

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

SUSSKIND LAYS DOWN THE FUTURE OF LAW

The highlight of the recent Legal IT Forum conference, at Gleneagles in Scotland, was a bravura performance by law firm management-to-courts IT guru Richard Susskind.

In a presentation that substantially expanded upon the theories first voiced in his 1996 book *The Future of Law*, Dr Susskind left the audience in no doubt that not only is the future of law digital but that if firms hope to still be in business in ten years time, not only must they embrace technology but they also need to make a far better and more imaginative use of IT than most are doing today.

Using a graphical representation of "the legal IT continuum" - that will probably come to be known as "the Susskind Grid" - Susskind showed how firms should be moving from inward-looking accounts, back office and wordprocessing systems, towards client-facing know-how systems, e-commerce, intranets and online legal services.

But, said Susskind, the majority of the managing partners he has spoken to in large City firms "still don't get it" when it comes to the Internet.

The net result is too many firms are still dithering over whether to invest in what Susskind described as "first generation online client relationship systems" when they should already be moving on to second generation systems.

First generation systems offer extranet/Internet access, via a web browser, to case progress/status tracking, financial reporting, secure sites for document distribution, archives, online instructions and matter management. But what they need to do next, said Susskind, is become more client/intranet focussed.

This, he explained, meant that whereas with the present model, the onus is upon the client to log into a firm's web site to obtain information, what firms actually need to do is provide information "feeds" to channel material directly to the client's own intranet/browser interface. As Susskind pointed out, with the inhouse legal departments of major corporations simultaneously instructing dozens - and in some cases hundreds - of firms around the globe, without some form of "panel management" element, far from making life easier, first generation online systems could actually make life more difficult for the client.

■ Dr Susskind was also highly critical of legal know-how projects, accusing firms of failing to recognise the overlap between training and know-how, having "information non-sharing" cultures, and lacking sufficient commitment and involvement by senior management.

For more exhibition and conference news, see pages 4 & 5

ELLIOTT SLONE TO CHANGE HANDS ?

Latest reports suggest the Williams Lea group is close to finalising a takeover bid for Elliott Slone, the largest remaining independent litigation support company in the UK. Williams Lea has already recruited James Catan from the London offices of US-based IKON Office Solutions (another one-time Elliott Slone suitor) and is believed to want to expand its document management operations.

Y2K - 65 DAYS TO GO

The good news is there is widespread optimism that the impact of the millennium bug will be less severe than originally feared. The bad news is that including weekends and public holidays there are now just 65 days to go.

See page 7 for latest Y2K news.

BIG INCREASE IN INSIDER WEB TRAFFIC

The Legal Technology Insider web site has seen a 135 percent increase in traffic over the past three months, with over 14,000 page views and 90,000 hits recorded in September alone.

The latest enhancements include the introduction of 7am.com's Internet news ticker service, the *Specialist Books* online bookstore and a more frequently updated *Legal Technology Breaking News* facility.

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ALL CHANGE AT THE LCD - AGAIN

Following the latest government reshuffle, after just five months in the job Keith Vaz, the technology-enthusiast junior minister at the Lord Chancellor's Department, has been promoted to the Foreign Office. Vaz replaces Geoff Hoon who was also Vaz's predecessor at the LCD. Hoon meanwhile has entered the Cabinet as the new defence secretary and non-lawyer Jane Kennedy MP joins the LCD as parliamentary under secretary.

Another junior LCD minister, David Lock, has taken over Vaz's responsibilities. These include the Community Legal Service, where Vaz had been championing the concept of online legal services, and the Woolf/courts IT project Hoon launched last year with the publication of the *civil justice* consultation paper.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ JULIAN BOARDMAN-WESTON has teamed up with five other lecturers at the NOTTINGHAM LAW SCHOOL Centre for Law Firm Management to form a new management consultancy. Called SHERWOOD, it will focus on providing advice to professional services firms. Boardman-Weston will also continue to run his own COMPUTER COUNSEL (01530 416333) IT consultancy business.

■ ASHURST MORRIS CRISP has become the first law firm in Europe recognised by MICROSOFT as an authorised MOUS (Microsoft Office User Specialist) testing centre. The IT department sought the accreditation as part of a project to increase levels of computer literacy in the firm and cut the number of helpdesk calls.

■ Legal costing software specialist WORDWRIGHT ASSOCIATES has moved from to new offices at: 33 Black Street, Martham Norfolk NR29 4PN. The new phone number is 01493 740902.

■ The LAW SOCIETY has approved MICHAEL KAYE's new educational video on video conferencing for two hours CPD points. The video costs £30 +VAT.

www.kt.uklaw.net

SOLOS STUMBLE AS NET USAGE SOARS

A recent initiative by the English Law Society's Sole Practitioners Group (SPG) to get more sole practitioners and small firms online has flopped badly with even the SPG admitting its target would be "missed by a mile".

The initiative had hoped to see over 2000 of the SPG's 4800 members achieve Internet access by the year 2000 but by the beginning of October, with less than three months to go, only 73 lawyers had registered an e-mail address and just 23 firms had active web sites.

Unfortunately this poor response comes at a time when all other indicators suggest that the usage of the Internet in legal circles is soaring.

Richard Susskind says that among larger law firms, the volume of e-mail traffic exchanged between fee earners and clients has increased by a factor of ten during the last 12 months, to the point where it has become the pre-eminent communications medium.

Legal publisher Martindale-Hubbell has released the results of a survey of small-to-medium sized companies (SMEs) in the UK that it conducted in September.

This found that 90 percent already had access to the Internet and the remainder intended to install it within the next 12 months. It also found that two-thirds of the sample used the web to research or look for potential suppliers and that nearly half (43 percent) would consider using the Net to source a lawyer. Nearly 30 percent of the SMEs regularly used different lawyers for different task and nearly 20 percent said they were interested in buying commoditised legal services directly from the Internet.

■ COMMENT - Insider editor Charles Christian recently attended a local law society IT seminar where a member of the audience announced that his firm had been keeping clients happy for the last 143 years without e-mail and was confident it would still be keeping them happy for the next 143 years without e-mail. The man received a standing ovation for his remarks.

Elsewhere in this issue Richard Susskind complains that the managing partners of larger law firms "still don't get it" when it comes to the Internet but it would seem that sole practitioners and small firms really don't get it.

STILL GRUMBLES OVER LAB

Another legal systems developer has complained to the Insider about the difficulty in obtaining information about the LAFQAS scheme from the Legal Aid Board.

The company, which has asked not to be named, says it took 11 months to receive a reply from the LAB but when it arrived the document "was very poorly written," had a "patronising" tone, and contained terminology that was "poorly defined or plain wrong". The supplier concludes: "for an organisation which is supposedly setting standards, the Legal Aid Board appears remarkably free of them."

ELITE MOVING INTO THE HIGH STREET

With almost 50 major UK and European installations under its belt, legal PMS supplier Elite now plans to follow the example of its US parent by moving into the High Street/small-to-medium sized law firms end of the market.

General manager David Thorpe said that from the start of 2000, Elite would commence a more active marketing campaign focussing on the needs of smaller firms and had already recruited a specialist sales team to target this market. These include Kay Betts, who joined Elite earlier this year, and Tina Jones and long-time Axxia stalwart Harry Townsend who join the company on 8th November.

Elite will not be selling smaller firms a cut-down version of its current practice management software. Instead, users will get an "out of the box" version that has been pre-configured to reduce implementation times.

Elite will also be launching an ASP (application service provider) service from next year that will allow even very small firms to run their practices across the Internet without any of the conventional internal hardware or PMS software infrastructure.

■ COMMENT - Axxia Systems, which is likely to provide Elite with its stiffest competition, has hinted that it will be moving into the ASP market next year. The Insider understands that to support the service it will use some of the spare capacity of the new disaster recovery/operations centre, it opened in Sheffield earlier this month.

SURVEY DEADLINE CLOSING

The closing date for returning questionnaires for the Grant Thornton "Legal IT Interfirm Comparison" survey is the end of October. If you have not yet received or returned a form, call Andrew Levison or Richard Blasdale on 020 7728 2293.

VALID IN SCOTTISH LITIGATION SUPPORT DEAL

Valid Information Systems has signed a distribution deal under which Imedia of Livingston (01506 461660) will market and support Valid's Optimum litigation product in Scotland. Imedia managing director Ray Bilton said he was "very excited" about Optimum's prospects. "We came down South and looked at every company with a litigation support offering, the Valid product was head and shoulders above the competition."

■ Although the company has been involved in the imaging market for about ten years, Imedia has now moved into the legal sector and is currently handling a major project for the Scottish Crown Office. The Insider understands this is the Dunblane shootings inquiry. Imedia will showing Optimum at a series of seminars in Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow on 16th, 17th and 18th November.

NEW PLAYER IN FORMS MARKET

HotDocs software distributor Capsoft UK last week launched a new electronic legal forms service that will allow law firms and businesses to obtain statutory forms free of charge from the Internet.

The service is channelled through a new company called EveryForm and can already offer over 430 Land Registry, Lord Chancellor's Department and Companies House forms. This number is expected to exceed 800 by the end of the year.

The latest versions of forms can be downloaded from the EveryForm web site at any time, free of charge however the company plans to generate revenue by offering optional update services. These include e-mail alerts to advise users when new forms are available and the delivery of forms on CD-Rom. Prices start at £100 per annum (£50 introductory rate until 30th November 1999).

■ COMMENT - The managing director of a rival forms publisher recently posted a comment to an online discussion group saying he could not see the commercial logic behind the scheme. Had he been at Glen Legal he would have heard Capsoft managing director Russell Shepherd explain the "value destruction model" for Internet start-up companies.

According to Shepherd, by offering free services, web newcomers can grab large numbers of customers from longer established competitors and so "leverage" their products to become the new market leader. Reading between the lines it seems EveryForm's short term objective is not to make a profit but to undermine suppliers like Oyez, StatPlus and Laserform who could not compete in such a price war.

<http://www.everyform.net>

INSIDER E-ZINES

Legal Technology Insider publishes two current awareness e-mail newsletters: *New Media Lawyer*, which covers all aspects of the Internet law industry, and *Watching Brief Online*, which carries commentaries on the latest local government law cases. Subscription is free and to be added to the distribution list send a note of your e-mail address to:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

LEGAL PUBLISHING NEWS IN BRIEF

- Dutch publishing house WOLTERS KLUWER has said it might consider reopening merger talks with REED ELSEVIER, the parent of LEXIS-NEXIS and BUTTERWORTHS TOLLEY.
- SWEET & MAXWELL is sponsoring a series of seminars on human rights law at the English LAW SOCIETY annual conference, which takes place at Euro Disney later this week. Managing director WENDY BEECHAM says the 1998 Human Rights Act has also had an impact on the company's publishing programme with forthcoming editions of the *White Book* and *Archbold* both covering the topic.
- BBC Radio 4 reporter MARK WHITAKER and freelance journalist LINDA TSANG were the winners of the BAR COUNCIL's 1999 legal journalism awards. OLWEN DUDGEON, the legal correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post*, received an honourable mention. Tsang's award was the result of a series of stories she wrote for the *The Independent*, while Whitaker won his for the programme *Trial by Jury*.
- The ADVERTISING STANDARDS AUTHORITY (ASA) has upheld five complaints made against THE LAWYER magazine. The complaints, which were lodged by rival publication LEGAL WEEK, all relate to claims made in *The Lawyer* media sales pack sent out to prospective advertisers. The ASA has ordered *The Lawyer* not to repeat any of the claims, which included statements that the magazine had a 100 percent requested circulation and a readership of 90,000. The publishers of *The Lawyer* said the claims were the result of errors made by inexperienced members of staff and the magazine's editor SEAN BRIERLEY subsequently told the trade press that he felt the ASA had been "manipulated" by a competitor.
- BUTTERWORTHS will this week launch EU DIRECT, a new online legal information service covering the latest developments in European Union law.

GLEN LEGAL REVIEW

Put the glitterati of the legal IT world together in Gleneagles, one of the best hotels in the world, for a few days and you are bound to hear some interesting ideas. As reported elsewhere Richard Susskind was in excellent form, here are some of the other ideas to emerge...

- **THINK LIKE A HEDGEHOG, RUN LIKE A FOX**
Michael Mills, of New York lawyers Davis Polk & Wardwell started the event with a bizarrely titled session introducing delegates to the concepts doing the rounds in the USA.

Apparently TQM and BPR are old hat and we should now subscribe to "six sigma" and the "three-fold way", the latter concept meaning focussing on service delivery that is better, faster and cheaper. As for six sigma, the key element is to keep regularly revisiting IT strategies, as distinct from the old idea of devising and then adhering to five year plans.

Mills believes the "lawyer's desktop" needs just e-mail and a browser and said his own firm was now trying to roll out all new applications with browser front ends, as that was slashing training requirements. But he also warned that if lawyers were "the reducers of friction" and online IT systems could also reduce friction, were lawyers risking automating and commoditising themselves out of a job?

- **GOING FOR BRAND MANAGEMENT**

Stuart Holden of Axxia reckoned the High Street market would split into three groups: those prepared to embrace change and invest in IT; the ostriches who were heading for failure and the "brand partners" who would become resellers of templated legal services developed by larger commercial practices, in much the same way as tied agents sell investment products in the financial services market.

- **CASE MANAGEMENT FUTURES**

Neil Ewin of Solicitec expressed amusement that so many firms were talking about starting to develop client-access intranet/extranet portals "next year" yet seemed reluctant to invest in web-based case management systems that could already deliver such services today. Ewin's theory is most firms are still reluctant to take the leap of faith needed to open up their systems and will only do so when forced into it by client pressure. Ewin also said the big challenge facing suppliers was to devise systems that could help manage non-standardised matters and civil litigation.

- **GLEN LEGAL VERDICT**

Although there is still room for fine tuning, it looks like *Legal Week* has pulled it off and that the "Glen Legal" IT forum will become a permanent fixture on the calendar. The response from delegates was largely favourable and it certainly struck the right note with IT vendors, particularly as many are now asking if conventional exhibitions and roadshow seminars have had their day. Or, as one supplier commented: "It was a good opportunity to get your face in front of people who wouldn't normally answer your calls".

SOLEX NORTH REVIEW

The UK's last major legal IT exhibition of the century generated an eclectic mixture of new products, new faces and new upgrades to established systems.

■ CASE MANAGEMENT OUT OF THE BOX

Arguably the star of the show was Axxia Systems new shrink-wrapped, stand alone case management system. Called CaseBrief, Axxia say its low cost and minimum implementation overheads make it an ideal product for both smaller firms and departmental teams - and it also looks like it could provide some very serious competition to the DPS and Laserform Case Control systems.

Pricing is based at £1000 per seat, subject to a minimum of five users, plus the £3250 cost of a specific application module. Currently there are two available: conveyancing, which encompasses all aspects of the work type including remortgaging, and an equally comprehensive personal injury/RTA module.

Although this brings the total price for a five user personal injury system to £8250 (or £1.75 per fee earner, per day if you take advantage of the finance deal available through LMS) there is then nothing else to pay. There are no renewable annual software licence fees. The initial price includes three days of implementation and customisation of standard templates to meet user working practices plus two days of training. And there is no annual maintenance charge - users can either buy support on a pay-as-you-go basis or use the free web-based support service.

■ LEGAL DOCS DEBUT

The most interesting new face was LegalDocs UK (0181 325 8454) with a new "wordprocessing enhancement" product called LegalDocs. Essentially this is a "macro" application for merging templates with data, that can also handle document production and management, time recording and archiving. It can be activated using a keyboard, mouse or speech recognition software but only operates in conjunction with WordPerfect. The nearest comparable product is Dennis Corr's DACS but LegalDocs seems to have an advantage in price - a five user system costs £1595 and for 20 plus users the price falls to £150 per seat.

■ INTRANETS MADE SIMPLE

The system attracting the most envious glances from other suppliers was Laserform's new LFM LegalNet browser-based "corporate portal" intranet. Developed by accountants Berg Kaprow Lewis, who also sell it into the accountancy market under the Prism brand name, the system is already in use at Browne Jacobson in Nottingham. It is a no-frills product that uses standard software components - Word, Windows NT IIS and Internet Explorer - to create documents and handle knowledge management tasks. Pricing has still to be finalised but a spokesman said the capital outlay was likely to be less than just the annual renewal costs of running a comparable-sized DOCS Open installation.

■ COST PLUS ON WINDOWS

Wordwright Associates launched Cost Plus 2000, a 32-bit Windows version of its costs drafting software. The new product, which is Woolf-compliant and meets legal aid franchise requirements, also fills a useful gap now Microcosts, the only other supplier of costs drafting software, has pulled out of the market.

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

■ AMICUS ATTORNEY IV

Gavel & Gown launched version IV of the Amicus Attorney case management system. Features include an integrated report generator using Crystal Reports, lower prices for the stand-alone and LAN versions, the ability to handle up to 50 custom fields per work type, which should be useful for legal aid lawyers, a "call centre" module for managing phone messages, and a client/server edition that can handle up to 200 users. Gavel & Gown believe the last feature will help the system gain wider acceptance within larger law firms.

■ CONTEXT PREVIEW

Context previewed a new web-enabled version of its J-Link hypertext generator. J-Link, which was launched last year to provide on-the-fly links between references appearing on different CD-Roms, has now been extended to encompass full text law reports appearing on the new JUSTIS.com online service.

■ SOLEX NORTH VERDICT

The exhibitors the Insider spoke to said it was a "quiet" show and that while the quality of visitors was good, there were few of them. But it was also acknowledged that 1999 is not a typical year as the IT market has been suffering a pre-Y2K downturn since the summer. In fact just about the only people actively looking to buy were High Street firms gearing up for next year's new LAFQAS regime.

On a more positive note, the event seemed well run. The new floor layout, with wider aisles between the stands, was welcomed and suppliers running presentations in the Masterclass Theatre described that facility as a "huge success", with several reporting standing room only attendance for their seminars.

SOLEX portal launches , see page 6

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ HAYS DX has produced a new release of its addressing software Address Plus. The software is free to all DX members in the UK and Ireland and is available on disk and CD-Rom. Call 0870 6060609.

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

■ EPOCH SOFTWARE has announced a "strategic reseller agreement" with VIP (Virtual Internet Provider Ltd). Under the terms of the deal VIP, the largest provider of branded Internet access in the UK, will promote Epoch's Desktop Lawyer online legal services to its 500,000 subscribers and 70 + clients, including Egg, Tiny Computers, the Royal Bank of Scotland and *Computer Weekly*.

■ The Carydan case and practice management system, which was launched by JONATHAN BECK & ASSOCIATES (0161 941 3790) in November 1998, has now completed the implementation phase and gone live in three law firms: WEBSTERS in Guildford, KENNEDYS in London and Altrincham-based clinical negligence specialists ALEXANDER HARRIS. The developers of the software say Carydan's key selling point is that it is an all-new system designed specifically to accommodate the post-Woolf personal injury and commercial litigation environment.

■ EQUITRAC has launched PrintLog Professional, a desktop application for tracking and billing network printer and digital copier usage. The software runs on Windows 95/98/NT 4 platforms.

TRY LTI-NET FREE

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. Subscription rates start at £135. For a free trial copy e-mail:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

MORE PORTALS AHOY !

The SOLEX North show also saw the first public appearance of two new legal market Internet portals.

Centaur, publishers of *The Lawyer* magazine, unveiled the Interactive Lawyer site. This offers a combination of law reporting from the Lawtel service plus more general legal community news supplied by *Lawyer* journalists.

The second portal is Lawyers Web. This has been set up by legal systems supplier JCS, who will also be acting as an Internet service provider, providing various access deals, web site design services and a public "online Yellow Pages for lawyers" facility. (See also **Homepages** story on page 7)

■ COMMENT - How many portals do lawyers need? While some of the earlier portals, notably LawLink, appear to have vanished, Lawyers Online is now entering its second year of operation. In the summer Legal Help and the Stat Plus Legal ISP.Net made their debut. Then there are the two legal publishing giants, Butterworths and Sweet & Maxwell, who are both rumoured to be working on new online legal information/portal services. And, finally, the Insider has learned that a major City institution plans to launch a "killer legal portal" next spring that not only aims to blow all other portals out of the water but also "supplant" some of the conventional weekly legal magazines.

■ On 17th November, Sweet & Maxwell will launch a new subscription-based legal information service called Westlaw UK. Although the service will not be commercially available until February, Sweets will be previewing it at the Interactive Online event in December. Sweets say it will have the "black letter law credibility" other services lack.

<http://www.interactive-lawyer.com>

<http://www.lawyersweb.net>

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

WHERE DID NETSCAPE GO ?

Two years ago it was still the clear market leader but today Netscape's Navigator/Communicator family of web browser software has almost completely vanished from the screen as far as the UK legal market is concerned.

Statistics for the UK at large show Microsoft Internet Explorer 3/4/5 has a 71 percent share of the market with Netscape still hanging on to a 29 percent share. However, the latest analysis of traffic going through the Insider web site reveals that over 95 percent of visitors are now using either IE 4 or IE 5 - statistically Internet Explorer 4 running on Windows 95 is the most popular platform.

■ COMMENT - Of course this is bad news for Netscape but if their browsers do continue to lose ground this way, the outcome is likely to be widely welcomed by law firm web site designers, as they will no longer have to develop lowest common denominator sites that are compatible with older versions of both Netscape and Microsoft browser software.

■ Netscape has just launched a new version of its browser Navigator 4.7. It can be downloaded free from the web.

<http://home.netscape.com>

LAWYER HOMEPAGES ARRIVE IN EUROPE

Martindale-Hubbell (0171 464 1430), part of the same publishing group as Lexis and Butterworths, will launch its International Lawyers HomePages service in Europe on 1st November. The service contains two main elements: a semi-automatic template-based web site design system that has already been used to design over 10,000 HomePages in the USA and the *Lawyer Locator* traffic generator.

The design element is based on a proprietary application called PageDesigner that guides users through a choice of 21 different templates - director of operations Derek Benton reckons that if you can use a wordprocessor, you can use PageDesigner. The system can also build bilingual sites, based on English, French, German, Italian or Spanish, and allows firms to update pages at anytime.

Although the service is not cheap - a firm has to have an entry in the *Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory* as well as subscribe to the service, bringing the first year's price to US\$ 3500 - the key element is *Lawyer Locator*, in effect a law firm-specific search engine/web portal, that is already handling over 1.5 million searches each month in the USA.

Benton's view is that what really matters is not the cost of developing a site but the volume of traffic accessing it. He also says getting lawyers online with marketing-oriented sites is merely the first stage and that Martindale-Hubbell will roll-out more interactive services in the future.

<http://www.martindale.com/ilhp>

LATEST Y2K NEWS

■ MORE NOVELL COMPLIANCY NEWS

Network software specialist Novell has now published additional information and product update packages on its web site. The company has also announced plans to run a 24 hours-a-day technical support helpline for the period 31st December to 3rd January. The phone numbers for countries outside North America are on the web.

<http://www.novell.com/year2000>

<http://support.novell.com/additional/telephone.htm>

■ COMPUTING IN THE LAST CHANCE SALOON

The UK government's Action 2000 agency, which provides information on dealing with the millennium bug, has published its *Last Chance Guide* to preparing for Y2K. The guide, which is available free of charge from Action 2000 (0845 601 2000) as well as on the web, contains masses of information on last minute risk assessment and contingency planning, plus checklists and useful tips. For example, if you require staff to work over the millennium holiday period, do you also need to organise special travel arrangements for them as public transport services will either be suspended or running on restricted timetables?

<http://www.bug2000.co.uk>

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ NOVEMBER 1, BRISTOL Laserform Product Open Days. A series of product presentation seminars. Other venues include Nottingham, Leeds, London, Manchester and Birmingham. Admission free. For details call 01925 750000.

■ NOVEMBER 1-to-3, CHICAGO LegalTech conference and exhibition organised by American Lawyer Media.

■ NOVEMBER 2, SOUTHAMPTON, NOVEMBER 3, BRISTOL, NOVEMBER 4, LONDON - Half-day seminars run by Corel and Philips to promote WordPerfect software in conjunction with speech recognition. Call 01703 814142.

■ NOVEMBER 4, LONDON - IT Planning for Law Firms seminar at the Law Society, Chancery Lane. Organised by Pilgrim Systems and focussing upon the impact of the new Microsoft Windows 2000 and Office 2000 products on legal systems, including web enablement and knowledge management. Call 0131 555 9700.

■ NOVEMBER 5, DUBLIN - LawTech '99 legal technology conference and exhibition at the Law Society of Ireland, Dublin. Call Veronic Donnelly on + 353 (0)1 6710711.

■ NOVEMBER 9, EDINBURGH - First of AIM's autumn series of one day seminars looking at Microsoft Word, Windows 2000, and providing client access via corporate portals. To book a place call 01482 326971.

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COMPUTER LORE

■ MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN

What better way to start the next millennium than by enduring seven days of sun, sand and saddle-sores as you participate in a 300 mile cycle ride along the banks of the River Nile in Egypt? John Burrill, the chairman of legal systems supplier Linetime has signed up for this experience in the middle of February. But, just in case you think he must have already spent too much time out in the midday sun, it should be pointed out that it is all in a good cause as he is hoping to raise money for the charity MENCAP. He is also looking for sponsorship, so if you would like to help, give him a ring on 0113 250 0020.

■ COMPUTER LORE AT GLEN LEGAL

Of course there was a lot of serious business conducted at the recent Legal IT Forum conference at Gleneagles. But there was also some serious golf and a great deal of serious drinking. Having kept the bar open until 4.00 in the morning on the first night, one hardened group of lawyers and techies managed to fit in a full day of seminars, a round of golf, a champagne reception, a gala dinner and still keep the bar open until 5.30 the following morning before adjourning to one of their rooms for a party that kept going until breakfast was served.

Apparently there was a serious side to all this: they were concerned about the forthcoming millennium party season and were testing their livers for Y2K alcohol compatibility.

Most of the speakers were good, some were very good and only one fell into the why-did-they-invite-him category. Nevertheless Mitch Grossbach of Interface Software must be singled out for making an impressive debut on the UK speaking circuit. Despite the awful slot, an early morning software-and-cereal breakfast briefing, he delivered a presentation that was both informative and genuinely amusing.

That said, the biggest laughs at the event were raised by the main cabaret act Fascinating Aida (the warm-up act was barrister-turned celebrity TV chef and surviving "Fat Lady" Clarissa Dickson-Wright) with one of their songs poking fun at the Germans. Bet that made the delegates of the two German law firms attending the event feel at home.

■ THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

What is the difference between the BBC series *Walking with Dinosaurs* and the attitude of sole practitioners towards the Internet? Answer: One is the sad tale of the inability of once proud creatures to evolve in the face of change and their slow march towards extinction. And the other is a high tech television programme.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Legal Technology Insider - No. 90 - will be published on Wednesday 10th November 1999.