

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

NEW HOPE FOR LIFE AFTER COMPARE-RITE ?

For almost a decade one of the most useful software tools in the arsenal of larger law firms has been the CompareRite document comparison and redlining system. But while the product operated more than adequately with DOS and WordPerfect files, there have been complaints about poorer performance with the later versions of Microsoft Word on Windows platforms.

One product now tipped as a successor to CompareRite is DeltaView, an application developed by Workshare Technology. This Anglo-American company, with offices in San Francisco and the City of London (0171 481 6100), already has over 350 law firms running its SafetyGain utility for DOCS Open users. Last autumn ten firms began piloting DeltaView 2, the latest version of its redlining system, which features improved document comparison times and integration with both DOCS and iManage.

■ Workshare will be exhibiting at next week's Information Systems for Lawyers conference in London and evaluation copies of DeltaView can be downloaded from the web.

www.workshare.net

LEGAL IT SHOW SUCCESS

The popular verdict is that the recent Legal IT 2000 event at the Business Design Centre in London was a huge success, not least because it provided the first clear indication that far from heading into recession, the legal IT market is alive, well and booming in the 21st century.

Axxia Systems, which had the largest stand at the event, reported being asked to give over 150 demonstrations of just its accounts software alone during the two day event - that's a rate of nearly one demo every six minutes. Neil Ewin of Solicitec said the event was the busiest he had known since the mid-1990s (when the UK market was going through the dumb-terminals to Windows boom).

Ewin also said the majority of visitors to the stand were looking at Solicitec's Internet-related products - an interest echoed by the success of the Legal IT seminar session on the impact of the web and online marketing on law firms, which turned into a standing room-only occasion with over 200 delegates attending.

The message seems clear, free now of Y2K bug fears, there are large numbers of both law firms and inhouse legal departments keen to invest in the latest technologies and take advantage of the opportunities offered by e-business.

For a report on exhibition product launches, see back page

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STOP PRESS

■ **RESULTS IN FOR LEGAL IT 2000**
Cordial Events has just released the attendance figures for the Legal IT 2000 exhibition that took place earlier this month. A total of 1932 people attended the two day event. This compares favourably with attendance figures for the market leading Solicitors National Legal Office show at the NEC, which had 2400 visitors over three days in its first year and just over 3000 visitors in 1999. Over two-thirds of the exhibitors have already booked stands for Legal IT 2001.

LEGALTECHNOLOGY.CO.UK

Visit the Legal Technology Insider web site for regularly updated legal IT news reports, bookmarks to web sites listed in the Insider, links to additional free services, a diary of forthcoming legal IT and new media events plus access to an archive of the Insider in PDF format.

■ The site has now been revised to offer improved cross-platform, cross-browser and cross-version compatibility.

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www.legalttechnology.co.uk

OFFER TO EXCHANGE IN TWO WEEKS ?

Official Search consortium, a new joint venture set up by PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and geographic information systems specialist ESRI UK was last week named by the Lord Chancellor's Department as one of the organisations short-listed to bid for a National Land Information Service licence to run a national online property searches service.

PwC say Official Search will make official information held by the Land Registry, local authorities, utilities and other bodies available over the web. The service also plans to offer a one-stop shop for a wide range of related land and property data, including neighbourhood information on schools and doctors.

"The future of conveyancing," say PwC, will marry the traditional values of professionalism and independence with new age convenience and efficiency."

Central to the consortium's bid is a planned investment to encourage local authorities to get online so the period between the agreement to proceed on a property and the exchange of contracts can be completed within two weeks.

■ Wragge & Co has been chosen as one of the sub-contractors for the project.

BUZZWORD CORNER

■ COVER DISK SYNDROME (*noun*)

Medical condition. The carrier is almost inevitably a lawyer but the pain is only felt by the IT staff who come into contact with a carrier. Typical scenario: lawyer appears in IT department carrying CD Rom that was a cover-mount disk with a popular computing magazine.

"There is a really useful application on this disk," says the lawyer, "that seems to do almost everything we want as that new system we are considering buying. It could save the firm a fortune."

At this point the IT manager begins to suffer palpitations and feel the need for a stiff drink as he (or she) has to explain why an unsupported, single-user shareware utility program is not an appropriate technology platform on which to base a 1500-user networked mission-critical application.

JUST THE FAX PLEASE

Despite some predictions that fax communications is an interim technology that will have been almost entirely superseded by e-mail and unified messaging within four to five years, it was interesting to see that at the recent Legal IT 2000 exhibition two new faces made their debut in the UK legal sector network fax server market.

The newcomers are Topcall UK (0118 952 8900), a subsidiary of Austria's Topcall International, and Omtool Europe (020 8541 1444), a subsidiary of the US Omtool organisation whose LegalFax system is currently one of the fastest selling communications products among US law firms. Interestingly, independent IT analysts GartnerGroup rate Topcall and Omtool as being among the three leading players in the fax server market - the other is RightFax, which is distributed in the UK by Kommunicate.

But if fax is interim technology, why should anyone be interested in such systems? Alex Thompson, who has responsibility for developing Omtool sales into the UK and European legal markets through resellers and partners such as Tikit, iManage and DOCs Open, believes that given current volumes of fax traffic in law firms there is still room for improvements in efficiency and cost savings.

For example 85 percent of all faxes are still sent by people feeding sheets of paper into stand-alone fax machines, thus failing to take advantage of the benefits of creating, sending and receiving faxes directly at the desktop. Thompson also suggests firms could cut their fax costs by as much as 40 percent if they used modern server technology to route faxes, particularly internal traffic, via WANs and data lines rather than phone lines.

■ Consultants Grant Thornton estimate that taking into account printing and the time it takes to walk to and from a fax machine, including stopping to chat or pour a cup of coffee, the average fax can take 15 minutes to send.

www.topcall.com

www.omtool.com

BACK ON TRACK AT COPITRAK

Two years after Copitrak Systems (0171 234 3000) took over distribution of the Copitrak range of cost management and recovery devices in Europe, the company believes it is now starting to make an impact upon Equitrac's hitherto dominance of the market.

Long-standing Copitrak users Slaughter & May, Herbert Smith and Stephenson Harwood have been joined by wins at SJ Berwin and Gouldens, who have both switched from Equitrac, and Paisner & Co, which is installing Copitrak systems during the next few weeks.

Copitrak is also enjoying considerable success selling into continental Europe, with recent installations at sites in France, Belgium, Italy, Turkey, the Czech Republic, Poland, Russia and Germany, including the Frankfurt offices of Clifford Chance. Further systems are soon to be installed in Ukraine, Latvia and Spain.

COREL IN LINUX/UNIX MERGER DEAL

Tomorrow (Thursday 17th) sees the formal launch of Microsoft's new Windows 2000 operating system. But, despite all the marketing hype, it seems unlikely that the new product will spell the end of the rival Unix operating system and its newer open-source offspring Linux.

For example, according to the results of a survey carried out for *Computer Weekly* magazine, nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of IT directors in the UK believe Unix still has a major role to play in complex transaction processing application, 11 percent were undecided and just 16 percent believed the days of Unix were numbered.

This continuing enthusiasm for Unix is echoed by one of the findings of Grant Thornton's soon-to-be-published legal IT survey which identified a growing trend within law firms for multiple file servers, with 65 percent of firms in the sample now running a mixture of Novell, Unix, Linux and NT server operating systems.

But possibly the biggest fillip the "there must be an alternative to Microsoft" cause has received in recent days was the news last week that Corel, the company behind WordPerfect, had entered into US\$2.44 billion merger talks with Silicon Valley-based Inprise/Borland to create what is described as a "Linux powerhouse" offering a single source for end-to-end solutions ranging from productivity applications (including wordprocessing) to e-commerce development tools.

Subject to obtaining shareholding and regulatory approval, the Corel merger is expected to be finalised in the late spring, with the companies then committed to developing applications that will run on Solaris, Linux, Mac and Windows platforms.

■ COMMENT - We have said it before and no doubt we will say it again but there is clearly still life in the old Unix (and Linux-son-of-Unix) horse. In fact the research group IDC predicts Linux sales will exceed Novell Netware sales by 2003. Law firms should therefore think twice before subscribing to the view that legal software must have Microsoft and Windows running all the way through it.

DIGITAL AGE SPECIAL OFFER

Legal Practice in the Digital Age by Charles Christian ("My advice to all lawyers in the land is to block three hours out of the diary, pour a stiff drink and read Charles Christian's *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* in one sitting." - Richard Susskind) has been reprinted and copies are once more available in the shops at £19.99. However readers of the Insider can obtain a copy at a special reprint price of £17, inclusive of P&P, by cutting out or copying this item and sending it, along with address details and a cheque payable to Bowerdean Publishing Company Ltd, to Bowerdean Publishing, 8 Abbotstone Road, London SW15 1QR

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ MOUNTAIN SOFTWARE has released a new software module for users of its accounts and practice management systems that will help them comply with the LEGAL AID BOARD's block contracting requirements. The module will automatically produce controlled matter start forms and consolidated matters reports.

■ REED ELSEVIER American subsidiary MATTHEW BENDER has filed a lawsuit in New York against JURISLINE.COM LLC alleging that Jurisline fraudulently obtained Matthew Bender products and used them to develop a legal information service in breach of its contracts with Bender. Jurisline is countersuing another Reed US subsidiary alleging the infringement of its intellectual property rights and accusing the subsidiary of anti-competitive behaviour.

■ MILES 33 has reported another year of strong growth with pre-tax profits for the trading year ended 30 September 1999 up 25 percent at £1.57 million (1998 - £1.26 million). Miles chief executive ALEX YEW said the year ahead would see continuing success for the group's legal market activities and the launch of "exciting new products and services, particularly in the areas of integrated business solutions, the Internet and e-commerce.

■ The SOLICITEC SolCase case management system is now compatible with the EVERYFORM electronic forms service. SolCase is already compatible with OYEZ and LASERFORM products.

■ Paris-based commercial law firm GIDE LOYRETTE NOUEL has signed a US\$2.8 million contract with telecoms network provider EQUANT to supply the firm's international network of 12 offices with high speed network services. The deal is part of an ongoing overhaul of the firm's IT infrastructure, which also includes the implementation of an ELITE PMS system, to "ensure all data is within arm's reach on a laptop whether the lawyer is in New York, Istanbul or Shanghai".

www.equant.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **NEW AXXIAUSER GROUP CHAIRMAN**
Chris Cowling, the finance director of Edge Ellison, has become the new chairman of the Axxia user group. He takes over from Philip Mitchell of Finers, who held the post for four years.

■ **NEW MD FOR LFI**
Sarah Singer has been appointed the managing director of Longbridge's recruitment subsidiary Law & Finance International. Wendy Phillips has been promoted from head of the legal IT team to managing the whole of LFI's IT division.

■ **WATERMARK NO LONGER AT SEA**
Users of Watermark, who may have felt lost since FileNet dropped the product in August and announced it would not be supported after March 2000, might have a exit strategy in the new WMEExtract system. Developed by Onstream Systems (01923 286808), WMEExtract converts Watermark image databases into a form suitable for importing into other image and document management systems. WMEExtract is also available from Lombard Document Systems (0171 353 5008).

■ **LAFQAS - WHY PAPER ?**
Select Legal Systems has written to the Legal Aid Board to suggest that instead of franchise holders submitting on paper the various reports required under the new LAFQAS regime, the LAB should take advantage of the fact the records are already being generated on computers and opt for the reports to be submitted electronically, either as spreadsheets or in an EDI format.

■ **CONSULTANT'S MARKETING AWARD**
Jacqueline Cuthbert, who works for the legal management consultancy Practical Solutions, has won the Chartered Institute of Marketing's "Best Student" award following her success on a CIM course at Salford University.

■ **NEW CONSULTANCY**
Tim Travers, a former practising solicitor turned knowledge management and working practices analyst, has formed his own West Midlands-based consultancy e-Legal Logistics (0121 705 5571).

LEGAL IT TRENDS - WHO SOLD WHAT ? (Q4 - 1999)

SUPPLIER	PRODUCT	BUYER	SEATS
ACCOUNTS & PRACTICE MANAGEMENT			
Avenue	Wisdom	43 firms	n/a
Edgebyte	LawByte	26 firms	50
MSS	AlphaLaw Net	6 firms	85
MSS	Esprit	37 firms	57
MSS	Vantage	3 firms	26
MSS	Alpha Junior	13 firms	13
Peapod	STRONGBox	51 firms	n/a
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Wiggin & Co	60
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Tozers	12
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Towells	60
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Alderson Dodds	25
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	More Fisher	25
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Memery Crystal	25
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Fenwick Elliot	n/a
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Read Hind	60
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Chill & Axtell	25
Select	Select FED	Carrick Carr	25
Select	Select FED	Fidler & Pepper	35
Select	Select FED	3 firms	12
SOS	Practice Manager	Calvert Smith	30
SOS	Practice Manager	Seymour Parkes	72
SOS	Practice Manager	Wilson Nesbitt	20
SOS	Practice Manager	Wards	25
SOS	Practice Manager	10 firms	94
SOS	+ via distributors	19 firms	210
TFB	Partner for Windows	Kidd Rapinet	30
Tikit	Carpe Diem	London firm	50
CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS			
Avenue	Wisdom	21 firms	n/a
Gavel & Gown	Amicus Attorney	Fisher Jones	33
Gavel & Gown	Amicus Attorney	Graham Pearce	23
Gavel & Gown	Amicus Attorney	McGrath & Co	46
Gavel & Gown	Amicus Attorney	60 firms	266
Peapod	CASEFlow	32 firms	106
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Wiggin & Co	60
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Tozers	12
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Towells	60
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Alderson Dodds	25
Sanderson	Galaxy Legal	Read Hind	60
Select	Case Management	Carrick Carr	30
Select	Case Management	Fidler & Pepper	35
Select	Case Management	2 firms	10
SOS	SolCase	Everatt & Co	20
SOS	SolCase	Wards	25
SOS	SolCase	3 firms	22
Solicitec	SolCase	Irish firm	85
Solicitec	SolCase	E.Midland firm	50
Solicitec	SolCase	Insurance co	50
Solicitec	SolCase	W.Midland firm	77
Solicitec	SolCase	9 firms	20
TFB	Partner for Windows	Kidd Rapinet	30

SUPPLIER	PRODUCT	BUYER	SEATS
DOCUMENT/KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT			
Hummingbird	DOCS	Ashurst Morris Crisp	600
Hummingbird	DOCS + Fulcrum	McCann Fitzg	300
Hummingbird	DOCS	Denton Wilde Sapte	1400
Hummingbird	Fulcrum	Titmuss Sainer Dechert	300
Hummingbird	Fulcrum	Olswang	50
Hummingbird	DOCS + Fulcrum	London firm	1200
Hummingbird	Fulcrum	London firm	500
iManage	iManage	London firm	20
iManage	iManage	London firm	760
iManage	iManage	Bristol firm	550
iManage	iManage	London firm	110
iManage	iManage	London firm	35
MISCELLANEOUS SYSTEMS			
Corel	WordPerfect	Paisner & Co	290
Corel	WordPerfect	Nicholson Grah Jones	300
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	500
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	500
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	50
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	350
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	300
Tikit	InterAction	London firm	20

■ Figures are for the period 1 October-to-31 December 1999. The data was gathered from IT suppliers and relates to legal market (including inhouse) sales. Several suppliers requested the identity of certain customers not be disclosed and a number declined to participate for commercial reasons. For sales of less than 20 seats, total figures are supplied. Supplier licensing policies meant the number of seats was not always available.

CW&C SWITCH TO E-LIBRARY

Last summer west-country-based Clarke Willmott & Clarke became the first large law firm in the UK to outsource its entire IT operations. This year CW&C is continuing to push the envelope in new directions by becoming the first UK practice to try to switch from conventional books and paper law reports to an "e-library" based on online services, CD-Rom publications and the delivery of information directly to fee earners' desktops.

■ COMMENT - The CW&C project, which is expected to take 12 months to complete, anticipates a number of benefits including delivering news about changes in the law far quicker than if lawyers were relying on printed publications. While a novel development in the UK, several US firms have already gone down this route - particularly those which, like CW&C, have multiple offices and need to duplicate library resources, including space, at each site.

US experiences do however suggest e-libraries can suffer from two major drawbacks. The first is unless fee earners are adequately trained to work with digital resources, they will soon revert back to demanding to use books. And the second problem is that digital publications can prove substantially more expensive than their paper equivalents.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ FEBRUARY 22 & 23, LONDON - Information Systems for Lawyers. The annual Lawyer conference at the Marriott Hotel this year looks at putting IT into the heart of the legal business. Speakers include Tim Hyman of Olswang on being client focussed and Clare Wardle of the Post Office on what clients really want in terms of direct access to law firm know-how. Andrew Levison will unveil the results of Grant Thornton's survey into the use of IT by law firms and there will also be a small exhibition. Fee £797 (+VAT) with discounts for additional delegates. (10.5 CPD hours.) To book a place call Centaur on 0207 970 4770.

■ FEBRUARY 23, BIRMINGHAM - Law Office IT Awareness Day. The Institute of Legal Cashiers' annual conference and exhibition at the Botanical Gardens, Edgbaston. From 9.30am to 5.00pm. (6 CPD hours.) Fee: members £110, non-members £140, with discounts for additional delegates. For details call the ILCA on 0181 294 2887.

■ MARCH 13 & 14, BIRMINGHAM - AIM Computer Users Association annual conference at the Marriott Forest of Arden. Speakers include Philip Hamer, consultants Delia Venables and Allan Carton plus Robert "I hacked into the Duke of Edinburgh's e-mail" Schifreen. Full delegate fee, including hotel, £340 (+VAT) but with various deals available. Up to 12 CPD hours, for details call ACUA on 01789 296096.

■ MARCH 14-to-16, BIRMINGHAM NEC The Solicitors National Legal Office & Legal Services Exhibition. Now in its third year, the NEC show has already become the best-attended event in the UK. The organisers say the March 2000 show, which is once again sponsored by the Law Society Gazette, will feature more IT suppliers than ever before. The event includes a programme of free seminars and supplier presentations. Admission is free, to pre-register for tickets call Nationwide on 0117 907 1000.

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

SITES TO BOOKMARK

■ Jersey law firm MOURANT DE FEU & JEUNE has published a library of legal information relating to local anti-money laundering regulations and investment business legislation.

www.mourant.com

■ The COURT SERVICE has published a consultation paper on civil court fees - it can be found in the "What's New" section on the LCD web site. Comments on the paper, which proposes a substantial increase in court civil fees, should be submitted by 25th February.

www.open.gov.uk/lcd

■ STEELE & CO in Norfolk has taken its first steps towards the provision of online legal services by introducing a facility that allows prospective clients to submit divorce instructions electronically. The firm then confirms instructions and provides quotations via e-mail.

www.steele.co.uk

■ Tunbridge Wells-based EASY WEB DIRECT (01892 617264) has developed what it describes as a low cost and easy to use web site design system for lawyers that does not require fluency in "nerd languages like HTML and Java". Project director Graham Sellors says a site can be built for as little as £99 (updates cost £10) and the whole process "takes around ten minutes and requires no skills".

www.easywebdirect.com

■ The US courts information service COURTLINK Inc has launched a new web based service providing real-time access to over 700 federal, state and local courts. The service, like CourtLink's established dial-up Windows system, allows users to track cases, search multiple court records and order documents online.

www.courtlink.com

■ Former New York mayor and TV *The People's Court* judge Ed Koch is one of the founders of TheLAW.com, a new US "consumer oriented" web service offering free legal information that launched last week. It has no connection with the US legal industry portal Law.com

www.thelaw.com

BUTTERWORTHS GETS NEW SEARCH FACILITY

Butterworths has launched two new search facilities for subscribers to its Butterworths Direct family of online legal information services. Total Search, which will be available on the web later this month, allows users to search across the entire range of products they subscribe to on a single pass. The other new facility - Link Direct - automatically provides hyperlinks from a law firm's know-how intranet to relevant reference material on the Butterworths Direct service. Both are available free of charge to subscribers.

www.butterworths.co.uk

LAWYERS TURN MATCHMAKERS

Simmons & Simmons, Eversheds and Field Fisher Waterhouse have signed up as business partners offering legal services to clients of Matchco.co.uk, the new advisory service for would-be high tech entrepreneurs that launched last week. Although Matchco.co.uk provides a full range of services, including access to venture capitalists, unlike comparable organisations the initial approach is via a web-based interface that takes the prospective entrepreneur through a series of step-by-step stages.

www.matchco.co.uk

NEW INTERMEDIARY LAW SITE

Former City solicitor Toby Starr has set up Lynxlaw, a web site offering advice, dispute resolution, case management and legal intermediary services. Although Lynxlaw will assist clients to locate potential legal advisers, unlike the equally new FirstLAW service (**see last Insider**) which will earn its living out of the commission paid by firms it introduces, Lynxlaw will be billing its clients directly.

www.lynxlaw.com

DENIAL OF SERVICE ATTACKS

Following last week's denial-of-service (or "pingstorm") attacks on a number of high profile web sites, the Insider's virus alert web page is currently carrying a seven point plan for dealing with denial-of-service hacks.

www.legaltechnology.co.uk

AND FINALLY... LOVE BYTES

To coincide with St Valentine's Day, those old romantics at Desktop Lawyer have launched a downloadable prenuptial agreement for cautious lovers wanting to pop the question and protect their assets this spring. The agreement, which costs £29.99, reflects recent market research suggesting that within ten years nearly 20 percent of all UK marriage arrangements will include prenuptial agreements.

www.desktoplawyer.net

WHO NEEDS ENEMIES WITH THESE FRIENDS !

A reader has reported what appears to be a new scam by salesmen at Internet service providers (ISPs) trying to drum up a little extra domain name registration business.

The scam began with the reader receiving an apparently innocent e-mail from an ISP saying they were "concerned" that a third-party had attempted to register a similar domain name to that of the reader's business. The ISP went on to suggest that in these days of "cyber-squatting" it might be prudent to invest in the cost of registering some of the alternative variants (com.uk, org.uk etc) and even synonyms of the domain name that were still available.

It sounded highly plausible until the reader compared notes with an associate who had received exactly the same warning and sales pitch from the same ISP in connection with his domain name. A little too much of a coincidence?

SECURITY NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SECURE E-MAIL FOR LAW FIRMS

Legal systems integrator Tikit (0171 717 1580) is now working with City of London e-commerce security specialist Trustis to provide a complete e-mail security solution for law firms, including authentication of correspondents and content encryption. The Trustis system, which uses PKI (public key infrastructure) technology, is compatible with most popular e-mail software packages.

www.trustis.com

■ PRIVACY FOR WEB SURFERS

Annoyed by those cookies that jump out at you when you visit some web sites? Then two new US services may help. The first is the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) which now carries a guide to its "Top 12 Ways to Protect your Online Privacy" on its web site. These include a suggestion that you should configure your web browser's "setup" and "preferences" specifications with a pseudonym. The second is the Anonymizer Surfing service, which acts as a buffer between your computer and the site you want to visit.

Anonymizer warn that a drawback of the service is lack of speed - because pages are downloaded indirectly - however it is free and you can upgrade to a faster paid-for service.

www.eff.org

www.anonymizer.com

■ WORDPERFECTLY SECURE

Falling into the damned-by-faint-praise category comes a suggestion from an Insider reader that one advantage of continuing to use WordPerfect for wordprocessing is security. Thanks to its declining market share, it has been apparently overlooked by the hacker community, who prefer to concentrate their efforts on the development of macro viruses for Microsoft Word.

READER SERVICES

■ INSIDER E-ZINES

Legal Technology Insider also publishes two current awareness e-zines (e-mail newsletters). These are: *New Media Lawyer*, covering all aspects of the Internet and new media law industries, and *Watching Brief Online*, carrying comment on recent local government law cases. Subscription is free. To be added to the distribution list send a note of your e-mail address to:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

Copies of the latest issues, plus a full archive, can also be found on the web:

www.newmedialawyer.co.uk

www.watchingbrief.com

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ON SHOW AT LEGAL IT

As reported on the front page, the star attractions at this month's Legal IT 2000 exhibition were the Internet and e-business related systems. AXXIA SYSTEMS showed its Advantage software. SOLICITEC demonstrated its SolCase Online case management product. LASERFORM had its intranet based knowledge management system - now marketed under the LegalAcumen brand name. And AIM used the event to launch its E-volution Lawdesk family of web-enabled fee earner applications and utilities.

Another interesting trend was a new-look approach to hardware and network technology. Cathode ray tubes are clearly out and in their place are space and energy saving LCD flat screens - which have now fallen in price to a point where they are affordable. TFB, incidentally, had a particularly novel device that incorporated a flat screen with an equally compact CPU and disk drive.

LINETIME was demonstrating "thin client" terminal architecture with ACER units that combined solid state hardware (no moving parts) with programmable smart cards containing individual user profiles. Linetime say a benefit of this approach (apart from price - thin client terminals now sell for less than some PC hardware) is users can take their profiles (including data access privileges) with them if they move offices or desks. Similarly, if a unit fails, it can be swapped out and the user got back up and running simply by inserting the smart card, whereas previously a support department would face the laborious task of reconfiguring a terminal or reloading software.

Thin client technology (including a wireless link, using Citrix Metaframe, between practice management software and a handheld computer running Windows CE) was also on show on the PILGRIM SYSTEMS stand. Pilgrim suggest benefits of this approach include flexibility, being able to utilise lower specification hardware (even old 386 PCs) and savings in software licence and communications costs.

Turning to software, LASERFORM previewed Laserform 8, its 32-bit forms series that goes on sale at the end of the month - new features include the ability to e-mail entire interactive forms to third parties. Newcomer ELLIS MILLS (0207 419 2905) launched Criminal Aid Tool, a low cost (£339 +VAT) legal aid billing system. A 14-days free trial version can be downloaded from the web. And SYSTEMATIC (01707 824824) demonstrated Practice Manager 8.0, a new case and document management system developed in the United States by PMT Inc for small-to-mid sized law firms.

www.ellismills.com

www.pmti.com

■ Cordial Events, the organiser of Legal IT 2000, has already booked the larger main hall at the Business Design Centre for Legal IT 2001 on 7th & 8th February next year.

NEXT ISSUE

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