

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

PC DOCS GROUP TO CHANGE HANDS

Last Friday Toronto-based Hummingbird Communications announced details of an agreement to acquire the entire PC Docs Group, including its CMS Data practice management systems subsidiary as well as the core DOCS document management business.

The deal, which is for shares rather than cash, values PC Docs at US\$ 155 million. Once the transaction is completed, which is estimated to be during May 1999, the PC Docs businesses will become an operating division of Hummingbird. UK-based PC Docs Europe are very bullish about the takeover, pointing out that the acquisition will make Hummingbird one of the top 50 software companies in the world, with a combined revenue of US\$ 240 million, over 1500 employees and 2.5 million users.

■ Neil Fishenden, last heard of when the PageNet/Lava document management business went down with all hands, could be about to return to the legal market heading UK operations for PeopleSoft's new PeopleDocs document management system.

MIXED VERDICT ON BRISTOL

Last week's Western Legal Office Exhibition has received mixed reviews from the IT suppliers who had stands there. Quill said it was better organised than in previous years but SOS felt attendance was lower than usual. There was also disappointment at the quality of visitors, with several suppliers intimating that if they had a positive response at next week's National Legal Office Exhibition, at the Birmingham NEC, they would not be returning to Bristol. The organisers of the NEC event, which had 2400 visitors last year, are predicting an attendance of 3500 this year.

■ Imark, the new owner of the Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition, is reported to have agreed to continue holding SOLEX at the Barbican in London for another three years.

DPS TO LAUNCH 32-BIT AT NEC

MCS is expected to launch the long-awaited 32-bit version of its DPS case management software at next week's NEC show. Although the most recent edition of the Robson Rhodes report, on the use of legal IT in the UK, said DPS was still the most widely used case management system, over the last twelve months a growing number of firms have been dropping DPS in favour of newer systems based on 32-bit, ODBC-compliant relational database technology.

GET THE WOOLF RULES ON CD

Despite charging £250 a set, the demand has been so great that the Stationery Office recently ran out of the new "Woolf" *Civil Procedures Rules*. And, while they can be downloaded free of charge from the Lord Chancellor's Department web site, there have been complaints that far from being easy-to-use, the site verges on being user-hostile.

Litigation support specialist Bowhawk Consulting (01252 716694) believes it has a compromise solution and is now making copies of the rules and practice directions available on CD-Rom for £49.95 (+ VAT and p&p). The project has been approved by the LCD and the rules are published in a PDF portable document file format that can be viewed using Bowhawk's own Discovery Express litigation support software or Adobe Acrobat Reader.

<http://www.bowhawk.com>

FREE DEMO DISK

This issue of the Insider includes a CD containing a free demonstration version of the new 32-bit BriefCase real time transcript analysis software from Sellers Legal Services. The system replaces the company's earlier 16-bit T/A-Law product and contains a number of enhancements including an audio-visual self tutoring facility to reduce training overheads.

Sellers (0171 405 4512), whose recent projects include providing court reporting services at the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, is currently running a special free usage offer on the BriefCase software, call Andrew Workman for details. **For extra copies of the CD phone: 01379 687518.**

THE INSIDER WEB SITE

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

<http://www.legaltechnology.co.uk>

IS QUISS TOO EXPENSIVE ?

The story in the last issue of the Insider about Quiss Technology's new Works for Legal outsourcing service has already prompted complaints by a rival supplier who reckons the Quiss price structure is too expensive.

Quiss say firms can expect to pay between £1700 and £2500 per seat, per year for the full package of hardware, software, training, consultancy and maintenance. However Ed Hodgson, the business development manager at The Data Base, reckons his company can offer the same deal - but minus the consultancy element - for an average of £4000 per seat for the whole three years.

■ Any other legal IT suppliers care to participate in this Dutch auction?

WHICH FAX IS THE RIGHT LEGAL FAX ?

Kommunicate, the UK distributor of the RightFAX network fax system says it is confident the product will continue to be the most popular system for law firms in the UK, despite the recent introduction of the rival LegalFax software (see last issue for full story).

However Interface Software, who produce the highly-rated InterAction relationship management system, say one of LegalFax's selling points among US law firms has been its seamless integration with InterAction, as this offers users the ability to fax to multiple recipients within an InterAction database.

■ In the UK, Tikit (0171 717 1580) is a reseller for both the RightFAX and InterAction products.

Y2K - LOADS OF TIME SAY AVENUE !

How appropriate that the corporate logo for Avenue Legal Systems features the colour red. It exactly matches the faces of its directors after discovering they had recently sent out a letter to law firms warning them that they needed to resolve their Year 2000 compliance issues before 31st January 2000.

TIKIT OUST LAWTECH AT SPEECHLY BIRCHAM

Speechly Bircham has appointed systems integrator Tikit to handle the upgrading and replacement of its entire front office infrastructure. The project includes the installation of an NT network, with NT 4.0 on the desktop, running Microsoft Office, MS Exchange email, web access, RightFAX, DOCS Open document management and Carpe Diem time recording. The firm currently has a Resolution practice management system but this comes up for review next year.

Consultant Andrew Levison, of Grant Thornton, advised on the project and Tikit's appointment ousts Speechly Bircham's previous systems house Lawtech Services.

JGR BUYS SOLICITEC

Jeffrey Green Russell has bought a SolCase system from Solicitec as a first stage towards upgrading the firm's entire case management infrastructure. The new software will eventually be integrated with both JGR's CMS Open practice management system and its new iManage document management software.

AXXIA EMERGING AS INSURANCE FRONT RUNNER ?

The managing partners involved in the recent alliance between Hextall Erskine in London, Jacksons in Middlesbrough and Cartwrights in Bristol to create "The Consortium" - or "virtual partnership" - of insurance litigation practices (all three belong to the Iron Trades law firms' panel) admit the deal would probably not have happened if the firms were not already using the same Axxia Arista case and practice management systems - in fact the firms first started discussing the link-up at an Axxia user group meeting. However, what seems to have provided the final icing on the cake was the launch in the autumn of Axxia's Advantage web-enabled client reporting system, as this provides lawyers with a framework for sharing case status information with third parties, including clients, associates and even other law firms, in a way that is both secure and largely automated.

■ COMMENT

A frequently heard criticism is that Axxia makes good accounts and practice management software but lousy case management systems. But, if that is so, how come a steady stream of insurance litigation practices, including The Consortium, Donns (see page 3) and Davies Arnold Cooper all use its case management software? Perhaps Axxia does not address all areas of case management equally well but on its present track record, it seems (like Beaver in the debt market) to be carving out a strong niche in the insurance litigation and matter management sector.

RIVAL WP SYSTEMS ON SHOW AT NEC

Visitors to next week's National Legal Office Exhibition at the Birmingham NEC (see page 7 for details) will have an opportunity to see demonstrations and evaluate the latest versions of both the new WordPerfect and rival Microsoft Word wordprocessing packages.

Corel, the developers of WordPerfect, will be showing a final beta version of the WordPerfect Office 2000 suite on its own stand, while the new version of Word, part of Microsoft's forthcoming Office 2000 suite, will be on show on stand E6 belonging to IT supplier The Data Base.

Readers can make up their own minds about which they prefer but the WordPerfect main selling point can basically be summarised as: the product allows you to remain with your familiar wordprocessing software but at the same time provides seamless compatibility with Word software. This means you can exchange files with clients and other lawyers using Word, safe in the knowledge that there will be no corruption of data or document formatting.

Microsoft Office 2000 is a potentially more complex product, both to use and implement, however the legal market is likely to appreciate the document management facility that allows users to make revisions and track them through different iterations.

■ Both products are scheduled for a UK launch in June.

STILL LIFE IN TRIAL/400 ?

The reappearance of London Bridge Software as a potential active player in the UK legal systems market, following its recent £21 million acquisition of case management specialist Hatton Blue, has also revived interest in its old Trial/400 accounts and practice management system. Along with Sherwin Oliver, there are still about a dozen other law firm users, including Goodman Derrick, Manches, Bower Cotton, Glanvilles and McGuinness Finch.

Although many of these firms are either considering replacement products or already actively phasing out their Trial/400 technology (Eversheds' Birmingham and Newcastle offices are scheduled to switch from Trial to Elite during the course of this year) the AS/400-based Trial system - described by one user as having "the best green screen functionality money can buy" - is Y2K compliant and can now be interfaced with Carpe Diem.

However, rumours that London Bridge is about to announce a new Trial sale in the legal market can probably be discounted as the company has declined even to tender for ITTs issued by some of its existing Trial users.

■ London Bridge Software has announced details of its results for its financial year to 31st December 1998. These reveal that the company almost doubled its pre-tax profits from £3.7 million to £7.37 million on a turnover of £22.4 million (up from £11.3 million in 1997). The company predicts pre-tax profits of £12.7 million for the coming year.

DEALS AND TENDERS

■ One of Northern Ireland's largest firms, CLEAVER FULTON & RANKIN in Belfast, has placed an order for a new MILES 33 Precedent accounts and practice management system. Miles also reports sales of its Smart facilities management/bureau service are ahead of target, with one of the latest signings coming from a former TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS site.

■ CLINTONS Solicitors in Drury Lane, London, has awarded COMBINED SOLUTIONS GROUP (CSG) a contract to supply all the firm's hardware, software and printers. As a first phase the firm has installed 50 GATEWAY PCs.

■ Birmingham's WILKES PARTNERSHIP has awarded MANAGEMENT INTERFACE (MIL) a contract to install a 100 user plus Microsoft Word 97 and internal e-mail network. The project includes integration with the firm's existing AXXIA accounts and time recording software.

■ BLAKEMORES in Coventry is installing a new AlphaLAW-Vantage practice management system from MSS MANAGEMENT SUPPORT SYSTEMS. The site will be one of the first firms in the country to go "live" with the new 32-bit Vantage product. Blakemores will be running the NT/SQL Server 7 system, which utilises Microsoft Back Office and Exchange Server, across a wide area network encompassing the firm's seven branch offices. The project's total order value is £300,000.

■ Two more firms have signed up for AXXIA's Arista Unix-based practice management system. BLANDY & BLANDY in Reading is spending £110,000 on a 55 user accounts, time recording, fee earner desktop and case management system. The new installation will replace the firm's existing TIMESLICE system. DONNS in Manchester is spending a total of £500,000 on a complete IT overhaul for its 200 user network. The project will include installing Axxia's new Advantage web-enabled client reporting system to provide the firm's personal injury work clients with real time case status reports.

LEGAL PUBLISHING NEWS IN BRIEF

■ Y2K AUTHORS ON THE MOVE

Simon Halberstam and Jonathan Berman, the co-authors of Butterworths' *Countdown to 2000* book on the legal aspects of Y2K, are leaving Halberstam Elias & Co and moving to Sprecher Grier to create a new cyberlaw practice. The new firm will be called Sprecher Grier Halberstam.

■ LAWYER OUT OF IT MARKET ?

In a surprising turn of events, Centaur's weekly newspaper *The Lawyer* has not only dropped all coverage of legal IT news but also appears to be no longer actively selling technology-related advertising space. Although *The Lawyer* is still committed to sponsoring the *Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition* at the Barbican in June, according to its advertising schedule, its eve-of-show issue will be focussing on charities rather than IT.

■ FREUDIAN SLIP

Laurence Eastham, editor of the SCL's *Computers & Law* magazine, reports that a reader made an embarrassing Freudian slip while ordering a back-copy of the magazine containing a specific article. The article, on client-facing technology, was actually called "It's the Clients, Stupid". The reader, a solicitor, thought it was called "It's the Stupid Clients".

■ SWEETS HATCHING PROJECT

Rumours are rife that Sweet & Maxwell's Legal Information Resources division, based at The Hatchery in Hebden Bridge, is about to launch a major new electronic database product, combining statute and case law, following reports that LIR has recently taken on an additional 150 staff.

■ INSIDER E-MAIL NEWSLETTERS

Legal Technology Insider publishes a series of free current awareness e-mail newsletters providing news and comment on areas of legal practice. The titles are: *Internet Law Digital Newsletter*, *Watching Brief Online* (local government law) and the *Litigation Support Digital Newsletter*.

To subscribe send a note of your e-mail address to: info@legaltechnology.co.uk

NEW LEGAL INTRANET IN-A-BOX SOLUTION

Nottingham-based systems integrator the Data Base Ltd (0115 971 2000) has announced details of a new packaged solution designed to provide law firms with the basis for creating their own legal intranets.

The system, which is based on a series of modules, is intended to support all aspects of the legal business from back office administration through to fee earner-support facilities.

These include: a virtual help desk displaying answers to frequently asked questions about a firm's IT systems; access to online and CD-Rom-based legal information resources; a library of internal know-how material, such as precedents, procedures, forms and similar standardised documentation - even marketing material stored as PowerPoint presentations; a comprehensive practice-wide directory of staff, indicating both responsibilities and expertise; and the facility to create interactive bulletin boards and discussion forums.

Ed Hodgson of the Data Base says pricing for the standard product would be £200 per user for a 50-user licence, falling to £100 per user for a 500 + user site.

NEW IN DIGITAL FORMAT

■ EMPLOYMENT LAW ON DISC

Law Society Publishing has relaunched Henry Scrope's *Employment Law on a Disc* on CD-Rom. The product's front end is now a lot smoother and new features include an archive of over 400 ICR case headnotes. The full text of these reports are available on Context's JUSTIS Industrial Cases Reports CD via Context's J-Link hyperlink (see **LTi 66**) facility. Prices start at £95 (+ VAT) for a one-off CD, rising to £185 (+ VAT) for the annual service including regular updates via the author's web site. For a free 21-day demonstration version of the disk call: 01527 504459.

<http://www.emplaw.co.uk>

■ NEW ON BUTTERWORTHS LAW DIRECT

Butterworths has introduced a number of enhancements to its web-based Law Direct service. These include: an articles citator for selected legal journals, a trademarks search facility, an expert witnesses database, and LNTV service providing access to the scripts of recent Legal Network Television programmes, and three new databases covering Acts, statutory instruments and cases - these are hyperlinked to Butterworths' Legislation Direct and All England Direct online services. (Butterworths' new Local Government Law Direct service goes live on 6th April.) A free trial of Law Direct is available by phoning 0845 608 1188 or by completing the form accessible by clicking on Law Direct on the Butterworths' web site home page.

<http://www.butterworths.co.uk>

WANTED - A NEW ORSA CHAMPION

With the 26th April starting date for the "Woolf" civil justice procedural reforms (or "Pol Pot Year Zero" as Jane Jales of Rakisons described them at a recent conference) edging nearer, there are growing rumblings that the LCD is ignoring the practical 'netiquette' side of the reforms. Or, as one litigator put it: "There is no point trying to introduce a 'wired' justice system that will allow pleadings to be filed and documents exchanged electronically if practitioners do not know how to handle and format file attachments or appreciate the importance of regularly checking for e-mail."

One suggestion now being made is that the ORSA (Official Referees' Solicitors Association) procedural rules, which do cover some of these issues, should be revised to make them relevant to a wider circle of lawyers. And who better to do the job than Richard Susskind? He is now the official adviser on IT to the Lord Chief Justice but in a previous incarnation was responsible, in the early 1990s, for drafting the first version of the ORSA rules.

E-DISCOVERY WARNING

Speaking at the recent Information Systems for Lawyers conference, US IT consultant Michael Jimmerson said Microsoft's difficulties in the Department of Justice lawsuit had revealed the evidential value of e-mail records and he predicted that gaining access to electronic records would play an increasingly important role in the discovery process.

NEW DATA ANALYSIS SYSTEM FOR LITIGATORS

Harlequin Intelligence has launched the Watson Litigation Application Pack, a free software utility to help lawyers analyse and review complex and/or high volume data in digital or hard copy formats. The program, which must be run in conjunction with Harlequin's Watson range of analytical software, was designed to test evidentiary material by allowing lawyers to structure data in a visual format, using what Harlequin term "charting algorithms", so that it is easier to identify any links or potential weaknesses in the evidence.

Recent cases in which Watson has been used include an internet child pornography case, where the system allowed Durham police to analyse over 4000 pedophilia-related e-mail messages found on the suspect's hard disk. Not only did the system allow prosecutors to create a clearer picture of the accused's criminal activities and secure a conviction but it also identified a further 12 suspects.

To obtain a free copy of the litigation pack and a 60-day evaluation copy of Harlequin's Elementary Watson entry level software on CD-Rom phone: 01223 873880.

<http://www.harlequin.com>

LITIGATION SUPPORT NEWS IN BRIEF

■ AND ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST

Litigation support systems developer DPA Egami may soon be having to change its name to DPA Sayonara if it does not staunch the steady flow of staff out of the door marked "Exit".

Over the last twelve months it has lost Mark Burrows to CSG, Kelvin McGregor to Legal Technologies, as well as Kerry Day and company founder Ted Clark to E-gnosis. The latest departure is DPA's marketing and PR manager Deborah Putzman who joined Sellers Legal Services/Sellers Imago at the beginning of March.

■ LIT SUPPORT DOWN UNDER

Australian software consultancy Sinch Software, which is based in Sydney where it specialises in the development of library and litigation support systems, now has a litigation support resources facility on its web site. The company's most high profile project to-date has been developing the Singapore Judiciary's "Courtroom of the Future" project. This uses the same ShowCase multimedia courtroom presentation system Legal Technologies Ltd operated during the first Maxwell trial in London.

<http://www.sinch.com.au>

■ NEW LONDON BUREAU

Office 24 on London's New Oxford Street has just opened what it claims is Europe's first walk-in office support centre that is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The company says it operates a strict client confidentiality policy and that its services can handle large scale copying projects for lawyers, including the production of trial bundles. Office 24 (0171 616 7300) plans to open more London offices over the next six months.

<http://www.office24.com>

■ CSG NOW RESELLING DOCS

Combined Solutions Group (CSG) has been appointed an authorised reseller for both Apollo litigation support software and PC Docs' DOCS Open document management system.

WEB RESOURCES

■ MORE SCOTTISH SITES

Legal publisher Butterworths has opened a new web site dedicated to Scottish law and including free online access to the Scottish Law Society's *Official Directory*. Also the Registers of Scotland is running a *Registers Direct* service providing web access to property information searches, as well as the smaller registers of deeds, sasine, judgments and inhibitions.

<http://www.butterworthsscotland.com>

<http://www.rosdir.gov.uk>

■ COMMUNITY TRADEMARKS

The EU now has a multilingual web site carrying trademark registration and harmonisation information from its OHIM office in Spain. The site also has links to national trademark offices within the EU, including the Patent Office, Japan, the United States and Switzerland.

<http://www.oami.eu.int>

■ LEGAL CHICK STUFF !

Our thanks to our friends on the US Law News Network for spotting this site, which they describe as a "mix of legal, chick stuff". Run by Los Angeles lawyer Jodi Sax, who works for a boutique firm specialising in intellectual property law, it combines a mixture of practical information - such as how to register a trademark and reports on the latest copyright and new media cases - with features of the "Web Hunk of the Month" and "What's the deal, Ally McBeal" variety.

<http://www.lawgirl.com>

■ LTi-NET - THE DIGITAL EDITION OF THE INSIDER

LTi-Net is the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. It is available in an HTML file format that can be delivered as an e-mail 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 e-mail info@legaltechnology.co.uk

COMPULINK BUYS US TRADEMARK SERVICE

Compulink Information eXchange (CIX), the UK's longest established online service provider, last week acquired the specialist US online intellectual property research bureau IP Warehouse. Formed by two US trademark law attorneys, Frank Cona and Michael Palage, IP Warehouse's main service is based around its IP DragNet technology which can be interfaced to all the major web search engines and then used to search the internet for specific intellectual property-related items of information.

According to Cona, one of the most widely used services is checking the internet (both web pages and Usenet postings) for references to brand names and trademarks both for the purpose of monitoring potential infringements and conducting "knockout" common law searches to establish that a particular name is generic and should not be protected by trademark registration.

The system is also being used in the United States by a growing number of hardware manufacturers and software publishers to monitor web sites belonging to retailers they suspect are carrying out unauthorised "grey market" sales by selling goods online at discount prices that contravene established distribution and licensing agreements.

Another IP Warehouse service proving popular is the URL "snapshot" facility. This takes a time-stamped record of a specific web page, which is then stored electronically in a format that is admissible in evidence. Cona says this is very useful when a plaintiff's lawyers are gathering evidence of trademark infringement as it overcomes the problem of defendants trying to argue they are outside the jurisdiction or destroy evidence by rewriting, erasing or, in some cases, relocating the contents of their web sites.

■ For further details call Compulink on: 0181 255 5000.

<http://www.ipwarehouse.com>

NEW EXPLORER ON THE WAY

The latest release of Microsoft's web browser, Internet Explorer 5.0, will be available as free download from Thursday 18th March in versions for the Windows 98, 95, NT 3.51, NT 4.0, 3.1, Sun Solaris and HP-UX operating system platforms. It will also be pre-installed on new PC hardware and included in the latest Windows 98 retail package. Over the next couple of months most PC and internet magazines will also be carrying copies of the new browser software on their cover-mounted disks

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/>

■ Although Microsoft has yet to announce a new version for the Macintosh, the Insider's Mac-using readership (which at the last count amounted to just long-time Apple fan and solicitor Nicholas McFarlane-Watts and the staff of *Legal Week*, who are running a 30 plus iMac network) should note that earlier this year Microsoft launched a special Explorer 4.5 upgrade for the Macintosh.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ PUSH TECHNOLOGY FOR E-MAIL ?

MailPush UK is launching a new e-mail service designed to automatically notify internet users when there are new e-mail messages waiting for them to be collected off their ISP's (internet service provider) mail servers. According to managing director Philip Taylor, the service overcomes the problem of users having to periodically log on to the internet to check for mail, by automatically polling servers every 10 minutes for messages and then notifying the user through a range of communications media options.

MailPush is offering a one month's free trial, after which the service costs from £3.99 a month. The premium service includes a full range of notification options including off line to PC screen, SMS text to mobile phones and pagers, voice messages to phone and full message delivery to a fax. Call Megan Marshall on 0171 750 7100 for more details.

<http://www.mailpushuk.com>

■ LINK UPGRADE

The LINK legal information and e-mail service is offering users a free software download that will allow them to upgrade their "client" software to version 3.5.1 and access the new pay-as-you-go EBIS company reports service that is now available on the network. Reports are delivered in a PDF file format that can be read by Adobe Acrobat Reader.

■ LOOKING 4 LAWYERS ?

Look4 is a new company that is currently compiling a database, in the form of a searchable directory, of professional firms on the internet. The professions covered include: solicitors, accountants, surveyors and architects.

<http://www.look4.co.uk>

■ NETSCAPE NOW SUPPORTING LINUX

Netscape has announced it is delivering preview versions of its Directory Server and Messaging Server software for Linux, the increasingly popular "open source code" version of the Unix operating system. Netscape is predicting Linux will become a dominant platform in the ISP (internet service provider) and intranet/extranet server markets.

<http://home.netscape.com>

■ SPG ON THE WEB

The English Law Society's Sole Practitioners Group (SPG) now has a useful web site containing membership news, information and advice.

<http://www.spg.uk.com>

■ ROWE & MAW IN LLOYD'S LINK

Rowe & Maw has introduced an internet-based reports accessing service for its underwriting and broking clients in the Lloyd's and London insurance markets. The service, called Fastrack, will provide clients with 24 hours-a-day instant access to a wide variety of matter-specific, as well as general legal, information via a secure web site facility.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ NATIONAL LEGAL OFFICE

EXHIBITION - The three day event, sponsored by the *Law Society's Gazette*, at the Birmingham NEC is now in its second year. Although the format remains the same, a mixture of seminars, free CPD workshops, exhibition stands and online services, this year also sees a significant increase in the number of legal IT suppliers taking stands.

Along with the usual names, there will also be an Internet Café run by Lawyers Online and Corel showing the latest version of WordPerfect. The event opens on Tuesday 16th and closes on Thursday 18th March. Opening times: 10.00 to 18.00, except the final day when the doors close at 16.00. Admission free. For details or to register for tickets call Nationwide Exhibitions on: 0117 907 1000. Up-to-the-minute information can also be found on the exhibition web site.

<http://www.nwe.co.uk>

■ AIM SEMINARS - Legal IT supplier

AIM is running a series of seminars to promote its Windows NT based Evolution Client/Server case and PMS system. The dates are Redditch 16th March, Northampton 17th March, Bury St Edmunds 18th March and London 23rd March. Admission free. For details call Iquo Ema of AIM on: 01482 326971.

■ MINORITY LAWYERS 1999

CONFERENCE - One day conference at the Law Society's Hall in London on Saturday 20th March. Starts 9.00 with keynote speech by the Lord Chancellor Lord Irvine. Includes an IT clinic chaired by Insider editor Charles Christian. Admission fees from £99 +VAT. 4.5 CPD hours. For details call 0121 3355 0900.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SOS OPENS LONDON OFFICE

In order to meet the increasing volume of business from law firms in London and the South-East, Bath-based Solicitors Own Software has opened a London office at No.5 John Street, WC1, near Gray's Inn. The office, which will handle sales and training operations in the capital, is being headed up by Debbie Widdicombe, who was recently appointed a main board director of SOS. The phone number is: 0171 440 9710.

■ TFB SPEAKING TO USERS

Technology for Business (TFB) has started a roadshow series that over the next two months will be holding half-day (afternoon) seminars across the south of England to demonstrate its Partner for Windows practice management system and Dragons NaturallySpeaking speech recognition software. Admission is free, call Gareth Thomas of TFB on 01932 781120 for details.

■ ACE DUMPED BY BARRISTERS' SET

Last year started very badly for Applied Computer Expertise (ACE), with the company getting egg all over its face as it scrambled to disengage from the solicitors' software market in order to spend more time with customers at the Bar who were threatening to defect to the rival Meridian system. Sadly this year has also got off to a bad start, with Michael Fysh QC's No 8 New Square intellectual property set having just announced it is dropping ACE in favour of a Windows based system from Meridian. Although the chambers had been using the Unix version of the ACE Infinity practice management system, the set's IT committee opted for Meridian after ACE repeatedly put back the release date of a new Windows version of Infinity.

■ OYEZ XMAS CARDS RAISE FUNDS FOR SBA

The electronic forms-to-legal stationery group OyezStraker raised a total of £4355 for Solicitors Benevolent Fund as a result of its sponsorship of the SBA's 1998 Christmas card appeal. OyezStraker, which has sponsored the appeal for three years running, donated 7.5 pence for each charity Christmas card sold last year.

RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES

■ LASERFORM - TWO PRODUCT MANAGERS

Laserform Law is recruiting people for two management posts involving responsibility for the future development of the company's electronic legal forms and probate/trust case management product ranges. The positions, which can be London or Manchester-based, require candidates with a mixture of management, legal and IT skills. Send CVs to Barry Hawley-Green, Managing Director, Laserform Law, 9-11 Princess Street, Knutsford, Cheshire WA16 6BY.