

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

ALL CHANGE FOR CMS AS PC DOCS REFOCUS

In a move that had been expected, Hummingbird has agreed to sell the CMS/Data Corporation - the CMS Open legal practice management software subsidiary of the recently-acquired PC Docs Group - to Solution 6 Holdings of Australia for US\$30 million.

Hummingbird Communications describes the deal as "a logical progression in the company's plan to focus on the enterprise information portal (EIP) market", in other words corporate know-how and document management technology. To this end the DOCS Open and Fulcrum document and knowledge management products remain with Hummingbird and will continue to be sold by PC Docs.

Solution 6 is an acquisitive company that has been involved in the IT world since the early 1980s. Although it has a global reputation for its systems for the accountancy market, it has also been involved in the legal sector - a number of City firms used its CABS-Law software when Wang was still their predominant hardware platform.

More recently Solution 6 has become an advocate of the web-driven application server provider (ASP) concept - an approach that looks like becoming the next "big thing" in law office technology with several suppliers, including CMS and Keystone, already developing ASP products.

■ Within the last couple of days CMS has launched a new OmniLedger module for multinational firms and begun bundling the FRx visual reporting system with CMS Open.

ABC DONE DEBT COLLECTING ?

Despite the fact it still makes a healthy profit, Addleshaw Booth & Co says it plans to close its computerised debt collection operations. In a recent interview, reported on the *Butterworths News Direct* online service, ABC managing partner Mark Jones said research had shown that no debt collection business ever returned more than a 15 percent profit and, with margins being squeezed, it made sense to "prune" the business so the firm could concentrate on "cutting edge, high value brain work, not bulk work".

The firm will continue to offer computerised conveyancing and also plans to develop new automated services as "over time products evolve from brain work to commodities".

■ Withy King has launched a computerised conveyancing service in the West of England. Called "Complete", it has been designed to combine the benefits of automation with a personalised service for clients and is based on case management software supplied by Solicitors Own Software.

BAR SETS TARGETS FOR GETTING ONLINE

The Bar Council has launched an ambitious campaign to get the Bar online.

According to a list of recommendations published last month, the Bar would like every barrister to have and be able to use a PC for wordprocessing and Internet access as soon as possible. By the end of the year every set of chambers should be connected to the Internet and accessible by e-mail. And, by this time next year every individual barrister should have an Internet e-mail address. The deadlines are strictly voluntary recommendations.

Y2K - DON'T PANIC

With just 78 bug fixing days left until the business world closes down for the Christmas and Millennium holiday break of Friday 24th December, this autumn the Insider will be running regular reports on Y2K compliance news.

For Y2K news and book offer see page 5

MORE REASONS TO VISIT THE WEB SITE

The Insider site has two new features:

■ A round-up of the day's latest legal headlines via a news "ticker". This links through to the *Butterworths News Direct* service where you can read the full story. (This feature is currently only supported on Internet Explorer browsers.)

■ And, with more and more members of the new media world accessing the site, the Insider has been invited to join the *Wall Street Journal* Interactive Edition affiliate programme and now carries the latest business and financial headlines.

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PEOPLE AND PLACES

■ CLIFFORD CHANCE's recent appointment of KPMG partner Dr BRIAN COLLINS as its new director of systems integration, has fuelled speculation that the firm is finalising an IT strategy for its forthcoming global merger with ROGERS & WELLS in the USA and PÜNDER VOLHARD WEBER & AXSTER in Germany. Although Clifford Chance currently runs bespoke PMS software, it has evaluated the CMS Open system which is already in use or being installed by Pünder and Rogers & Wells.

■ E-business specialist QUIDNUNC has moved to new premises at The Shoe Factory, 26-28 Paddenswick Road, London W6 0UB. Phone 020 8600 5000.
<http://www.quidnunc.com>

■ MITCH GROSSBACH, international business development director for INTERFACE SOFTWARE, the company behind the InterAction system, has begun an 18 month assignment in the UK. Along with client liaison, he will be responsible for "anglicising" the system so it handles salutations, phone codes and similar features in a way that is more acceptable to UK lawyers.

■ LASERFORM has established a dedicated Woolf hotline to handle enquiries relating to the new Civil Justice forms. Phone SARA WALKER on 01925 750000 or e-mail:
woolf@laserform.co.uk

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Try LTI-Net, the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. Available in an HTML file format, it can be accessed via a subscriber-only web site or delivered as an e-mail attachment. It comes complete with all hyperlinks and is designed for firms wanting to access the newsletter across corporate portals, intranets and Lotus Notes databases or people who just want to be able to read and print it from the desktop. LTI-NET subscribers also have access to an archive of back copies of the newsletter. Subscription rates start at £135. For a free trial copy e-mail: info@legaltechnology.co.uk

GOODBYE OLD STYLE CASE MANAGEMENT ?

As part of a new "strategic alliance" Hummingbird Communications, the Canadian parent of PC Docs, has just agreed to embed BEI-Metastorm's e-work collaborative workflow software within its own market leading DOCS Open knowledge and document management systems.

■ COMMENT - Although on the face of it just another dry piece of corporate news, BEI insiders say this could be the beginning of the end for conventional case management software which, they suggest, are frequently little more than over-priced diary-linked document assembly systems.

By adding the workflow functionality and flexibility of the e-work system to an existing know-how and document management infrastructure, it is claimed law firms will have all the tools they need to rapidly build and deploy automated business processes for a fraction of the price currently being asked for case management software. Time will tell whether this view is embraced by the marketplace.

<http://www.bei-metastorm.com>

NEW CHAIR FOR LSSA

Neil Ewin, the chairman of Solicitec Computer Systems, has become the new chair of the UK's Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA). Ewin says he hopes to broaden the association's brief to build better relationships between members and other legal IT suppliers on matters of common interest, including escrow agreements and working with consultants. Ewin is also seeking to increase the frequency of LSSA meetings, which he believes could have "tremendous value" as a networking opportunity.

■ The other committee members are Tony Landes of Quill, Roger Jackson of JCS, Alan Richardson of Norwel and Alan Hodgkinson of Sanderson. Roger Hancock (01789 296096) is the secretary.

WP TIPS, HELP AND ADVICE

■ WORDPERFECT WEB SITES

Two new web sites have gone live containing WordPerfect tips, advice, links and downloads. The Office Community site (note use of upper case) is run by Corel, while the links site was created by US WordPerfect enthusiast Paul Merrell.

<http://www.OfficeCommunity.com>

<http://www.wpwin.com/links.html>

■ PUTTING WORD TO WORK

Software applications consultancy Kutana Ltd (01235 227434) is to run a series of one day basic and advanced development training courses between this October and March 2000 on getting the most out of Microsoft Word. Topics to be covered will include using VBA and the VB editor plus the creation of interactive templates.

KEYSTONE ENTERS IRISH MARKET

Ireland's largest law firm A & L Goodbody, which has over 220 fee earners, has placed a £750,000 order for a new practice management system to be supplied by Keystone Solutions. Managing partner Frank O'Riordan said he saw technology as a way of delivering a competitive advantage.

Neil Cameron advised on the selection process (CMS and Elite were also short-listed) and implementation will be handled by Keystone staff and Professional Plus.

■ AIM-listed Keystone has just published its preliminary results for the year to 31st March 1999. Although these show a pre-tax loss of £2.4 million, compared with a loss of £0.8 million for the previous year, turnover nearly quadrupled to £1.6 million and prospects for the coming year are good. Keystone has taken four major orders in the first four trading months, with the result that turnover has already exceeded last year's total; signed an implementation deal with Deloitte Touche for the Pacific Rim; and has a range of web-enabled systems due for launch later this year.

AXXIA MOVING INTO DISASTER RECOVERY SERVICES ?

Axxia Systems is reported to be about to move into offering disaster recovery services from a new purpose-built centre in Sheffield. The service will include facilities, such as the regular validation of back-up tapes, of interest to a wide range of law firms including users of rival systems. Axxia is expected to launch the service in October but will be previewing it to user group members later this month.

EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS NEWS

■ NEW DATE FOR SCL SHOW

The Society for Computers & Law has moved the date of its "Towards 2000" conference and exhibition to Wednesday 1st December, giving it the distinction of being the UK's last major legal IT event of the 20th Century. Appropriately enough, the final session of the day deals with last minute Y2K preparations. For details call the SCL on 01179 237393.

■ SOLEX NOT PUBLISHING JUNE FIGURES

Breaking with established tradition Imark, the new owners of the SOLEX Solicitors & Legal Office Exhibition, will not be publishing attendance figures for this June's event at the Barbican. Event manager Nicola Bateman says it is not company practice to publish visitor numbers. Nationwide, which runs the rival Solicitors National Legal Office event at the Birmingham NEC, reports having 3029 visitors in March this year, a 27 percent increase on 1998's figures, and is anticipating 4000 visitors for its March 2000 event.

See Legal IT Diary Dates on page 7

DEALS AND TENDERS

■ BRAY & BRAY in Leicester has ordered a new case and practice management system from TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS. The firm will run TFB's Partner for Windows software across a 90-user NT network. TFB won the contract in a four-way competition with AIM, AXXIA and AVENUE. Bray & Bray previously ran a SOVEREIGN system.

■ The LORD CHANCELLOR'S DEPARTMENT has confirmed that SMITH BERNAL has been reappointed to provide reporting and transcription services to the civil and criminal divisions of the Court of Appeal and Crown Office list until 2002, extendable until 2004.

■ BOVY TECHNOLOGIES has been awarded a contract by BT to provide its Courtview electronic trial presentation system for a pending case BT is involved with. This will be the second time BT has used Courtview in litigation - on the previous occasion BT's lawyers estimated the system reduced the trial time by three weeks and reduced costs by £80,000.

■ SELLERS LEGAL SYSTEMS recently launched Legal Eyes litigation support software is being used by Alun Jones QC to prepare his case in R -v- Duckenfield & Murray, the criminal trial arising out of the Hillsborough stadium disaster that is scheduled to start next year.

■ The LAND REGISTERS of NORTHERN IRELAND has awarded BT's systems integration division SYNTEGRA a contract to create a new electronic land registration system. Called LandWeb, the service will open up the registry to lawyers and lending institutions via a secure extranet. The deal is funded by an unusual application of the PFI private finance initiative, with Syntegra meeting the cost but in return obtaining a fee each time the system is used over the course of the 12 year contract.

■ WRAGGE & CO in Birmingham has signed a practice-wide licence deal with CAPSOFT UK to use HotDocs software to automate some of its precedent and document assembly operations.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ NEW FILING MODULE

Jordans (0117 929 3777) has introduced an electronic filing module for its PCSec 32bit company secretarial software. The new module permits the electronic transmission to Companies House of the information contained on paper forms 287, 288a, 288b, 288c and 363.

■ BUSINESS BOOMING AT LFI

Group chairman Frank Varela reports that Longbridge International's legal IT recruitment division LFI Technology (the division changed its name earlier this year) is enjoying booming business with turnover already up £300,000 on last year's target. The division, which is now headed by Wendy Phillips, has also increased in size to seven consultants, making it the largest in the market.

■ NEW AMICUS RESELLER

Irwin Associates (020 7237 6356) has been appointed an authorised UK reseller for the Amicus Attorney legal desktop system. Irwin Associates will also shortly be introducing an interface between Amicus and its own Virgo low-cost legal accounts software.

■ LINDON WOOD DIVERSIFIES

The Liverpool-based Lindon Wood IT and management consultancy has diversified into the expert witness field with the acquisition of Medico-Legal Reports Ltd. Founder Terry Lindon says that with the exception of LAFQAS (Legal Aid Franchise Quality Assurance Standard) work, the conventional legal IT consultancy business has gone very quiet in recent weeks, as firms have begun putting all new projects on hold until after the millennium holiday break.

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

■ PUTTING A PRICE ON TIME

Software house Alternative Team (020 7359 3595) has released pricing details of The Time, its new stand-alone time recording system for legal aid practices. The entry-level price is £350 for a single user licence but prices fall to £175 per concurrent user for 51+ users. The product, now being beta tested, is scheduled to be launched later this year.

NEW BROOM TO PUT CUSTOMERS FIRST

She may have only been in the job a few weeks but Sweet & Maxwell's new managing director Wendy Beecham is determined to shake-up the UK legal publishing world and particularly its attitude towards customers.

Although all her working career has been spent in North America - her previous post was as a vice president of the US web-based legal information service Westlaw - Beecham is adamant she is "here for the long run". (In fact she was born in the UK and still has family here.)

Rather more pertinently, having worked on both sides of the industry, in publishing and as a librarian, she is conscious that Sweet & Maxwell needs to rethink its approach to the market by paying far more attention to actual customer needs and the way services are delivered, rather than what publishers think they need.

Beecham says she is also keen to redress any perceived problems and concedes that publishers have so far failed to convince the market they should pay more for electronic products because they contain an added value element. Interestingly Beecham admits that Sweet's recent "rush into CD publishing may not have been the wisest move" and thinks that bundling CDs together with books is potentially harmful as it devalues both media.

Turning to the future, with a reputation as the woman who pulled West Publishing into the Internet age, the expectation within the industry is that Beecham's primary role in the UK is to help Sweet & Maxwell finally get its Internet publishing act together. For obvious reasons she is not giving any commercial secrets away save to say that Sweet's will be launching a major primary law Internet publishing initiative in the autumn and that the pricing structure will appeal to all types and size of legal practice.

EMPLOYMENT LAW SECTOR TURNS COMPETITIVE

The world of online employment law news and case reports has taken a competitive turn with the launch of CCH New Law's new *Employment Law Service* providing stiff competition for the Law Society's budget-priced CD plus online *Employment Law on a Disc* service. CCH (01869 872469) is offering one month's free trial of the service.

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

■ The last few weeks have seen the launch of two new free law reporting sites. The Employment Appeal Tribunal is publishing the full text of all new judgments and the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting has unveiled a trial version of a new daily case notes service, containing summarised reports of House of Lords, Court of Appeal, High Court and European Court of Justice decisions.

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

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

DOCS WINS AWARD FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IT

For the third year running, PC Docs has won a *Microsoft Industry Solution Award*. However, this time the company was placed first in the "Best Publish and Search Solution" category for a novel web-based knowledge management application installed at the European Court of Human Rights and Directorate of Human Rights.

Built around the company's DOCSFulcrum software, HUDOC acts as a central document repository for human rights services and a portal to all judgments and decisions made by the Court. Although the site was created primarily for the benefit of the Council of Europe's 41 states, it is also publicly accessible at no charge to end users.

■ The site offers simple and advanced search forms, the ability to retrieve documents in French and/or English and displays all meta data with the full text.

<http://www.dhcour.coe.fr/hudoc/>

SPECIAL HALF PRICE OFFER TO INSIDER SUBSCRIBERS

The Year 2000 will soon be upon us, and although many law firms have already taken action to avoid the effects of the millennium bug, others have yet to assess what their risks are and how to tackle them. Could you say, hand on heart, that your firm has done everything necessary?

Legal Technology Insider has negotiated a half price discount worth £10 with Law Society Publishing on *Year 2000 Compliance - the lawyer's guide to surviving the millennium bug* by Charles Christian. To order, complete the special form below and then clip out or send a photocopy to the address below to obtain your discount. This offer is available on mail orders only, but Law Society Publishing has agreed to send this offer CARRIAGE FREE.

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Y2K NEWS IN BRIEF

■ Better known for its anti-virus products, McAfee Software has launched a new version of its Office 2000 suite which includes a Y2K survival kit. This includes a database of over 5000 applications with known year 2000 issues and a facility to check Windows date formats, to ensure the full long date format (mm/dd/yyyy) is being used. The software should retail for around £41.99.

■ According to Keith Vaz, the junior minister at the Lord Chancellor's Department, over 93 percent of Y2K compliance work for Crown Courts is complete and magistrates' courts are only a few percent behind. The LCD is confident the risk factor will be further reduced from this month when new business continuity (ie contingency) plans are in place.

■ The UK's official Y2K watchdog ACTION 2000 has warned business to recheck the millennium compliance of software applications following reports that in recent weeks some suppliers of packaged products have rephrased or qualified the wording of their Y2K disclaimers. Microsoft Word 97 and Excel 95 are two of the products named.

■ Bond Pearce, which has six offices throughout the South-West of England, has been commended by ACTION 2000 for its approach to its Y2K compliance projects. The firm estimates it has spent approximately £115,000 on system replacements. Although much of this related to upgrade work that was already scheduled, following the 1997 merger with Hephherd Winstanley & Pugh, the process did throw up one important anomaly. Namely staff would have been locked out of the offices in January 2000 because the building access ID card system used non-compliant embedded chips.

■ In Dallas, Sage has agreed to settle class action litigation involving claims about the Y2K readiness of its Timeslips software. The settlement provides free upgrades to users of Timeslips Version 6 or earlier. Full details are on the web.

<http://www.sageus.com>

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ The BIRD & BIRD site now has a section providing practical advice and suggestions on the construction of web site disclaimers, protecting copyright and trademarks and how to bring disclaimers to the attention of web site visitors.

<http://www.twobirds.com/library/internet/disc.htm>

■ Nigel Williams, the IT manager of CARTWRIGHTS in Bristol, has set up a free e-mailing list to provide a general forum and encourage the exchange of information, tips and advice between people involved in the use and supply of IT services within the UK legal market. Anyone interested in joining the list should send a blank e-mail to:

uklit-subscribe@egroups.com

■ On 26th July 1999, section 29 of the Family Law Act 1996 came into effect. Under this provision, which is being piloted with the Legal Aid Board in several parts of the country, applicants will not qualify for legal aid unless they first see a mediator. To address this issue London-based THE FAMILY LAW CONSORTIUM has designed its web site to include an online referral facility so solicitors can organise immediate appointments with family mediators. TFLC say the process could be further streamlined if the LAB would accept S29 mediation legal aid forms via e-mail.

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

■ East London law firm SYKES ANDERSON has launched a web site containing free advice and guidance for litigants in person. For litigants needing some legal assistance, the firm has unbundled its services to provide ad-hoc "pay as you sue" facilities, including a telephone advice line. As well as a full range of conventional legal services, the firm also offers fixed fee services.

<http://www.sykesanderson.com>

■ The LEGAL PUBLISHING COMPANY, which produces newsletters for a number of local law societies and associations, is now offering web site design services. For details phone Ian Lock on 01782 635664.

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

FREESERVE LEGAL GIVEAWAY SUCCESS

Epoch Software report that the recent free-legal-documents promotion on the Freeserve Desktop Lawyer web site was a runaway success with, at its peak, 1200 documents a day being downloaded from the Internet.

Thanks in part to the publicity generated by comments by the Roman Catholic Church to the effect that the service was "repellent", over 300 people downloaded the free DIY divorce kit during the first week of the campaign.

■ COMMENT - Richard Cohen, Epoch's legal director (and a former solicitor in private practice - **see also back page**) said one of the more worrying aspects to emerge from the Freeserve Desktop Lawyer exercise was the number of members of the public who felt they had been overcharged by conventional legal service providers.

The most extreme example was a businessman who could not understand how his former solicitor had been allowed to charge him £1500 for a document, when he was able to locate exactly the same material on the web for just £75. Cohen says that on average Freeserve Legal Desktop rates are about one-fifth of the prices being charged by High Street firms for almost identical work.

■ Tarlo Lyons has announced that it is working on its own web-based legal document production service. Using a bespoke software application called ScaffoldIT, the service will offer an alternative approach to Epoch's system in that it does not require the user to first download special player software. One of the people behind the Tarlo Lyons project is partner John Mawhood, one of the original developers of the old LIX Legal Information eXchange system.

INSURE YOUR WEB SITE

The Hiscox insurance group (020 7448 6000) has launched what it says is the UK's first comprehensive "cyberliability" policy covering the full range of risks businesses face when they establish an Internet presence, including: damage caused by hackers, cyberfraud, the inadvertent spread of viruses to customers, infringement of foreign law and defamation claims arising from employee e-mail gossip.

Commenting on the scheme, Hiscox underwriter Robert Goldhawk said: "Companies are often unprepared for the additional complications a web site creates, such as the need to comply with different marketing and copyright laws worldwide. There are now virtual ambulance chasers trawling the web for technical legal infringements in order to initiate litigation."

■ By coincidence, Bristol law firm Lawrence Tucketts has just completed a survey of UK web sites and concluded that more than half break the law. Common faults include omitting the name and address of the business where payment is received before goods are supplied and failing to give consumers a seven day cooling-off period where a contract is made away from business premises.

WEB ACCESS MOVE

Manchester firm Horwich Farrelly has commenced a project to offer its clients direct access via a web browser interface. From early next year, when the firm's new Solicitec Solcase Online software goes live, clients will be able to access selected case management records through an Internet link. The firm is also using Manchester web designers XTML to upgrade its web site and Internet access facilities.

A WEB MASTER REPLIES

In the latest instalment of our ongoing debate on law firm web design, James Hodgkinson, whose company Virtual Light International has developed web sites for several law firms, including Pannone & Partners and Alexander Harris, has this to say about the use of technologies such as Macromedia Flash...

"As you may be aware, there are a vast number of legal web sites, many of which feature little in the way of attention grabbing features. When considering how best to publish the Pannone site, we took the view that we needed to create a site which would grab the users' attention and encourage them to navigate the site. To achieve this aim, we decided to author the site using Macromedia Flash.

"Macromedia is the tool used to create many of the more innovative sites on the Internet. At this stage it is often found on the sites of larger companies (including Reebok, Disney, Shell and Novell) who have tried to move into a new style of publishing their material. Microsoft has also used Macromedia extensively throughout its web sites since 1996 and ships the software as standard with the Internet Explorer browser.

"Since launching the Pannone site we have received a great deal of positive feedback from users and have been approached by other firms who felt the approach Pannone had taken put them far ahead of the many mundane legal sites. The navigation on site is very easy and download speeds, even with a 28.8 kbps modem are far quicker than traditional HTML sites.

"We chose to implement Macromedia only when the long term future and expansion of the product was guaranteed. The software will grow immensely over time and is by no means a passing trend. In the same way that people will spend money on new digital TVs, they will spend the average of 45 to 60 seconds required to download Macromedia for free (in the event the software is not already pre-installed with the browser.)

"The passage of time will show that Pannone are simply adopting a technology that will infiltrate a very large percentage of all web sites over the next few years."

■ By the end of July nearly 170 million copies of the Flash player software had been downloaded from the web. The latest version, Flash Player 4, was launched in August and can be downloaded free of charge from the Macromedia site.

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

<http://www.macromedia.com>

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ SEPTEMBER 22 & 23, LONDON
Improving Profitability Conference and Workshop, Lord's Cricket Ground. Speakers include Ian Dinwiddie of Allen & Overy on using IT to improve profitability. Fees from £447 per day. Call Centaur on 0207 970 4770.

■ SEPTEMBER 23 & 24, STRATFORD
Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) Autumn Conference, the Moat House Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon. Along with a seminar session on "Making the most of your PC", there will also be a one-day exhibition. There are a variety of conference packages available for delegates. Call Marlene Lord of APIL on 0115 958 0585.

■ SEPTEMBER 29, LONDON - CPR in Practice, Forum Hotel SW7. One day conference on the new Civil Procedure Rules, litigation, case management and the role of IT. Fees from £499 (+VAT). Call QDOS on 020 7440 8920.

■ OCTOBER 9, LONDON - Bar Council 1999 Conference & Exhibition, the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre. Call Blair Communications on 020 7483 8411.

■ OCTOBER 13-to-15, GLENEAGLES, SCOTLAND - The Legal IT Forum 1999. New invitation-only event being staged by *Legal Week* to provide law firm IT directors and systems suppliers with a mixture of formal conference sessions and informal networking opportunities. Call on 020 7566 5612 for brochure.

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COMPUTER LORE

■ LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

At the beginning of August Epoch Software, the company behind the Freeserve Desktop Lawyer service, raised £1 million in a private placement organised by investment bankers Durlacher. So has this move made Epoch's founders - Richard and Graham Cohen - two of the UK's more successful Internet entrepreneurs? Well, it did for about a month until one of the Durlacher team happened to notice a web site Richard's son Benjamin had built.

Called Jewish Net, it is a community site for people "who see Judaism not only as a religion but also as a way of life" and effectively serves as Jewish *Yellow Pages*, complete with its own online "CyberRabbi". Begun initially as a hobby, it subsequently developed into a business which Durlacher estimate could be worth as much as £5 million. Durlacher is now advising Epoch on the acquisition of the site as a commercial venture - and Benjamin has put his name down for a Porsche.

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

■ IT WAS THIRTY YEARS AGO TODAY

So, still trying to come to grips with all this new-fangled Internet stuff? Well, here is a chilling thought - last weekend was the 30th anniversary of the origins of the Internet when two mainframes, funded via the US Defence Department's Advanced Research Projects Agency, managed to communicate with each other via a modem the size of a fridge-freezer. And so was born ARPAnet, the antecedent of today's global Internet.

■ RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME

Since its launch in June, Pannone & Partners has been busily expanding the volume of news stories and articles on its web site. Particularly timely was a posting at the end of July detailing everything you need to know about buying a property in France. This was doubly topical as it coincided both with the start of the holiday season and the launch of a new Peter Mayle book *Encore Provence*, which should inspire a whole new generation with the dream of buying a home in the sun.

<http://www.pannone.com>

■ RIGHT NAME, RIGHT TIME

Full marks to case management software specialists Eclipse Legal Systems for not overlooking a promotional opportunity that will not be repeated in the UK for another 80 years. To coincide with the total eclipse of the sun on 11th August, the company sent all its clients and contacts pairs of special safe solar viewers.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Legal Technology Insider - No. 87 - will be published on Wednesday 22nd September 1999.