
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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PC DOCS IN SPEECH RECOGNITION TALKS

The Toronto-based PC Docs Group, best known in the legal market for its CMS Open practice management and DOCS Open document management software, is currently talking to two developers of speech recognition and digital dictation systems about the possibility of integrating sound files within networked document management systems.

The two companies are Philips Speech Processing and the BCB Technology Group of Canada, who produce the PC-DART (Digital Audio Record & Transfer) system.

Both companies currently sell digital dictation systems that can be run across conventional computer networks but only Philips promises an eventual migration path into a full voice to text speech recognition system.

For its part, the BCB's strength is that it can support the transfer of sound files down a conventional telephone line - something the Philips SpeechFlow system is at present unable to do.

According to Richard Sadler of Harford Systems (PC-DART's distributor in the UK), this facility is proving particularly popular with firms such as William Heath & Co in Paddington, who are now able to have their secretarial support staff based in relatively low rent, low salary locations outside of London to process remotely the dictation generated by fee earners in London. ➔

➔ One other difference between the two systems is that whereas Philips can send sound files across a network at a rate of 44 megabytes per hour, PC-DART's maximum speed is 14.4Mb per hour. Although this is slower, it also potentially cheaper as it means users do not need to install such high specification hardware.

A formal announcement from Philips and PC Docs is expected in May, when Philips is scheduled to have completed a Windows NT/95 version of SpeechFlow.

☞ **Related Developments...** Meanwhile PC Docs' UK subsidiary, Quintec International, has secured another sale of the CMS Open practice management system. The latest deal is with Bird & Bird and it is also understood that PC Docs are negotiating to rent office accommodation in the firm's Fetter Lane offices. ☐

BOOST FOR WINDOWS NT

The rise and rise of the Windows NT computing platform received a further boost last week when Admiral Legal Systems signed an agreement with systems integrator Mercury Computing to become an authorised distributor of Mercury's InControl Legal case and workflow management software.

Both InControl and Admiral's LegalMind practice management product run on a Windows NT platform with a Microsoft SQL Server database and this has resulted in the companies working together on a number of presentations and tenders to prospective customers.

According to Mercury's commercial director Alby Smith, the new agreement is the natural ...continued on page 2 ➔

Change of name

Document management technology specialist Ymij's Ltd has changed its name to Valid Information Systems.

Although there has been no change of ownership or address (the phone number remains ☎ 0181 518 1414) managing director Bill Cannings felt the old name no longer reflected the way the company had evolved from scanning and imaging systems into an intranet business.

Change of address

Legal IT consultant Graham Irwin has moved. His new address is 12 Keats Close, London SE1 5TZ (☎ 0171 237 6356).

INFORMIX AND SUN LAUNCH LEGAL INTRANET

This week's *Information Systems for Lawyers* conference in London sees the launch of what is thought to be the UK's first ready-to-run legal intranet.

Called Llama 2000, the system brings together Internet technology from Sun Microsystems, the Informix database "universal server" system and a know-how index based on Sweet & Maxwell's *Current Legal Information* service. The visual design and software integration side of the project is supplied by Internet consultants Information Hyperlink Ltd (☎ 0171-240 8121) who have developed Web sites for a number of law firms.

Information Hyperlink say the "catalyst" has been the "datablade" technology that is now part of the Informix universal server (see *Issue No 32 for first report*). This makes an entire intranet keyword searchable, while at the same time capable of handling the different data formats, including multimedia, that law firms have to deal with. Llama also allows users to move through the site's different layers, using a *drill down* process based on Legal Information Resources' already widely used thesaurus.

☞ **Comment...** If last year was the year of the Internet, this year looks like being the year of the intranet. Llama may be first off the mark but there are at least four other companies, including Oracle, now sniffing around this same market. ☐

NEW PLAYER ENTERS FAX MANAGEMENT MARKET

The already highly competitive market for fax management systems looks like shifting up a gear, with the news that the US/Israel based NICE Systems group is planning to enter the UK legal market with its new NiceFax system. Launched in November last year, as well as ➔

➔ managing all incoming and outgoing fax traffic, NiceFax has logging, archiving and retrieval facilities. It will also support dedicated fax machines as well as desk-top faxing.

The UK NiceFax distributors are currently IPC Information Systems and Business Systems UK although neither has the track record in the legal sector of market leaders Hexar, with FaxSwitch, and Kommunicate, with RightFax. ☐

BOOST FOR WINDOWS NT

➔ *continued from front page...* extension of an already successful working relationship between the companies, which has included the development of a new interface to provide seamless integration between the two systems.

One of the first orders Admiral and Mercury have secured as a result of working together is Townsends in Swindon, where the combined InControl-LegalMind offering won against a short list that included Axxia and Resolution.

☞ **Comment** As well as reflecting the developing trend for cooperation between legal systems suppliers with compatible products - SOS and Solicitec are another good example - it also indicates the growing importance of the Windows NT/SQL Server platform.

In another example, Pinsent Curtis in Birmingham is replacing its old Novell/Sybase IT infrastructure and has 450 users going "live" running Windows 95 clients on an NT/SQL backbone on 1st March. Over the next 18 months the number of users will increase to over 1000 as the firm also migrates from WordPerfect to Microsoft Office.

Independent market research by IDC and Forrester, amongst others, reports there was an 85 percent increase in sales for NT Server platform in 1996, with the system being used in nearly two-thirds of all new intranet installations and now outselling its main rivals Unix and Novell NetWare. ☐

WHAT WILL CHANCERY LANE DO NEXT ?

Next week - on Thursday 6th of March - the English Law Society's council has another opportunity to decide the fate of its ill-starred High Street Starter Kit (HSSK) project. With the Chancery Lane rumour machine now operating at full tilt, it is becoming increasingly difficult to sort the facts from the wishful thinking but this is the story so far...

In the autumn of 1996 it became apparent that development of the HSSK low cost computer system for small firms was falling behind schedule and would not be ready for a commercial launch in the spring of this year. A study by IT consultants Oxford Law & Computing subsequently reported that it contained "fundamental design problems" and required substantial additional work.

This report then went before the December council meeting with a proposal that although some £170,000 had already been spent on the HSSK, another £770,000 would be needed to bring it to completion. Council asked for more information and discussion was put back until the January meeting, by which time the money needed had miraculously declined to just £300,000.

In the event there was no time to discuss it in January, so the matter was deferred until next week's meeting but not before the Society finance committee considered and rejected a request for an additional £95,000 to keep the HSSK project ticking over until March. It is not clear whether these various sums include the compensation it is understood the Law Society is considering paying to Macmillans, the Ipswich firm that was the HSSK's only pilot site.

Although Chancery Lane gossip suggests the HSSK will be scrapped at the next council meeting, this is by no means a foregone conclusion. There are still a large number of council members who ➡

➡ believe the project should go ahead. And now the waters have been muddied by Robert Sayer and Martin Mears, who have just launched their latest bid for the Law Society presidency, citing Chancery Lane's handling of the HSSK project as another example of the Society's "waste and mismanagement". There is therefore a possibility that objective decisions on the HSSK's future will be overshadowed by political in-fighting.

There is also a further option that the HSSK project will continue but with revised aims and new project managers. The name of Oxford Law & Computing has been mentioned in this context but the consultancy says its contractual relationship with the Law Society precludes it from making any comments.

☞ **Comment...** Presidential candidate Robert Sayer has said an alternative to the HSSK would be to change the *Solicitors Accounts Rules* so firms could use ordinary business software rather than specialist legal systems.

Given the record claim levels the Solicitors Indemnity Fund is currently facing and that the original justification for the *Rules* was to protect client money from fraud etc, to abolish what is seen as a safeguard against dishonesty would be a public relations disaster. It would also result in compensation claims from the 40 plus IT suppliers who would effectively be put out of business by such a move.

Another suggestion now also finding favour is for the creation of an IT resource centre located at Chancery Lane that would allow visiting solicitors to "test drive" a range of legal IT products.

Lloyd's of London ran a similar scheme for several years but abandoned it because of logistical problems, the main one being the drain on resources needed to train Lloyd's staff so they were able to competently demonstrate other organisations' software. Lloyd's now runs a programme of product presentations at which individual suppliers demonstrate their own systems. ☐

**Gazette
refuses Quill
advertisement**
Quill Computer Systems has had a new advertisement rejected by the *Law Society's Gazette* because it contained wording criticising another legal software product.

**The product in
question was the
High Street Starter
Kit and the
"knocking copy"
quoted one of the
Gazette's own
stories about the
HSSK's failings.**

☞ **Last year the
Gazette refused to
carry an advertise-
ment from Peapod
Solutions because
Geoff Bignell, the
now departed
director of Law
Society Services,
objected to the
wording of that
advertisement.**

Halifax takes AIM

The Halifax building society has placed an order with AIM Data Systems (☎ 0113 237 8500) for the company's Debtco Progression case and workflow management system.

Drysdales move on

Southend based solicitors Drysdales have installed a new 18 user network running accounts, case management and office automation systems, including AlphaLAW accounts and Novell GroupWise. The project was handled by Management Interface Ltd (☎ 01992 788288).

☞ Celebrating its centenary this year, the firm has recently changed its name to Drysdales & Janes.

NEXUS IN LEGAL DEBUT WITH NEW CASE NOTES SYSTEM

Camberley-based systems house Nexus Technology is entering the UK legal software market with a new case management system.

Called CASEnotes it is built around Lotus Notes groupware to provide users with the increasingly popular combination of case load and workflow management.

The system, developed in conjunction with a major law firm, claims to offer all the features now expected of a modern Windows case management system, including document management, "to do" lists, critical dates reminders, centralised diaries and case status overviews.

Along with providing potential internal improvements in efficiency and productivity, Nexus say the system also makes its easier to manage and format client facing documents, such as regular progress reports.

☞ **Technical Note...** Being based on Lotus Notes, CASEnotes will run on Windows 3x, Windows 95, Windows NT, OS/2, Novell NetWare and Unix platforms. The software can be integrated with most wordprocessing packages, including Microsoft Word, as well as products such as Lotus Organiser.

Nexus (☎ 01276 686900) believe the system, which can also be linked to a document imaging facility, can be configured for any size of legal practice, from High Street legal aid practitioners through to larger commercial firms.

A screen based rolling demo of the software (running on Lotus ScreenCam) is available free of charge from Nexus. ☐

UNDER LYNE GOES ON LINE

Smith & Tetley in Ashton-under-Lyne has joined the ranks of High Street firms to have recently abandoned manual systems in favour of technology. ➔

➔ The firm has installed a suite of applications software, including time recording, accounts, conveyancing, case management, diary scheduling and email, supplied by Linetime (☎ 0113 250 0020).

Smith & Tetley practice manager Lorraine Mycroft said the investment in IT to streamline office management and fee earner support was "essential" as it had become apparent that "more and more time was being devoted to chasing paperwork and tracking down documents" at the expense of fee earning. ☐

HARDWARE NEWS

☞ Novell's new IntranetWare for Small Business system, which is optimised for organisations with 25 or fewer users on a network, has been endorsed by a number of leading European PC manufacturers, who will be bundling the system with their entry level servers.

The manufacturers include Dell, Olivetti, IBM, Hewlett-Packard and Compaq. From March Compaq will be packaging IntranetWare and a 5-user licence for GroupWise 5.1 on their ProSignia 200 and ProLiant 800 servers.

☞ The Digital Equipment Corporation has confirmed the new UK and Irish pricing for its 64-bit range of Alpha servers and workstations. For example the price of the low-end AlphaServer 1000A 5/333 with 256MB of memory is now £8,333, while the entry-level AlphaStation 255/300 workstation with Unix, 64MB of memory and 1GB disk is £6,967.

Digital say the new prices make the midrange AlphaServer 4100 systems 34% more affordable than comparable Sun systems, while other models are now more competitively priced than rival Compaq and Hewlett-Packard systems. The prices amount to reductions of between 14% and 55% on previous list prices and are partly attributed by Digital to lower-priced memory, which is now available for as little as \$19/megabyte. ☐

CONSULTANTS - DO YOU LOVE THEM OR HATE THEM ?

There are some legal IT consultants whose hourly rates are matched only by those of partners in City of London firms. But are they any good and would you recommend them to anyone else?

This survey is designed to provide legal practices and IT suppliers with an opportunity to tell a few home truths about consultants, as well as to identify who are the most widely used and highly recommended consultants in the market.

LAW FIRMS/LEGAL DEPARTMENTS

(1.) Have you ever used an independent IT consultant? YES/NO

(2.) If "NO" was this because of:

- i.** COST
- ii.** HAD OWN IN-HOUSE IT SKILLS
- iii.** FELT UNNECESSARY
- iv.** NO SUITABLE CONSULTANT

(3.) If "YES", please list the names of a maximum of 5 IT consultants you have used over the past five years

- i.**.....
- ii.**.....
- iii.**.....
- iv.**.....
- v.**.....

(4.) Would you use any of them again? NONE/SOME/ALL OF THEM

(5.) How do you rate IT consultants in terms of their understanding of the needs of legal practices?

EXCELLENT, GOOD, REASONABLE, BELOW AVERAGE or POOR

(6.) If asked to recommend a consultant, who would you suggest? (List up to 5)

- i.**.....
- ii.**.....
- iii.**.....
- iv.**.....
- v.**..... ➔

(7.) From your experiences, what is the main advantage of using an independent IT consultant?.....

.....

(8.) What has been your worst experience with an IT consultant?.....

.....

FOR LEGAL IT SUPPLIERS

(9.) Please list the names of consultants you have encountered over the past five years (maximum 5)

- i.**.....
- ii.**.....
- iii.**.....
- iv.**.....
- v.**.....

(10.) If asked to recommend a consultant, who would you suggest? (List up to 5)

- i.**.....
- ii.**.....
- iii.**.....
- iv.**.....
- v.**.....

(11.) Does your own company now offer IT consultancy services? YES/NO

(12.) What do you see as the key benefit to customers of using consultants?

.....

(13.) What was your worst experience with an IT consultant?.....

.....

(14.) How do you rate IT consultants in terms of technical skills?

EXCELLENT, GOOD, REASONABLE, BELOW AVERAGE or POOR

(15.) Have or would you ever refuse to tender for a contract because you know a specific consultant is involved? YES/NO

How to reply
 Please complete the survey form and then either cut out or photocopy the form and return it to **LTi** by 15th March by post or fax.

☞ **Please note** you do not have to answer all questions and your replies will be treated in strictest confidence. Individual respondents will not be identified when the survey findings are published later this spring.

Replies to:
LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER
 Ferndale House
 North Lopham,
 Diss, Norfolk
 IP22 2NQ
 or
 Fax: 01379 687704

Need help or information ?

Enquiries about speech recognition, case management systems and intranets are some of the topics we have dealt with since the last issue.

☞ If you need a phone number, product name, contact point or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology - including being put in contact with new recruits - just call the Insider Info line on ☎ 01379 687518.

Hotlinks

Readers with Internet access can visit the Insider Hotlinks pages at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/hotlinks/> where you will find hyperlinks to the Web sites of organisations mentioned in this issue.

FACILITIES MANAGEMENT - THE GOLDEN RULE

Responding to the item in the last issue of the INSIDER on law firms moving to outsourcing and facilities management (FM) as an alternative to inhouse IT operations, a leading IT consultant said he has also noticed a recent increase in the number firms looking at this option.

According to John Irving, who heads the legal division at BDO Stoy Hayward, there are two main reasons. "Sometimes it is concern over escalating IT department costs due to a high cost IT director/manager doing some empire building. Or, it can be a genuine attempt to benefit from some economies of scale.

"This is now possible given that the legal IT systems marketplace is getting more mature, telecoms technology and remote helpdesk services have improved, and users are starting to recognise that most aspects of IT are not a black art but mostly common sense," he adds.

Irving, who has experience of FM in other markets, does sound one note of caution. "It is a golden rule of FM," he says, "that you should not outsource anything that is strategically critical. So it may not be wise or practical for lawyers to outsource case management support or the production of management accounts. However, it could be possible to outsource the maintenance of the network and PC support - providing you have the full support of the hardware and software application suppliers."

☞ **Comment...** Quill Computers with its PINpoint legal accounts bureau and Peapod Solutions with its rental-based One Stop Solution for High Street firms both offer a form of outsourcing. In addition, it is understood that a major legal management consultancy is currently evaluating the viability of providing an FM service for a number of practice management systems. ☐

DIARY DATES

☎ **March 1 - IT in the Justice System Post Woolf** One day conference organised by Society for Computers & Law and ITAC (Information Technology & the Courts) at No 1 Great George Street London. Speakers include the Master of the Rolls, the chairman of the Bar Council and Dermot Gleeson, the Irish Attorney General. Admission £117.50. Call SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393 for details.

☎ **March 5 & 6 - Software for Solicitors** Technology exhibition featuring major legal systems suppliers, at the Bristol Marriott Hotel. Admission free, call Truemist on ☎ 0181 742 3399 for details.

☎ **March 6 - Discovery (Now and post Woolf)** Three one hour seminars on the use of IT in litigation support, at the Brussels Suite, Bristol Marriott Hotel. Admission free, call Bowhawk on ☎ 01252 716694 for details.

☎ **March 6 - AIM Evolution Spring Seminar Programme** Starts in London and continues until Coventry on May 29. Admission free, with a choice of morning or afternoon sessions. Call Jo Hunter on ☎ 01482 326971 for details.

☎ **March 10 & 11 - Rethinking the Law Firm** Two day seminar organised by the International Bar Association and American Bar Association looking at all aspects of legal practice re-engineering including IT. Location: SAS Royal Hotel in Amsterdam. Admission £450 (£400 for IBA/ABA members). Call IBA on ☎ 0171 629 12061 for details.

☎ **March 13 & 14 - Communications & Law '97** The Society for Computers & Law's annual conference. Day one is on Internet law and regulation, including forum shopping. The second day looks at intranet technology, email and legal business opportunities on the Web. At No 1 Great George Street, London. Call the SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393 for details. ☐

COMMUNIC@TIONS FUTURES

ALTAVISTA UPGRADES WEB SEARCH ENGINE

The Digital Equipment Corporation's Internet software subsidiary AltaVista has announced details of an enhancement to the AltaVista Search service on the World Wide Web. Called LiveTopics, it allows users to organise Web pages with similar content into groups of topics, which should in turn make it easier to locate specific items of information. The LiveTopics feature of AltaVista Search is available for public beta testing at <http://altavista.digital.com>

☞ **Comment...** We are all familiar with the problem of running a simple search query on the Web and it throwing up thousands of results. A search for the acronym "ATM" (which can refer to "asynchronous transfer mode" networks and "automatic teller machines") recently brought up references to 400,000 Web pages. Furthermore, with the Web's content roughly doubling every four months, the problem is getting worse.

If LiveTopics really can make it easier to pinpoint information, it is going to be a very valuable asset. Interestingly, AltaVista are also hinting that once beta testing is complete, the technology will be made more widely available so it can be incorporated into private intranets.

In a related development, the rival Yahoo! search engine has been linked with Excalibur Technologies' visual retrieval system to create "Image Surfer", a new facility that allows users to search the Web for photographs, diagrams and pictures etc. Image Surfer can be found at <http://isurf.yahoo.com> ☐

SOLICITEC ON THE WEB

Case management specialists Solicitec Legal Systems has opened a Web site at <http://www.solicitec.co.uk/solicitec> ☐

MIXED FORTUNES FOR NOTES

IBM and its subsidiary Lotus have announced plans to deliver the Lotus Domino groupware and email server system for the Internet and intranets on IBM System/390 and IBM AS/400 enterprise servers. In an attempt to increase the popularity of the Web-ready version of Lotus Notes, from this month Domino 4.5 is also being shipped free of charge as part of IBM's AIX Version 4.2 Unix offering for the RS/6000 platform.

☞ **Comment...** Although Lotus is to be admired for its perseverance with the Notes/Domino concept, its longer term prospects within the legal market seem to be deteriorating. Less than a year after embarking on its current Lotus Notes strategy, media lawyers Olswang are understood to be bringing in consultants to review their whole IT policy. ☐

INSIDER AND THE WEB

Following a move to a more powerful server, the URL for **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** has been modified to <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk> The Hotlinks pages can now be found at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/hotlinks/> ☐

WARWICK WINS AWARD

Warwick University's law school has won the Charlesworth Award for Electronic Journals for its Internet title Journal of Information, Law & Technology at <http://elj.warwick.ac.uk/elj/jilt/> ☐

ALIROO NOW AT PEAPOD

The range of Internet security products developed by the Israel-based software house Aliroo (see *Issue 32* for first report) are now being distributed in the UK by Peapod Internet (☎ 0181 606 9924). The range comprises: PrivaMail text encryption for email, PrivaSoft image encryption for fax and PrivaFile encryption and compression for file transfer. ☐

Web site news

☞ **The Association of Women Solicitors now has its own Web page** at <http://www.badgerap.demon.co.uk/aws/>

☞ **The home page of the Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators has changed to** <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/ilca/>

☞ **In Scotland McGrigor Donald has opened a new Web site** at <http://www.mcgrigors.com> **Along with the usual "corporate" information, the site also contains downloadable legal briefings on a number of topics, including the use of email in business.**

The 140 page site's most novel feature is an interactive "Employment Law Centre" which invites visitors to test their knowledge of UK employment law. The prize for getting the answers correct is £1500 worth of free employment law advice.

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Coming soon...
The Law Society finally decides what to do with the HSSK - probably. And we look at the new LegalDocs file management system. Don't miss the next issue on 10th March.

Alexis Byter's COMPUTER LORE

Forget fusion

So, the traditional rivalry between the English Bar and solicitors continues. Clearly inspired by the sight of the Law Society getting egg on its face over the REGIS computerisation project, the Bar Council has responded with its own PACH pupillage clearing house system.

In its first year of operation PACH has left over 300 pupillage places unfilled, thereby depriving many would-be barristers from completing their legal education. This is in contrast to REGIS whose failings deprived many qualified solicitors from renewing their practising certificates.

It is hard to see which is the most sorry enterprise, save to say this must be one of the most persuasive arguments yet against any "fusion" between the two sides of the legal profession.

As rich as Croesus - or Bill

The news that Bill Gates of Microsoft is well on his way to becoming the richest man in the known universe - his current fortune is worth \$29 billion (£18 billion) and rising by \$42.5 million (£26.5 million) a day is bad news for some people.

Yes, we are talking about that most heinous of employment law

abuses, namely *geeksploitation*. A practice kindly defined by *Wired* magazine as taking advantage of twenty-something computer programmers "who are so flushed with pioneer enthusiasm and willing to work very long hours bolstered only by junk food, flexible work schedules and no dress code".

And in which century do you belong ?

Talking of Bill Gates, he was in the news recently for suggesting that Europe was in danger of losing its "edge" against emerging IT powers, such as India and the states of South East Asia. A couple of weeks ago these views were echoed in a speech by Andy Grove, chief executive of the microprocessor manufacturer Intel. According to Grove, one of the reasons why Europe lags behind the US in making use of IT is Europe does not have an Internet and email *culture*.

Perhaps that is true but at least here in the UK we have something the techies of Silicon Valley can only dream about. Stand up members of the Worshipful Company of Information Technologists - or *Ye Gilde of Geekes* as the City of London livery company has been cruelly christened. What's more they are everywhere - at least two are speaking at next month's conference on IT in a post-Woolf justice system! *And a hey nonny no, as off to the interface we go.* ☐

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