, making plans for the Christmas thrash is clearly high on the agenda of many law firms and IT suppliers. But not at Norwel Computer Services, where leaving parties are the order of the day. Not only is London-based sales manager Marcus Macleod leaving but this week also sees the departure of the company's ebullient (and horse mad) marketing manager Deborah Stevenson. Deborah is taking over marketing at go-ahead Lancashire firm Stephenson's (no relation).

His own wonderwall

In 1986 there were just 48 books available in a CD-Rom format whereas today the number of titles is increasing at a rate of 30% every six months. Nowhere is this boom more apparent than in law and last week legal publishers Context, in association with the Council of Law Reporting, presented former Court of Appeal judge Sir Brian Neill with a copy of their *electronic Law Reports* in recognition of all the support he has given to the application of IT to the law during his career on the Bench.

Looking at the two CD disks that make up the *Reports*, Sir Brian remarked that they held "a wall of information". An apposite comment given that if published in conventional book format the *Reports* would occupy 110 feet of shelf space. ☐

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