

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

MANCHES TO ORDER KEYSTONE

Aldwych-based Manches is finalising negotiations to buy a Keystone practice management system. The new system will replace Manches' London Bridge Trial/400 accounts software and be integrated with the 50-partner firm's existing DOCS Open and Lotus Notes systems.

Keystone director Kaye Sycamore says that with the Manches order, plus two big Australian sites on the point of signing and a total of seven sites going "live" within the next three months, the company has turned the corner and is looking forward to "more good news and good results".

Although Keystone now employs 20 people in the UK and is currently in the process of recruiting more staff, the company is also talking to potential UK distributors and implementation partners. Sycamore believes there is a large demand for Keystone's integrated approach to practice management software and says the company has already been approached by several firms wanting to move away from their existing Elite plus Carpe Diem infrastructures.

To this end, over the next twelve months Keystone will launch a number of complementary modules covering law firm marketing activities, knowledge management and project/resource planning. The last of these is effectively a high value (rather than high volume) case management system (rumoured to be based on a Neil Cameron design) for handling project budgeting and milestones.

DIXONS LAUNCH ONLINE LEGAL SERVICE ON INTERNET

This Monday (26th) saw Dixons launch an online public legal service for the 1.3 million subscribers to its Freeserve free Internet access service.

Called Freeserve Desktop Lawyer, the service is based on the Rapidocs document assembly system that was developed by Epoch Software, itself originally an off-shoot of North London law firm Landau & Cohen. The system allows subscribers to buy, download from the Freeserve web portal and use a range of forms, deeds and documents designed to help with common legal problems.

The templates for these documents were drafted by a team of barristers at the 11 Stone Buildings set and the service will be backed up by a free helpline/referrals facility to a call centre manned by solicitors belonging to the LawNet national grouping of solicitors' practices.

For the background to the service see page 7

INTERFACE IN AT FIVE MORE FIRMS

Five more well-known London firms - S J Berwin, Bristows, Olswang, Memery Crystal and Travers Smith Braithwaite - have placed orders for the InterAction "relationship management" system from UK distributor Tikit.

Berwin Leighton, Lovell White Durrant and Lamport Bassitt in Southampton already use InterAction and the Insider understands three other "top ten" firms are currently looking at the software.

■ COMMENT

Last September the Insider predicted that relationship management systems would become the next big thing in legal software. And so it is proving - except for the moment InterAction seems to have the market to itself.

Yesterday (Tuesday) saw the UK launch of version 4.0 of InterAction. Along with additional functionality in the fields of marketing activities and mailing list management, version 4.0 also offers a new look and feel to the user interface, adopting a Microsoft Outlook approach and making greater use of hyperlinks.

CRIPPS HALL BACK IN THE MARKET ?

Cripps Harries Hall in Tunbridge Wells is once again looking for a new practice management system. One of the original users of Ushers' old U-Legal system, the firm has more recently been running AIM Evolution but is now reported to be considering a move to CMS Open.

THE INSIDER WEB SITE

Visit the Legal Technology Insider web site for up-to-the-minute news and hyperlinks to additional information, including a full listing of legal IT events.

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

PEOPLE AND PLACES

■ SOLICITEC SCOTLAND has recruited GARY SORLEY as a project manager, accounts specialist JANIE McDONALD and RICHARD HARVEY, a qualified solicitor just finishing an MSc in IT. One of the latest recruits to the development team at Solicitec's head office in Leeds is Java programmer PAUL BROWN.

■ Following its recent move to new offices in Finsbury Square, the main switchboard number for CMS DATA EUROPE has changed to 0171 786 5000.

■ JASON VAUGHAN-PHILLIPS has joined document management specialist KRAMER LEE & ASSOCIATES with responsibility for developing new sales opportunities in the legal market.

■ Congratulations to City law firms ALLEN & OVERY and NORTON ROSE who last week both picked up the QUEEN'S AWARD FOR EXPORT ACHIEVEMENT.

■ LOVELL WHITE DURRANT systems development manager Kevin Connell has reportedly been offered the job of IT director at MASONS.

■ Classical violinist STEPHANIE CHAMBERS, credits include work with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Welsh National Opera and Celine Dion, has joined PROFESSIONAL COMPUTER GROUP (PCG), where she will be working on IT training projects with law firms.

■ Legal publisher BUTTERWORTHS TOLLEY is to sponsor a Chair in Competition Law and Practice at NOTTINGHAM LAW SCHOOL. This will be the first time Butterworths Tolley has linked up with a major academic institution in this way. The post will be full-time and the appointee will deliver an inaugural lecture in Nottingham and London.

■ Following its move into the mid-sized law firm IT marketplace, where it now competes head-on with Axxia, Pilgrim and Norwel, ELITE INFORMATION SYSTEMS is actively recruiting for additional sales staff.

LAW SOCIETY ROLLS OUT 1999 IT SCHEME

The English Law Society has begun rolling out plans for the next phase of its *Software Solutions* annual guide to IT for smaller firms. The Law Society says the new edition, which will build upon the highly successful 1998/1999 guide, is expected to contain a wider range of products, more information on choosing and using IT systems, including a section providing assistance for sole practitioners and very small firms, and be self-financing.

Two weeks ago Chancery Lane sent out a letter to all the IT suppliers on its database inviting them to apply for inclusion in the scheme. The closing date for applications is the 14th May however over a dozen companies have already responded to the invitation. The Law Society will then evaluate the applications and finalise the list of "recognised suppliers" - the process includes independent market research - with a view to formally launching the 1999/2000 guide in October. Companies interested in participating should contact Gary Day on 0171 316 5516.

NEW WIP TAXATION MODULE

Technology for Business has launched a work-in-progress taxation module for firms using its Partner for Windows case and practice management software. The module complies with the new Inland Revenue WIP taxation rules.

SCL LOOKING FOR A ROLE ?

Faced with criticism that it has become tired, irrelevant, complacent, patronising and lost all sense of direction, the Society for Computers & Law (SCL) has embarked upon a thorough review of its objectives and operations. The Insider has learned that the options being considered include: changes to membership of the SCL ruling council, cutting back the role of the Bristol administrative office, and introducing measures to encourage more independent initiatives by local branches and special interest groups.

■ COMMENT

One senior SCL council member recently told the Insider that, given the number of non-lawyers now on the council, it might be necessary to change the organisation's name to the Society for Consultants & Law. There is also a view that the SCL has effectively been neutered by its deferential association with the legal "establishment". Ironically, while the SCL probably could regain credibility by reinventing itself as a campaigning body, championing such causes as public access to free online legal information or restricting government interference in the development of e-commerce and the Internet, the SCL's current charitable status precludes it from following such a course of action. But, all is not lost, the SCL has achieved something over the past twelve months - it now has a rinky-dink new logo.

SOLEX TO MOVE TO EARLS COURT

This year will be the last occasion on which the annual *Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition* (SOLEX) is held at its traditional home (it has been there since the early 1980s) of the Barbican Exhibition Centre in London. From next year Imark, the new owners of the show, will be moving the event to Earls Court.

■ COMMENT

As well as taking the brave step of shifting SOLEX away from its legal heartland (the organiser's own statistics show a strong City element - nearly one third of law firm visitors came from practices with 36 or more partners) Imark also appears to be ignoring exhibitor worries about the timing of SOLEX.

A number have already expressed concern to the Insider that this year's event, which takes place a fortnight later than usual on the 15th-to-17th June, leaves little time to follow-up hot leads from visitors before the legal world winds down for the long vacation. However in the year 2000, the event will be held even closer to the summer holiday season, during the week commencing 26th June.

Latest floor plans available to the Insider show there are still about a dozen stand sites, including the two large ground floor plots occupied by Axxia and Pilgrim in 1998, left unsold for this year's event.

RECORD RESULTS AT AXXIA

Axxia Systems has just announced record results for its 1998/99 financial year, with revenues up 20 percent to £10.8 million. The company has also completed its 200th Arista accounts installation and now has over 80 case management system users.

Managing director Stuart Holden says the company now has about a quarter of the UK's 300 largest firms among its user base, including 22 "top 100" firms. Turning to its current trading year, Holden says the company already has over £2 million-worth of orders on its books, including more than a dozen orders for the new Eiiion practice management system for smaller-to-mid-sized firms.

MIL MOVE INTO MANAGEMENT

Chattertons in Lincolnshire has awarded Management Interface Ltd (01992 788288) a contract to upgrade its wordprocessing operations to WordPerfect 8.0 running on a 64 PC WAN, with ISDN links between the firm's five offices.

MIL will also act as project managers for Chattertons, providing consultancy services and assisting the firm to implement new accounts and case management software supplied by Solicitec. MIL's Roger George says the company is winning an increasing amount of project management work involving the implementation of third-party systems.

DEALS AND TENDERS

■ CUFF ROBERTS in Liverpool has signed a contract worth £257,000 with SANDERSON SYSTEMS as part of a two stage project that will see the firm moving to a Windows NT hardware platform and installing Sanderson's Galaxy practice management system on Microsoft SQL Server.

■ MACNAIRS, which has offices in both Paisley and Glasgow, has become the fourth Scottish firm to place an order with recently incorporated SOLICITEC SCOTLAND. The system will initially be used to support the firm's conveyancing operations.

■ JAMES CHAPMAN & CO in Manchester has gone "live" with a 160 user site running PILGRIM SYSTEMS' LawSoft case and practice management system. In addition Cardiff-based HUGH JAMES, which has eight offices across South Wales, has placed an order for LawSoft to replace the firm's ageing RADIUS Legacy accounts system.

■ One of Northern Ireland's largest law firms CLEAVER FULTON RANKIN has just completed the implementation of a MILES 33 Precedent practice management system at its Belfast offices. Miles also supplied and installed new Y2K compliant hardware and networking systems, as well as a full suite of office automation products including e-mail, networked faxing and web access.

■ Hull-based IVESONS has awarded LINETIME a contract to assist in a significant upgrade of the firm's IT systems. The project includes the installation of Y2K compliant hardware plus Linetime's own accounts, case management and fee earner desktop software systems.

■ Three more law firms - PRETTYYS in Ipswich, KIMBELL & CO in Milton Keynes and KEELY BEEDHAM in Lichfield - have installed Corel WORDPERFECT 8.0. Keely Beedham chose WordPerfect to replace Microsoft WORD, while the other two were upgrades from WordPerfect 6.1.

NEW WOOLF FORMS AVAILABLE NOW

■ RULES FREE ON CD

Information for Lawyers (IFL) is making the new Civil Procedure Rules available free of charge on CD-Rom. To obtain a copy of the Infolaw/CPR CD either call Adam Blackstone on 0181 878 3033 or complete the online form on the company web site. There is also an optional quarterly update service, costing £25 each, covering practice directions and amendments to the Rules. The CD will run on Windows 3.1, 95/98 and NT.

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

■ WOOLF LAB FORMS ON WEB

Last Friday saw Capsoft UK post a new Woolf-compliant version of its Legal Aid Board forms onto the Internet. The forms, which were developed by Capsoft in conjunction with the English Law Society, are available free of charge and use the HotDocs document assembly software. Once downloaded from the web site (see below and note there is no "www" in the address) the forms can be saved and filled in on screen. Capsoft reckon the system can cut document completion times by up to 75 percent.

<http://lawsociety.hotdocs.co.uk>

■ NEW PRINTAFORM HELPLINE

Peapod Solutions has now issued an update to its PRINTAFORMS software containing a complete set of the Woolf County Court litigation forms. The update CD-Rom also contains a new set of Employment/Industrial Tribunal forms. Peapod has now established a dedicated helpline service for customers of its electronic legal forms products. The new number is 0181 606 7215.

■ INSIDER E-ZINES

Legal Technology Insider publishes a series of free current awareness e-mail newsletters (e-zines) providing news and comment on areas of legal practice. The titles are: *E-Business + Law*, *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

CONSULTANT DENIES CMS DEAL

Leading legal IT consultant Andrew Levison has reacted angrily to rumours that Grant Thornton UK (Levison is a Grant Thornton partner) has entered into an exclusive business relationship with CMS Data, the company behind the CMS Open practice management system.

Levison said the rumours, which appear to have been spread by a rival consultant, stem from an ambiguously worded announcement published on the CMS web site in the United States. This refers to the fact Grant Thornton is both a CMS Data user and carries out implementation projects for law firms wanting to install CMS Open.

According to Levison, the announcement is misleading because it is only the US arm of Grant Thornton that runs CMS Open - the UK side uses a recently acquired Star 2000 system to handle the firm's accounts and practice management routines. Furthermore, the information on the web site fails to make it clear that Grant Thornton US actually handles implementation work for all the major US legal systems - not just CMS but also its main rival Elite.

"Although some of our clients have asked us to handle project management and implementation work, until we are in a position to offer the service across a full range of products, it would clearly create a conflict of interest and jeopardise our reputation for impartiality to only offer the service to customers of just one supplier," said Levison. Levison also warned that Grant Thornton would, if necessary, consider legal action to compel CMS to correct the wording on the web site.

■ Two consultancies that are moving into implementation work are Professional Plus, which has been set up by former Keystone salesman Colin Morris - no relation to Peter Morris who is still with Keystone. And, Hilderbrandt International, which has been formed by the recent merger of Hodgart Consulting and the US legal consultancy Hildebrandt - this will be Hildebrandt's second attempt to establish a presence in the UK legal market.

WORDPERFECT HERE IN JUNE

The Corel Corporation has confirmed that WordPerfect Office 2000, which includes WordPerfect 9.0 - the latest version of its wordprocessing software, will be commercially available in the UK from 1st June. The full price for the standard version will be £265 (+ VAT). Existing users will be able to upgrade from just £127 (+ VAT) however Corel also has a new corporate licensing scheme offering recent purchasers of WordPerfect 8.0 a free upgrade to Office 2000.

■ The new suite includes one important change to its optional *voice powered* edition, namely Dragon Dictate has been dropped as the speech recognition software of choice and replaced with Philips' new FreeSpeech 2000 system. But please note that 128 Mb of RAM is the recommended minimum hardware specification for the voice power edition.

MIDDLE OF THE ROAD CAN BE DANGEROUS

Speaking at a recent conference, Linklater's IT director Andrew Taylor-Browne expressed surprise that rival firms had questioned the wisdom of Linklaters' decision to buy the Documentum document management system.

"Other firms describe Documentum as a 'Rolls Royce' product but from our point of view," said Taylor-Browne, "when you are building a global legal practice, you need a system that can support a global document management and know-how infrastructure."

Taylor-Browne added, gnomically: "I appreciate some firms may think it safer to buy a middle of the road system but, as Steve Jobs of Apple once pointed out, the middle of the road is a dangerous place to be driving your car."

■ The Documentum range, which now includes a growing number of products to support electronic commerce and interactive web applications, is available in the UK legal market via its official reseller Text Systems (0171 403 4033).
<http://www.documentum.com>
<http://www.textsys.co.uk>

BIRD & BIRD KESTREL READY TO FLY ON INTRANET

Following the success of an initial pilot project, over the next six months Bird & Bird will be rolling out its new intranet/extranet, code-named Kestrel, throughout its London, Hong Kong and Brussels offices.

The system, which will also allow remote access by fee earners and, in due course, direct access by clients, is based around a PC Docs/Fulcrum knowledge management system, with the design and implementation work handled by intranet consultancy Web Enabled Ltd (01920 463363). Subject to the usual security constraints, all information can be accessed from one browser-based search screen.

According to Bird & Bird head of IT services Kevin Mackay: "the main aim of the IT strategy was to establish an innovative environment whereby the firm and, in the future, clients can benefit from fast, efficient and easy access to information. The 'no barriers' policy will apply whether information is being sought internally or remotely and will encompass a variety of data repositories and file formats, including e-mail, online services, documents, SQL databases, web sites, NT and Novell file systems, MS Exchange and Lotus Notes."

Bird & Bird partner Morag Macdonald added: "Control and access to a large quantity and broad range of information is essential for the successful functioning of our type of legal advice capability. The solution constitutes a significant leap forward in information control, access and delivery. It will enable Bird & Bird to drive forward new information based legal services into the Millennium."

<http://www.webenabled.com>

TAXMAN INFLEXIBLE SO BOWHAWK FOLDS

Litigation support specialist Bowhawk has folded following a failure to negotiate a rescue deal with the taxman.

In a formal statement the company said: "The directors of Bowhawk Consulting Ltd are placing the company into voluntary liquidation as a result of HM Customs & Excise and the Inland Revenue's (the only major creditors of the company other than the directors) unwillingness to negotiate reasonable terms. The settlement of major litigation and the general problems small companies have with lengthy payment terms contributed to this position."

Managing director Nigel Murray told the Insider he has found the necessary funding to relaunch the business on a sounder basis and that in the meantime all current obligations to existing clients would be met. Nigel Murray can be contacted on 01252 716694.

■ COMMENT

Bowhawk clearly has its own problems to deal with but its difficulties do raise two more widely applicable questions: Firstly, if a company as long established in the litigation support industry as Bowhawk cannot survive, what are the prospects for some of the newer and/or smaller operations that already seem to exist on a hand-to-mouth basis?

And, secondly, perhaps the market for litigation support services in the UK is simply not big enough (as US operators trying to break into this market found to their cost in the early 1990s) to support so many suppliers?

G3 IN iMANAGE DEAL

CSE Systems, the UK distributor for Netright Technologies' iManage document management system (DMS), has appointed G3 Consulting as its new legal market "business partner".

■ Netright Technologies claims iManage is currently outselling competitive DMS offerings from PC Docs at a ratio of nearly 6 seats-to-1 in the US legal market and winning new customer sites at a rate of almost 3-to-1 over PC Docs.

<http://www.g3consulting.co.uk>

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ALL GONE UP IN SMOKE

One of the more controversial new web sites belongs to Brown & Williamson Tobacco, the third largest cigarette manufacturer in the USA. The company, which is a subsidiary of British American Tobacco and makes the Carlton and Lucky Strike brands, warns on its web site that "The evidence is sufficient to determine that smoking causes disease".

This may sound a candid admission but what is concerning tobacco industry critics is that this could be a pre-emptive legal strategy to restrict any liability for lawsuits brought in the future by the next generation of claimants suffering from smoking-related illnesses.

<http://www.brownandwilliamson.com>

■ NEW HOME FOR VIRGO

Irwin Associates, the developer of the Virgo ultra low-cost legal accounts system, now has a new web address.

<http://www.compassion-in-business.co.uk>

■ SPEECHLY GETS RETRO LOOK

Speechly Bircham has launched its first web site. It contains plenty of disclaimers but little news and suffers from a design that looks two years behind the times.

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

■ BANKING ON THE WEB

Bankers Almanac is offering two weeks' free access to its new web-based database of global banking information.

<http://www.bankersalmanac.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

XML THE FUTURE OF ELECTRONIC FILING ?

Utah's Third District Court this month became the first court in the United States to accept legal filings via the Internet using XML and digital signatures. The electronic filings (e-filings) are the result of a joint venture involving the Third District Court, the Utah Court Administrative Office and the Salt Lake District Attorney's Office.

The first phases of the project apply to the 30,000 criminal filings the court handles each year but in the future it will include general civil and small claims cases. The system is expected to save thousands of hours of work a year and allow documents to be filed on a 24 hours a day basis, while significantly reducing the potential for errors and enhancing the public's access to court documents.

According to the US Center for State Courts Technology "XML is the future of electronic filing". The iLumin Corporation supplied the IT systems to support the project.

<http://www.ilumin.com>

LOL TO SUPPLY CONTENT

Lawyers Online (LOL) has appointed Insider editor Charles Christian as its first publishing director. His role will focus on the development of editorial content, including news and information channels, to help establish the service as the independent one-stop web portal for the legal world.

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

NEW LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES GO ONLINE

Rather like London buses, there is never an online legal information service available for local government lawyers when you want one - but then suddenly two come along at the same time.

First off the mark, at the end of March, was Centaur with its *Local Government Interactive* service. This contains a number of services, including legislation, the latest Lawtel case reports and local government stories published in *The Lawyer*, as well as access to an "interactive community" discussion forum and a fully searchable database of public sector legal vacancies. For a seven day free trial of the service, call 0171 970 4818.

One week later Butterworths launched its rival *Local Government Direct* service. This also contains the full text of statutory materials and an "online community" discussion forum, plus access to the *Butterworths Local Government Reports* series. Butterworths also offer a rolling news service supplied by the *Local Government Chronicle* LGCNet online information bureau. For a seven day free trial of this service, call Karen Farman on 0845 608 1188.

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

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

DESKTOP LAWYER SERVICE GOES ONLINE

Continued from front page

Epoch's legal director Richard Cohen first dabbled his toes in the "commoditised" legal product market four years ago when his company began distributing templates for legal documents on the CD-Roms mounted on the covers of computing magazines. Recognising that CD was an interim technology, Epoch then went on to refine the underlying systems to create a service that could be accessed by the public via the Internet

The first manifestation of this is the Freeserve service launched last Monday however the same approach is also being piloted in other markets, including online insurance broking and publishing. Cohen says the combination of an e-commerce engine and the Rapidocs document assembly software would let legal publishers sell their law reports, commentaries and precedents forms by the individual form, statute or even chapter. In addition, Epoch offers a generic version of the service called DirectLaw. This provides the e-commerce mechanism to allow any law firm to sell and deliver commoditised legal services via the web.

■ COMMENT

Rapidocs' nearest competitor is Capsoft's HotDocs system. Epoch claims the latest enhancements to Rapidocs, which include an improved export to Word facility, make it the superior product but it should be noted that it is still not possible to export directly to WordPerfect.

By coincidence, the IT research group Ovum this week publishes a new report *Next Generation Call Centres: CTI, Voice and the Web* which suggests call centres have an important role to play supporting the web as a self-service medium for delivering e-commerce and business solutions.

But, while Epoch may have got this side of the equation right, we are not so sure about the overall business model. Richard Cohen is a follower of the latent legal market theory and believes products like Freeserve Desktop Lawyer will make legal services accessible to a section of the public who currently do not use lawyers.

Here on the Insider we do not believe in the latent legal market (or the tooth fairy) and suspect online legal services will only expand at the expense of conventional legal service providers. This view is supported by a number of recent independent studies by Internet market analysts, including Durlacher and Jupiter.

These suggest the overall trend is for "cannibalisation". Thus, Internet use may be growing but far from expanding the overall size of the market, it is merely stealing market share from traditional media and business outlets. In other words, for every member of the public that signs up for Freeserve Desktop Lawyer, that is one less client that will be coming through the doors of a high street law firm.

<http://www.directlaw.com> <http://www.freeserve.net>
<http://www.epochsoftware.co.uk>

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ **TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS SEMINARS** - Half-day (afternoon) seminars across the south of England to demonstrate TFB's latest software. The next seminar takes place in Ashford on 29th April. Admission is free, call Gareth Thomas on 01932 781120 for details.

■ **INTRANETS & KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT** One day conference on 6th May at the Chiswell Street Brewery in London. Speakers from Eversheds, Bird & Bird, Sweet & Maxwell and Masons. Fee £525 + VAT. To book call Osney Media on 0171 880 0000.

■ **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION** Two day conference on 11th & 12th May at the Stakis St Ermins hotel in London. Speakers include Clive Whitfield-Jones, David Andrews and Professor Stephen Mayson. Fee from £950 + VAT. To book, call Ark Conferences on 0181 785 2700.

■ **AXXIA IT FOR BUSINESS SEMINARS** - A new series of product promotional seminars across England. Starts in Leeds on 11th May. Admission is free, call Claire Jones of Axxia on 01189 602 602 to reserve a place.

■ **KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT WITHIN LAW FIRMS** One day conference on 20th May at the London Marriott Hotel. Now in its third iteration, this is the major UK know-how event for lawyers, with a top line-up of speakers. No consultants plugging their services, just law firm know-how directors passing on tips and practical advice. Fee £445 + VAT. To book, call Centaur Conferences on 0171 970 4770.

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WINDOWS 2000 - MORE DELAYS TO COME ?

The long wait for Microsoft's new Windows 2000 (aka NT 5.0) operating system may be drawing to a close but the last few weeks have still seen more unexpected twists and turns in the saga.

Microsoft has begun shipping the final beta version of the system and is still on target for an October 1999 launch of the finished product. Unfortunately, the "finished" product will initially be missing key management tools for handling the Intellimirror software installation utility and the Active Directory system. Apparently Windows 2000 service packs scheduled for the spring of 2000 will contain this functionality but until then users wanting an Active Directory facility would be better advised to buy or stay using the rival Novell Directory Services system.

And then there is the question of memory. Microsoft is recommending a minimum of 64Mb of RAM for Windows 2000 but both Compaq and Hewlett-Packard say 128Mb is actually a more realistic figure.

■ Microsoft's equally delayed Office 2000 software suite is scheduled for a UK retail market launch on 8th June.

COMPUTER LORE

■ ALL NIGHT LONG AT ACRONYM CORNER

We have all heard of DTP - desktop publishing - but now there is a fresh acronym to contend with, courtesy of Dibb Lupton Alsop. According to a recent article in the *Guardian* newspaper, Dibbs' Leeds office is employing a new breed of nocturnal paralegal: the DPT or "document production technician". Operating 6.30 pm to 2.30 am, and 4.00 pm to 12.00 am shifts, DPTs work in a centralised document production unit churning out most documents longer than three pages for fee earners throughout the firm. Shorter documents remain the preserve of conventional secretarial staff but "evening" work can pay as much as £2000 per year more than day work. And, as one DPT points out: "With the blinds down it feels like a normal day, except, of course, that it's actually the middle of the night."

■ THE YAWNING OF AN AUSPICIOUS DATE

Amid all the publicity surrounding the Woolf civil justice reforms (or YAWNS - "Yet Another Woolf News Story") is it pure coincidence the Lord Chancellor's Department chose the 26th of April as the date on which to go "live" with its revolutionary new procedures? Cast your minds back 13 years and you will find the 26th of April was also the date on which Ukrainian scientists decided to go "live" with a revolutionary new operating procedure for the Chernobyl nuclear reactors. Let's hope the courts do not enjoy a similar meltdown. Meanwhile, the latest betting is that we will be lucky if we see the Court Service's own IT systems to support Woolf up and running before 26th April 2001.