BUTTERWORTHS AND BT IN LEGAL ONLINE SERVICE ALLIANCE

Butterworths and BT have formed an alliance to develop a new online legal information and communications service for the legal sector.

The move follows nationwide market research and meetings with focus groups, which BT says has identified an unmet demand among small to medium-sized law firms for a bundle of services that would take them into the "next generation" of legal know-how and communications, as well as help them keep pace with some of the services City firms are now able to offer their clients.

Top priority on the focus group "wish lists" was a secure electronic document exchange service. Next in line was a single point of access to a variety of legal information, such as commentary, statute and case law resources, closely followed by standard forms and templates. Then came LINK-type online conferencing for special interest groups, followed by electronic document archiving and storage.

All these elements are now being brought together in a new service, to be called "Legal*connect*" (previously code named Project Eagle), that is currently in the final stages of development by Butterworths and BT.

Key elements of the package will commence two months of field testing with a number of firms in Leeds and London in February, with a view to a nationwide launch of the full Legal*connect* service during the second quarter of 1999. Pricing details for the subscription-based service have still to be finalised.

● COMMENT

Although the prospects of the increasingly impressive E-docs electronic document exchange service should not be under-rated, this field could still turn into a one horse race. Butterworths is streets ahead of its competition in terms of both the content and delivery of legal materials in a digital format, while BT is already delivering comparable services into other specialist markets. The electronic document exchange service will be based on 128-bit encryption.

Y2K - ONLY 234 DAYS TO GO

There are now only 234 working days to go until the commercial world grinds to a halt on Christmas Eve. Will your practice be open for business on 4th January 2000?

More Year 2000 news on pages 6 & 7

LAW SOC SUPPLIER "INUNDATED"

Alan Roberts, who now heads sales and marketing activities for Amicus Attorney and Solace Millennium, one of the five "recognised supplier" solutions listed in the English Law Society's new *Software Solutions Guide*, says his company has been "totally inundated" with inquires and new orders since the scheme was launched at the end of November.

According to Roberts, Amicus distributor Gavel & Gown received over 500 inquiries during the first four weeks of the scheme's operation and these are being converted into sales at an "unprecedented rate".

Gavel & Gown has moved offices, the new phone number is 01780 766661.

CHADWICK FILE WEB CASE DEFENCE

Dewsbury law firm Chadwick Lawrence has filed a defence in the copyright action being brought against it by award winning software developer NKT.

NKT alleges the Dewsbury solicitors copied and used "substantial parts" of the source code NKT had developed for the UKLAW.NET interactive internet system.

In its defence, Chadwick Lawrence admits copying some code but denies liability for copyright infringement on the grounds of "de minimis" (the dispute resolves around one specific line of code) and the argument that the content of web sites are in the public domain.

THE INSIDER WEB SITE

Visit the Legal Technology Insider web site for up to the minute news and hyperlinks to additional information.

Regular surfers should note the site's domain name has changed so you will need to alter any bookmarked URLs.

http://www.legaltechnology.co.uk

LONGBRIDGE HEAD HUNT HEADHUNTERS

Recruitment consultancy Longbridge International has headhunted the entire staff of the Hong Kong office of American headhunters Stanton Chase. Anton Webb, formerly head of Stanton Chase Hong Kong, has now become managing director of Longbridge's Asia-Pacific operations.

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Kirsty McDonald, Solace's long time marketing manager until last summer when she quit to join Data Management Associates in Wales, has moved on again and is now believed to be negotiating a role with another legal systems supplier.

Data Management Associates has privately admitted that its attempts to enter the English legal systems market, with its new Sentinel case and document management product, have so far met with little success. The product was launched at the GMEX exhibition in Manchester in October 1998.

REGIS FIVE CLEARED

The Office for the Supervision of Solicitors (OSS) has rejected a formal complaint made by the British Legal Association against five former members of the Law Society management team involved with the ill-fated REGIS membership database project.

Although the project, which began in 1992, came in £7.5 million over budget and initially did not work properly, the OSS ruled that the team, which included the then secretary general John Hayes, had not acted improperly and had been authorised to transfer monies between different Law Society projects to help fund the REGIS implementation.
● The REGIS system is currently not Year 2000 compliant but the project is described as "in hand" and the Law Society is confident it will be completed during the course of 1999. The actual compliance project will be undertaken by ITNet UK who, as part of a three year outsourcing contract, are due to take over full responsibility for the Society's IT services with effect from February 1999.

HATTON BLUE LOOK TO NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Back in September, the Insider reported on the emergence of "relationship management" as one of the hottest new concepts in the US law office technology market, where products such as Interface Software's InterAction system are making major inroads into the "AMLaw Top 100" largest legal practices.

Since then, both Lovell White Durrant and Berwin Leighton in London have placed orders for the InterAction system. And now Hatton Blue has entered the market with a home-grown "CRM" (customer relationship management) system to compete against the American challenge.

The Hatton Blue offering is based around the company's Vectus case management engine and is being previewed at a series of seminars at the Savoy Hotel in London on 11th February and 11th March. To book a place contact Joanna Kilbride of Hatton Blue on: 01789 470489.

THE BATTLE OF THE RUBBER CHICKEN CIRCUIT

Greater love hath no chicken that it will lay down its life to provide drumsticks for a buffet lunch. This certainly seems to be the order of the day in the increasingly competitive legal know-how and document management market, with rival suppliers using seminars as the basis of their promotional activities.

Today, PC DOCS is holding a joint seminar, plus lunch, with Arthur Andersen at Lincoln's Inn to promote the advantages to law firms of using the Fulcrum knowledge management system. Next Wednesday, 3rd February, CSE Systems is hosting a free seminar, plus lunch, to promote the NetRight iManage document management system it now distributes in the UK. Speakers will include Clive Whifield-Jones, whose firm Jeffrey Green Russell is now implementing a 150-user iManage installation. To book a place for this event phone CSE on: 01483 453900.

● COMMENT

According to new statistics from the US high tech market research agency IDC, the current leader in the worldwide "business process centric" document management sector, with a 37 percent market share, is Documentum Software (0181 867 3000).

The Documentum system, which is currently being rolled out by Linklaters across the firm's network of offices, has recently been enhanced by the launch of the EDMS 98 upgrade. This is designed to help organisations tackle the management of Y2K compliance documentation, including recording statements and warranties issued by third-parties, as well as capturing all questionnaires requesting Y2K compliance information.

http://www.documentum.com

HAS SCL AWARD GONE TO WRONG ENTRY ?

Last Monday night the Society for Computers & Law presented its annual IT award to H M Land Registry for its Direct Access Service, which provides online access to more than 15.5 million registers of title in England and Wales.

Currently subscribers still have to run proprietary 3270 emulation software on their PCs to communicate with the Land Registry's mainframe systems however there is a pilot project due to start in April that will provide internet access via a standard web browser.

http://www.landreg.gov.uk/dastop.htm

● COMMENT

Why has the SCL given the award to a publicly funded government agency that should have been - and in fact was talking about - providing direct access 15 years ago? It makes about as much sense as giving Richard Branson an award for getting his Virgin trains to run on time.

Over the next twelve months the legal profession will have to cope with the introduction of a new civil justice regime, major changes in the way litigation is funded by the Legal Aid Board and the emergence of a growing number of internet-based legal services.

The other short-listed entries for the award, namely Axxia's Advantage web reporting tool, Bevan Ashford's Interact software for handling the new "Woolf" procedural rules and Solicitec's SolCase Online web-enabled case management system, all address these issues. By ignoring them, this year's award not only looks irrelevant but also gives the impression the SCL has begun to lose the plot.

LOOKING GOOD OFFSHORE

The Jersey law firm Olsen Backhurst & Dorey has awarded Axxia Systems a contract worth £120,000 to replace its old AIM software with an Arista practice management system and implement a new fee earner desktop system across a 100-user network. This is Axxia's Channel Islands fourth site. The other users are Ogier & Le Masurier and Crill Canavan, on Jersey, and Collas Day Rowland on Guernsey.

WARREN MOVING INTO NEW FIELDS

After six years, latterly as a director, with Truemist, the company probably best known for running the Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition at the Barbican, David Warren has quit to set up his own business Cordial Events (07071 226887). Warren says he believes there is room for a different approach to running exhibitions for professional markets, with their unique need to provide a real business forum while at the same time minimising the amount of time partners and fee earners are away from their desks.

DEALS AND TENDERS

● The PROBATION SERVICE has chosen a CITRIX WINFRAME platform as a way of combining Y2K compliance with continued use of its existing 386 PCs. The Service rejected the rival MICROSOFT WTS Windows Terminal Server option on the grounds of cost and concerns that WTS is still only available in beta release.

● Three partner MASON, BAGGOTT & GARTON in Scunthorpe has ordered the Wisdom case and practice management system from AVENUE LEGAL SYSTEMS.

● The LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT has awarded ICL and UNISYS a £183 million contract, under the private finance initiative, to update the IT systems at over 400 magistrates courts across England & Wales as part of its Project Libra. EDS, which pulled out of the bidding for the contract last year, has criticised the deal, claiming the LCD should only have paid £120 million.

● GOULDENS and CHARLES RUSSELL have ordered the DOCS Open document management system from PC DOCS. Charles Russell will be running it in conjunction with Office 97. In addition, BIRD & BIRD is running a pilot project to test the DOCS/Fulcrum know-how product, while ALLEN & OVERY has jumped straight in and placed an order for a 2250 user DOCS/Fulcrum system.

● CARTWRIGHTS in Bristol has used THE DATABASE to implement a new office automation project including DOCS Open document management and migration to Microsoft Word 97. The Database also provided on-site training for the firm's entire 130 staff.

● VIDESS continues to sweep through the legal IT market. The latest signings for its Legal Office system include: WYNNE BAXTER GODFREE in Brighton, Andrew MacFadyen was the consultant on this project; BLACKETT HART & PRATT in Durham, who will also use the system to support their "solicitors property shop" operation; and ROLLIT FARRELL & BLADON in Hull, who are upgrading from Unix to Windows NT.

HOT DOCS TO LAUNCH EXTRANET LICENCE

Capsoft UK, the distributors of the Hot Docs document assembly software, are finalising details of a new licensing model that will allow law firms to publish their HotDocs-based precedents both on the web and on intranet/extranet systems. The latest law firm to take out a HotDocs site licence is Berwin Leighton.

Laserform Law, another Capsoft UK customer, has begun rolling out a series of HotDocs-based "intelligent" documents - known as IntelliDocs - as a component of its probate, personal injury and property case management software.

● HotDocs Version 5.0 was formally launched in the UK yesterday (Tuesday). It has also been confirmed that Microsoft has invited the US developers of HotDocs to collaborate on the Office 2000 project to ensure that Word and HotDocs file formats remain compatible.

NEW SOFTWARE GUIDE OUT NOW

The Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators has published the 1999 edition of its *Legal Software Suppliers Pocket Guide.*

It contains contact details, company profiles, product information and Y2K compliance status reports on over 30 of the most widely used solicitors accounts and practice management software systems, suitable for a wide range of firms from sole practitioners through to the larger commercial practices. The guide is available, price £15.00 from the ILCA (0181 294 2887).

INSIDER DIGITAL NEWSLETTERS

Legal Technology Insider now publishes a series of free current awareness email newsletters providing news and comment on areas of legal practice. The titles are: *Local Government Law Digital Newsletter*, *Internet Law Digital Newsletter* and the new *Litigation Support Digital Newsletter*. To subscribe, send a note of your email address to: info@legaltechnology.co.uk

SMITH BERNAL CUTS BACK ON PUBLISHING

Back in April 1998, the Smith Bernal court reporting group launched its *Casbase* free public access archive of Court of Appeal judgments amid claims that this represented "a significant step forward" in making the law more accessible to the general public.

Well let's hope the general public has not come to rely on *Casebase* too heavily because Smith Bernal is now cutting back on this service. Instead of new case reports being published within 30 days of judgment, the archive will now only be updated on an annual basis.

● COMMENT

Smith Bernal blame cost and, in particular, the expense of providing telephone support and advice to members of the public who find it difficult to use the service. However, as the Insider pointed out when it reviewed the service last May, the lack of decent explanatory material on the home page, plus the site's very poor navigation tools, widespread use of legalistic jargon rather than plain English and a conditions of use/exclusion of liability clause of awesome severity all combined to create a distinctly non-general public user-friendly service.

It is also worth noting that last year, Smith Bernal was acquired by LegalLink, the American court reporting group. Since then Smith Bernal founder Graham Smith has moved over into a semi-detached consultancy role and Mark Smith (no relation) has left the company altogether. Bearing in mind Mark Smith was the designer of the Livenote transcription/annotation system, his departure probably explains why the software has not yet been upgraded from 16-bit to a newer 32-bit architecture.

PUBLISHING NEWS IN BRIEF

● LEGAL WEEK HITS THE NEWS STANDS

The first edition of *Legal Week*, the magazine developed by Mary Heaney, the ex-editor of *The Lawyer*, was launched last Thursday. The new weekly, which is published in a glossy tabloid format, is available free of charge to inhouse lawyers, the Bar and solicitors in commercial practices with ten or more partners.

● DIALOG NOW AVAILABLE ON LOTUS NOTES

The Dialog Corporation has begun making its online information service available in a Lotus Notes compatible format that, once set up, allows Dialog data to flow automatically into a Lotus Notes database, where it will be available to an entire organisation. Lotus Notes delivery is currently available in a collection of 50 Dialog files and this is set to increase during 1999. There is no charge for Lotus integration software, which is available on the web.

http://products.dialog.com/products/lotus_notes/

NEW MOVES ON SPEECH TECHNOLOGY

Dragon Systems, the company that currently seems to be making all the running in the speech recognition software market, has launched a new product that fills what was previously a gap in the technology's capabilities.

Called Dragon NaturallySpeaking Mobile, the new product combines Dragon's top-of-the-range Naturally Speaking Preferred continuous speech recognition software with a battery-powered handheld digital recorder specifically designed for speech recognition applications.

The recorder can hold up to 40 minutes (approximately 10 pages-worth) of recorded speech in its built-in memory and an additional 80 minutes-worth on removable memory cards. (There is also a playback facility so dictation can be reviewed.) Once back in the office, a user can connect the recorder to the PC, via a cable to the serial port, and download the dictation for transcription and processing by by the speech recognition software.

Expect to pay around £170 (+ VAT) for the complete product, compared with just under for the software alone.

● Microprocessor manufacturer Intel is planning to launch its new Pentium III chip in March. The IT research firms Bloor and GartnerGroup both suggest the enhanced performance and 500 MHz clock speeds of the new chip will finally give PCs the processing power they need to adequately support speech recognition applications.

ELLIOTT SLONE MOVES INTO BRISTOL - AND PUBLISHING

As part of its strategy to place some clear blue water between it and the rest of the litigation support market pack, Elliott Slone has opened a branch office in Bristol's Prince Street (phone: 01179 058728) and launched a new "digital" newsletter that will provide regular reports on the latest litigation support-related developments in both law and technology.

The *Litigation Support Digital Newsletter* is delivered by email and available free of charge to anyone interested in the subject of litigation support. To register to receive a copy, send a note of your name, organisation and email address to info@elliottslone.co.uk

● WOOLF CONFERENCE COMPETITION
As an official sponsor of next month's *Woolf: Practical Impact for Litigators* conference in London (*see Diary Dates on page 7 for details*) Elliott Slone has two tickets to give away in a free prize draw. For a chance to win one of these tickets, phone or fax Elliott Slone to request a copy of their "tickets" questionnaire form, complete the form and fax it back immediately. Winners will be notified within the next few days. The Elliott Slone phone number is: 0171 729 2088 (fax: 0171 729 8088).

MICROSOFT'S THIN CLIENT U-TURN

Despite claiming as recently as December that there was nothing wrong with the pricing policy for its Windows Terminal Server (WTS) thin client technology, Microsoft has now both simplified the licensing structure and lowered the price.

The move follows six months of increasingly strident complaints as well as a number of high profile orders being lost to the rival Citrix Winframe system (*see Probation Service story on page 3*), as organisations did their sums and realised that on some implementations the WTS route would cost more than double the price of a comparable Winframe system.

The main change has been the introduction of a new class of Terminal Server Client Access Licences (CALs). These obviate the need to buy Windows NT Workstation licences and so could cut the cost of a 25-user WTS site by about 20 percent, from £3500 to £2775.

ALL GONE TO BLAZES

Suffolk County Council has awarded Valid Information Systems a contract to help establish a 3500-user intranet, which will be used to access archived records that have been scanned and stored electronically. One of the first applications to go online will be the county fire brigade's files, which are currently being processed and converted into a digital format.

Valid's managing director Bill Cannings, who has a reputation for banging on about the benefits of digital storage over conventional off-site secure storage, believes it is a telling comment that a fire brigade should choose to store its records on an intranet.

"There again," says Cannings, "just before Christmas one ten-year-old arsonist managed to avoid the security surrounding one such secure warehouse and start a blaze that destroyed 60,000 square feet of off-site storage, containing tens of millions of documents, including an estimated 100,000 deeds belonging to solicitors' practices. It took 100 firemen most of the night to control the blaze."

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

● WOOLF ON THE WEB

Downloadable copies of some of the new Woolf civil justice procedural rules can be found on two non-government sites.

http://www.foil.org.uk
http://www.beagle.org.uk

● CRIMINAL CASE REVIEWS

With more and more inmates having access to the internet in prison libraries, the Criminal Cases Review Commission has launched its own web site.

http://www.ccrc.gov.uk

● NEW PUBLISHING SITE

Legal publisher Monitor Press now has a site providing sales and support material.

http://www.monitorpress.co.uk

● EURO CALCULATIONS

The banking group UBS has launched a multilingual web site containing a huge amount background information about the Euro and a downloadable calculator providing conversion rates for the eleven "euro-land" currencies.

http://www.ubs.com/e/pcc/euro.html

● DUMB AND DUMBER

The Duh 2000 site runs a competition for the dumbest comments made about Y2K problems. This month's winner is a compliance statement that reads: "The current release is Y2K compliant. The next release will be even more compliant."

http://www.duh-2000.com

LTi-NET - INSIDER'S DIGITAL EDITION

LTi-Net is the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. It is available in an HTML file format that can be delivered as an email attachment or accessed via a secure subscriber-only web site.

LTi-NET comes complete with live hypertext links and is designed for firms wanting to access the newsletter across intranets and Lotus Notes databases or individual subscribers who just want to read and print it from the desktop.

Subscription rates start at £135 (inc VAT). To obtain a free sample copy email info@legaltechnology.co.uk

IMPEACHMENT-NET

Cannot learn enough about the impeachment proceedings in the US Senate against President Clinton? Then check out the web. The American Bar Association site has plenty of legal background information on the process. The Jurist "law professors' network" offers photos and links to media coverage of the trial. And the AltaVista service provides a key-word search facility that will retrieve both the relevant extract from transcript and an accompanying video clip.

http://www.abanet.org/publiced/impeachment.html
http://www.jurist.law.pitt.edu
http://video.altavista.com/impeach

Y2K NEWS IN BRIEF

● MICROSOFT AND NOVELL POST COMPLIANCE INFORMATION ON THE WEB

Within the last month both Microsoft and Novell have revamped their web sites to provide more detailed information about the Y2K status of their entire product ranges. It would be nice to think this was the result of concerns about their users but in fact the prime motivation seems to have been the need to comply with the provisions of the US *Year 2000 Information & Readiness Disclosure Act* (the so-called "good samaritan law").

The Microsoft site is huge, covering 1600 products, including the English and foreign language versions of desktop applications, operating systems, browsers, server applications and development tools. There is also full supporting documentation relating to all those products that are "compliant with minor issues".

One note of caution: You need to set aside adequate time to surf this site - because it is so big, access times can sometimes be very slow.

Trying to determine the Y2K status of all the different versions of NetWare has always been a daunting task. Anything before Version 3.11 is non-compliant and should be replaced. Version 3.2 is compliant. Versions 3.11 to 4.11 are compliant with appropriate patches and upgrades. Version 5.0 is compliant. To remedy this, Novell is now offering users a free "Y2K Information Ferret" tool to analyse Novell servers and produce compliance reports.

http://www.microsoft.com/technet/topics/year2k/product/
http://www.novell.com/year2000

● AT&T SUED OVER YEAR 2000 COMPLIANCE

New York law firm Beatie, King & Abate has commenced a Y2K compliance class action against AT&T and its spin-off Lucent Technologies. The lawsuit alleges the companies contravened State consumer protection laws and breached an implied warranty of merchantability by selling office communications systems (including call-logging, voice mail and video conferencing systems) that would be obsolete after 1999 without offering free repairs or upgrades. The writ seeks compensatory and punitive damages.

WORDPERFECT DOS OUT OF Y2K LIMBO

Within the last fortnight Corel, the Canadian owner and developer of the WordPerfect wordprocessing system, has managed to amaze its fans and confound its critics by completing all verification work and being able to unequivocally certify that its old WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS product is Year 2000 compliant, subject to some minor issues that should not affect overall performance.

The "minor issues" in this instance relate to the program's handling of date-related assumptions, which users are most likely to encounter when working with the "Document Summary" feature.

Because document creation and revision dates can only be displayed in a double-digit date format in WordPerfect 5.1, any date values falling into the 00 to 79 band are automatically assumed to refer to the years 2000 to 2079, whereas the inference with dates in the 80 to 99 band is they refer to the period 1980 to 1999.

● COMMENT

It is also essential to change the operating system date, on whichever version of DOS or Windows is in use, to a four digit DD/MM/YYYY format for the date assumptions to work correctly. (DOS is Y2K compliant but does not accept the entry of double-digit year values from 00 to 79.)

Users should also ignore the recommendations of those legal IT suppliers who have been incorrectly advising the replacement or upgrading of WordPerfect 5.1 for DOS software because it is no longer Y2K compliant.

Corel has also issued Y2K test results for the following versions of the software: WordPerfect 6.1 Windows 3.1 - compliant with minor issues, WordPerfect 7.0 Windows 3.1 - compliant, WordPerfect 7.0 Windows 95/NT - compliant with minor issues, WordPerfect 8.0 Windows 95/NT - compliant, WordPerfect 8.0 Unix - compliant.

In addition, Versions: 5.1+ DOS, 5.1 Unix, 5.1+ Open VMS, 5.2+ Windows, 5.2 Unix, 6.0 DOS, 6.0 Unix, 6.1 DOS, 6.2 DOS, 7.0 Unix and 7.0 Open VMS are still being tested however WordPerfect OS/2 appears to have been abandoned and will not be tested for compliance.

The Corel web site carries Y2K compliance reports on the company's entire product range, including further information on all those "minor issues".

http://www.corel.com/2000.htm

● WORDPERFECT 9.0

The forthcoming WordPerfect Version 9.0 is scheduled for a UK launch in May however one of Corel's specialists from Canada is in England this week giving previews of the beta version. He is at the offices of Anthony Collins Solicitors in Birmingham today and in Manchester with Halliwell Landau tomorrow (Thursday 28th). Admission is free but please first contact Bernard Stebbing of Corel UK to reserve a place. He can be contacted on 07775 661416.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

● WOOLF: PRACTICAL IMPACT FOR LITIGATORS - One day conference at the Berkeley Hotel in Knightsbridge on 19th February with an impressive list of speakers, including Lord Woolf, looking at all aspects of the impending civil justice reforms and the impact upon case management. The event starts at 8.30 and runs through until 17.25. Fees: £695 (+ VAT). For details call IQPC on: 0171 430 7000.

● INFORMATION SYSTEMS FOR LAWYERS - Centaur's annual two day conference and exhibition takes place at the London Marriott Hotel on 23rd and 24th of February. This year sees the introduction of interactive discussion forums to complement the seminar sessions. Topics covered will include: IT training, know-how systems, desktop productivity for fee earners, meeting the needs of inhouse lawyers and alternative working practices, such as the "virtual office". The event carries 10.5 CPD hours. Fees: £797 (+ VAT), with £50 discount for extra delegates and small firms. For details call Centaur on: 0171 970 4770.

● ILCA IT AWARENESS DAY

The ILCA (Institute of Legal Cashiers & Administrators) holds its annual Law Office IT Awareness Day on 24th February at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. The event, which combines seminar sessions and an IT exhibition, starts at 9.30. Topics this year include the Euro, Y2K and the 1998 Solicitors' Accounts Rules. The event carries 5 CPD hours. Fees: £125 (£95 for members), with discounts for extra delegates. For details call the ILCA on: 0181 294 2887.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

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PAGENET GOES DOWN

The recent acquisition of Lava Systems Inc of Toronto by another Canadian document management systems supplier, Open Text Corporation, looks to be the final twist in the saga of the PageNet document management system.

Originally launched by Neil Fishenden and his team in the early 1990s as a system for law firms, despite considerable hype PageNet only secured one legal market sale before being reinvented for the insurance industry.

The product's corporate record was even less auspicious. First sold by Fishenden's own business Patent Systems, this company became embroiled in a dispute over copyright with a competitor and was subsequently acquired by Westminster Computer Services. When WCS itself ran into problems, the system was distributed through PageNet International (no relation to the electronic pager supplier) before this company was in turn rescued by Lava Systems and the product repackaged as Lava DMS.

Unfortunately Lava's commercial prospects shone rather less brightly than the lamps of the same name and, while the terms of the agreement have not been disclosed, it is understood Lava's assets were acquired at bargain basement prices.

Open Text has said it will continue to support Lava DMS users within the insurance industry however the company also has its own document management offering in the shape of the Livelink system currently being implemented by Simmons & Simmons.

NEWS IN BRIEF

● ELITE NOW SUPPORTING SQL SERVER 7.0
Elite Information Systems has announced that the entire Elite product suite is now integrated with and running on Microsoft's new SQL Server 7.0 platform.

● SOS EXPANDS MANAGEMENT TEAM
Stephen Parry has joined Solicitors Own Software in the newly created role of business manager. Parry, who was previously with a firm of chartered surveyors in London, will have responsibility for a number of projects, including finalising the company's Investors in People accreditation.

● KOMMUNICATE ACQUIRED BY FRENCH
Kommunicate Ltd, best known in the legal market as the distributor of the RightFAX network fax system, has been acquired by Paris-based BVRP Software. BVRP is listed on the Euro N M Paris stock exchange. Further information can be found on the company's web site http:/www.bvrp.fr

● HAYES TO CONTINUE TRADING IN EUROPE
Hayes Europe, the manufacturer of the Accura and Optima modem ranges, says the UK operation will continue to honour its commitments despite a recent announcement that its US parent company has ceased trading.