

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

FRANKENSTEIN APP COMING TO UK VIA KLA

Document management specialist Kramer Lee & Associates (KLA) has been appointed the UK distributor for DataTech Software's thinkDOCS "intelligent document assembly and automation" system. As first reported in the previous issue of the Insider, although a relatively new product on the market, thinkDOCS is already winning business from US law firms (DataTech began life in the legal world as the publishers of the Quick & Easy electronic forms range) and insurance companies.

The key feature that makes thinkDOCS stand out from the competition (and there are about 20 other document assembly systems available in the United States) is its use of a 'live data' update facility. This treats all information as fields of data in a database, so if one item of information is changed, it is also automatically updated both elsewhere within that document and in all sequential documents.

DataTech president Paul Endress says that as well as being more efficient than the traditional cut and paste approach to document assembly, it also avoids the risk of creating "a Frankenstein document" made up of "a mismatched patchwork" of clauses. The latter point is particularly pertinent in the USA where a couple of recent cases have been lost by parties seeking to rely on documents that were subsequently found to contain ambiguously assembled clauses.

■ thinkDOCS runs on an Access database and is compatible with Word but not WordPerfect documents. KLA is holding a thinkDOCS briefing, attended by Paul Endress, at its London offices on the morning of 15th May. To book a place phone Peter Barnes on 01268 584666. Alternatively, you can arrange a one-to-one live interactive demonstration of thinkDOCS via the DataTech web site.

www.thinkdocs.com

OZ BLOW FOR KEYSTONE

Phillips Fox, which has 10 offices across Australia, New Zealand and Vietnam - and which was one of the original beta test sites for Keystone software - has just chosen the CMS Open product as its new practice management system. The order, said to be worth \$3 million, was placed with Horwath Computer Systems (HCS), the Australasian distributor for CMS Open. This project includes converting the firm from its current Law3000, BHL and Keystone legacy systems. Phillips Fox will implement CMS on a single database in Sydney for all their offices to access.

TFB ACQUIRE CB LEGAL BUSINESS

Technology for Business has acquired the assets and business of CB Business Systems (Legal) Ltd. As reported in a previous issue of the Insider, CB systems has a client base of some 150 firms, including blue chip Edinburgh practice Henderson Boyd Jackson, running its Signet accounts software but in March this year it announced that liquidators had been called in to negotiate a rescue deal as the company was facing voluntary liquidation. TFB joins the list of English suppliers, including Axxia, AIM and Solicitec, operating in Scotland. CB Business will now trade under the TFB brand name.

US CASE SYSTEM HEADING FOR UK

Legal systems distributor Syscorp (01707 824824) has signed a new deal that will see US software developer Synaptec's Lawbase 2000 case management system marketed and supported in the UK and Europe. The product, which has a SQL Server back-end and integrates with applications such as Outlook, PC Docs, HotDocs, Carpe Diem and many practice management systems, is being anglicised by Syscorp and will be sold under the CaseFlex brand name.

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PUBLISHER BUYS SLICE OF VIRTUAL LAW FIRM

eLawForum.com, the US online auction site for legal services, has received an undisclosed amount of equity financing from Wolters Kluwer North America, the US arm of the international publishing group. The deal gives Kluwer a 25 percent stake in eLawForum, as well as a seat on the company's board of directors.

eLawForum founder John B Henry said it was unlikely the company would now seek additional outside financing. The company will use the investment for "further expansion into US and European markets sectors". In the latter case its only real competitor is Anthony Armitage's FirstLAW.co.uk virtual law firm. As part of the deal eLawForum will also make its services available to the Wolters Kluwer group. eLawForum says it is also in discussions with other "strategic partners". US sources report that eLawForum had previously raised \$4 million from individual investors, has a monthly burn rate of \$200,000 and a post-money valuation of \$22 million.

LOVELLS ROLL OUT REDLINER

Lovells has completed a practice-wide roll out of the DeltaView document comparison system from Workshare Technology (0207 481 6101). The firm previously used the now largely obsolete CompareRite redlining software.

According to Lovells desktop applications manager Ashley Jones "one of the absolute key things about DeltaView" is that it is compatible with email and has no difficulty comparing the content of documents originated in different file formats. Jones also said he "loved the fact DeltaView does what is says on the tin" and did not have pretensions to do anything other than compare documents.

Although always modest about its activities, Lovells is building one of the most effective IT infrastructures of any major law firm. Lovells will run DeltaView as part of its standard PC desktop, which includes Microsoft Office, PC Docs and InterAction. As reported in the last issue, the firm has also begun a major digital dictation pilot study.

NEW WORDPERFECT TO SHIP IN TWO WEEKS

Corel has announced that the latest version of its office software - WordPerfect Office Suite 2002 - will be available in the UK, Ireland and Benelux countries from Monday 14th May. The suite includes WordPerfect Version 10, which the company modestly describes as the best version of its wordprocessing application since 5.1. Prices range from £199 for an upgrade from earlier versions of Word or WordPerfect, through to £599 for a new copy of the Professional Edition, which also includes the Paradox database product and Dragon speech recognition software.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ADOBE PUTS PDF ON PALM TOP

Adobe Systems has announced a public beta version of its Acrobat Reader software for the Palm OS. The new product will enable Palm users to view content in a Portable Document Format (PDF) file format. A beta version of the product is available for download free of charge from the Adobe web site.

www.adobe.co.uk/betareg.html

■ STILL GOING THANKS TO NO VC

Sean Sullivan, of legal PMS supplier Thompson Moore Associates, says that while other legal systems suppliers may currently be facing problems, he believes one of the reasons why TMA is still going strong is because it is "unburdened by a reliance on venture capital funding" and so does not have to pander to the needs of investors who do not understand the legal market. TMA's flagship site is Gouldens however it also has a strong user base among Channel Islands firms, including one 400-user site.

www.tma.gb.com

■ E1 BUSINESS HAS MOVED

Marketing and CRM software specialist e1 Business has moved to: 1 Crown Walk, Jewry Street, Winchester, Hants SO23 8BD. The 01962 829750 phone number remains unchanged.

www.e1business.com

■ TWO BENS JOIN PERICOM

Two of Avenue Legal Systems' junior sales staff Ben Harris, previously at the Fareham office, and Ben Mills, previously in Manchester, have quit the company to join rival supplier Pericom Legal Services. Other ex-Avenue people to have either joined or become associated with Pericom in recent months include Steve Chivers and Dave Webber.

■ CUFF ROBERTS UPGRADE

Long-time Sanderson IT Systems user Cuff Roberts is upgrading to Sanderson's latest Galaxy Legal case and practice management system. The project, which is worth £250,000, will also see the Liverpool-based firm installing a network of 90 new PC workstations running on a Windows 2000 platform.

NORWEL SUFFERS A DOUBLE WHAMMY

Norwel has suffered a double blow with the news that not only were two of its most prestigious sites - Berwin Leighton and Paisner & Co - merging but also that the new firm (called Berwin Leighton Paisner - it commenced operations yesterday, 1st May) had chosen Elite as the platform for its new practice management system.

To be fair to Norwel, it and other traditional legal systems suppliers are increasingly being hit by the new orthodoxy which suggests that if you are a commercial firm with serious international aspirations, there are only four "world class" PMS products that will fit the bill, namely Elite plus Keystone, CMS Open and ResSoft.

DLA, which last week announced it had purchased a 2500 user licence for Hummingbird's Fulcrum knowledge management system, has also just begun the process of looking for a replacement for its old Axxia Arista practice management system. It too is expected to eventually choose one of the big four products.

BIG BLUE BUYS INFORMIX

IBM has just bought the database operations of Informix Software for \$1 billion in cash. Informix, as a company, will now focus on other areas of its operations and change its name to Ascential Software. Although Informix was at one point the legal world's most widely used RDBMS, since Unix went out of favour the product has been losing market share to Microsoft's SQL Server for mid-range NT applications, while Oracle has become the database of choice for larger firms. A spokesman said IBM will continue to sell and support Informix "for years" but would eventually combine it with its own DB2 product.

HELLO BLACKBERRY, BYE BYE LAPTOP !

With RIM's Blackberry portable email terminal now scheduled to hit the UK later this summer (see last issue for first report) it will be interesting to see if the device has the same impact on UK lawyers as it has had on their American counterparts. Along with becoming the gadget du-jour among lawyers, replacing the Palm Pilot as the must-have accessory, a recent study by Goldman Sachs found that the usage of laptop computers dropped by an average of 70 percent (in some instances as high as 100 percent) among lawyers and professionals once they were also equipped with a Blackberry.

In other words, it looks as if a lot of lawyers have been lugging laptops around almost exclusively to handle email. Goldman Sachs point out a widescale switch to the Blackberry could also have a positive impact on a firm's hardware, software, training and system support costs.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ EUROPE GETS THE CMS HABIT

Solution 6's legal PMS product CMS Open has extended its foothold in Continental Europe by securing three more contracts in The Netherlands, this time from Nolst Trenite of Rotterdam, Van Doorne of Amsterdam and AKD Prinsen Van Wijmen. CMS European distributor Timesoft Hansco helped win all three deals. The BGL Reads Group, a financial services organization based in Guernsey, has also recently placed an order for CMS Open.

■ VIDESS LAUNCHES CDS SYSTEM

Videss has launched a module for its Legal Office practice management software to process criminal contract work under the new Criminal Defence Service procedures that came into force on 2nd April. Along with allocating unique file numbers, the system also handles criminal contract payment structures and case status reports.

■ BAR FINDS A THIRD WAY FOR IT

After years of grumbling about the limited choice and scope of the IT systems available to it, the Bar now has an alternative to products from ACE and Meridian Law in the shape of the Libra chambers administration software from Clerkenwell Systems (020 7692 7173). Libra is an all-new Windows 32-bit application that runs on a Microsoft Access database.

Clerkenwell say Libra has the benefit of being both more reliable than the competition - because there are no legacy Unix or non-standard database issues to accommodate - and more affordable. The ball-park price for a chambers-wide multiuser licence is £15,000.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY JOBS BOARD

If you are a legal systems supplier or a law firm looking for IT staff, including positions in management, development, sales, support and training, you can post your vacancies free of charge on the Legal Technology Insider web site. Email job details to: info@legaltechnology.org

CRM NOT A PRODUCT BUT A CONCEPT

In an exclusive interview Rick Klau, Interface Software's new vice president with responsibility for the legal sector, told the Insider the big challenge for law firms was not to think of CRM (client relationship management) software such as InterAction as just another tactical product. Instead it should be viewed as a strategic concept. "The key is not to see CRM in terms of saving a bit of money by creating better mailing lists. Used properly it can help earn extra fees by spotting relationships that generate revenue."

Klau, a former practising lawyer, joined Interface from iManage in January of this year. His main role will be to ensure the company's software continues to meet the specific needs of the legal market. On his most recent trip to London he was also in talks with a number of potential new business partners. (In the United States, Baker Robbins has become a strategic consulting partner.)

The company is launching IRIS (an XML web interface product positioned as middleware between the user's browser and database applications) in the UK on 1st June.

DPS AND VIDESS LOOKING TO MAKE ACQUISITIONS ?

As uncertainty continues to cloud the future of some of the UK's leading legal IT suppliers, Osman Ismail, the managing director of DPS Software, has told the Insider that his company is in the market to buy out some of its competitors. "We are happy to purchase such brethren as see fit to sell, particularly those in the North," said Ismail.

We have also heard on the grapevine that Videss is on the acquisition trail. Although Videss tends to keep a low public profile, it is actually one of the most profitable suppliers in the domestic market, as well as one of the few with an apparently happy and contented user base.

SUBS PRICE HIKE UPSETS SCL MEMBERS

Since the Society for Computers & Law, a registered charity, announced its recent 60 percent increase in subscription fees, the Insider has been contacted by a number of SCL members, including one current member of the SCL's governing council, expressing their dismay at the move. Their views can best be summed up in the words of one management consultant who told the Insider: "The sub rate has gone through the roof yet the SCL is running far fewer activities than in the past and started charging people £20 a time to attend them. In effect all you now get for £80 a year is six issues of a magazine that is heavy going at the best of times. I'm seriously considering whether it is worth renewing my membership."

COURT NEWS BRIEF

■ COURT INFO KIOSKS GO LIVE

The UK's first touch-screen information kiosk has gone live at the main public library in Telford. The prototype kiosk, which was developed as a partnership between the Court Service, the University of Wolverhampton and Telford & Wrekin Council, provides access to forms and leaflets on court procedures and general information on what to expect when you attend court. Future plans include dial-up video conferencing links to Telford Citizens Advice Bureau so users can obtain further advice. Over the next six months the design and usage of the kiosk will be evaluated, with a view to extending the project.

■ BROOKE'S MODERNISATION ROLE

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf, has appointed Lord Justice Brooke as 'judge in charge of modernisation' with responsibility for liaising on behalf of the judiciary with the Lord Chancellor's Department and the Court Service on the various initiatives underway to modernise the administration of justice.

Sir Henry Brooke already represents the judiciary on the Modernising the Civil Courts Programme Board, whose task is to modernise the civil courts, including the Family Division. He will now play the same role on the Crown Court Programme Board, as well as lead the judiciary on the new Judicial Technology Project Board. One of the tasks of this body is to develop a 10 year strategy on the way judges could use technology. It sounds a dry old announcement but in fact Sir Henry Brooke is one of the most computer literate judges on the bench today.

TUNE IN AND WATCH LEGAL WEB.TV

Its new and its here. Legal Web.tv. Sit back and watch the latest webcasts on legal technology and new media law. The new free service from the publishers of the Insider is in streaming video format and requires RealPlayer 8. Keep watching. New content coming through.

www.legalweb.tv

TRAPEZE SWINGS IN

TrapezePro, a new 'image enabling' product developed by Onstream Systems in New Zealand, is now available in the UK and Ireland through its recently appointed distributor Ascertus Limited (020 7360 6026). Ascertus was formed by Roy Russell and Steve Tomalin - both have been involved in the UK legal market since the days of Quintec.

TrapezePro is application and database neutral, so it can be integrated with most document, case, knowledge and practice management systems. It has been designed from the outset to run across the internet, intranets or any other TCP/IP network - the image viewer can operate as a Windows client or as an internet browser plugin and there is also a thin client Java version available. And, despite its newness, the Insider understands that the TrapezePro product is already incorporated within the Land Registry Direct service, where it is used to provide a rapid online delivery, view and print facility for title plans.

www.ascertus.com

THE SUN SHINES ON KSB

London firm Kingsford Stacey Blackwell has implemented a SunRay thin client system from Sun Microsystems. KSB partner Ken Smith said the firm, which has run on a Sun Solaris platform for the past seven years, was looking for a new desktop solution that avoided the support and upgrade costs of Windows. The firm can however still access Windows applications by using Citrix Metaframe or SCO Tarantella. The system was installed and is supported by Productivity Computer Solutions (01924 281777).

iMANAGE AND PERCEPTIVE TEAM UP FOR DEAL ROOMS

Document management specialist iManage and Perceptive Technology are teaming up to offer a new online dealroom solution for law firms. According to iManage UK manager Tom Bird the approach - which is based on iManage's new WorkSite interactive web site system and Perceptive's Mentor KMS - will provide "the benefits of a secure online environment, where you can easily share knowledge and collaborate on documents, that goes beyond the capabilities of a traditional dealroom." The new system will be available from 1st July.

iManage last week announced record revenues of \$8.7 million for the first quarter ended March 31, 2001. This represents a 21 percent increase on the same period last year and a 9 percent increase on its Q4 2000 figures.

SYNCHRONISE YOUR DIARIES

If you are planning an IT event, avoid possible date clashes by first checking out the full list of legal technology and new media law events published on the Insider web site:

www.legaltechnology.org

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

■ **MAY 10, LEEDS.** E-commerce Strategies for Promoting Fee Earner Productivity & Creating a Web Presence. Breakfast briefing (starts 9:00am) on ways firms can create an effective web presence. The event is hosted by Technology for Business and is repeated in Bristol on 15th May. For details call Kent Brennan at TFB on 01932 781120.

■ **MAY 15, EDINBURGH.** Knowledge Management with LawSoft and iManage. First in a series of seminars organised by Pilgrim looking at knowledge and case management systems. At the Sheraton, followed by seminars in London (22 May - The Law Society), Manchester (5 June - Malmaison) and Birmingham (19 June - Post House). For more details visit:

www.pilgrimsystems.com

■ **MAY 17, LONDON.** Online Strategies for Smaller Law Firms. First in a series of afternoon seminars (1:30pm to 4:30pm) organised by Martindale-Hubbell looking at making the internet work for law firms. Other venues are Manchester 31 May, Birmingham 13 June and London 27 June. The main speaker is Insider editor Charles Christian. The event qualifies for CPD points and costs £75 + VAT. For details call 020 7868 4867.

■ **MAY 22-to-24, LONDON.** E-commerce Strategies for the Legal Profession. Two day conference at the Kensington Hilton Hotel (with optional workshop) looking at key issues involved in establishing an e-commerce strategy. Speakers include Charles Christian, Janet Day of Berwin Leighton Paisner and Mark Abell of Field Fisher Waterhouse. Costs from £1050 + VAT. Email hlewis@ark-group.com for details or phone 020 8785 2700.

■ **MAY 23, EDINBURGH.** CMS Open roadshow showcasing new products and strategic business partners at the Bonham Hotel. Starts 10:00am and ends with lunch. There will be a similar presentation in London at the Chiswell Street Brewery on 20th June. For details email: michael.ballard@solution6.com

LAW GYM NOW OPEN

London solicitor Patricia Ogunfeibo, who last year opened her VATad.com online tax law service, this week launches her latest virtual law firm venture: the LawGym.

LawGym Ltd (08707 307308) - strapline "is your business fit to compete" - is a Law Society regulated and fully indemnity insured legal practice that complements its inhouse skills with a panel of freelance solicitors, all of whom will be at least five years post qualification.

Although this sounds similar to John Yates' V-Lex virtual law firm, LawGym's spin on repackaging legal services is in its approach to pricing, with clients being offered a choice of fee rates for the same piece of advice depending upon the urgency of the work. For example, clients can choose if they want advice immediately by phone (£75 + VAT per 30 minutes), in writing within one hour (£85 + VAT), in writing within 12 hours (£65 + VAT) or face-to-face (£300 for a half day). There is even a 50 percent fee discount if agreed delivery times are not met.

www.lawgym.com

ONLINE CASUALTIES MOUNT

The casualties are starting to mount in the UK legal marketing and referral "find a lawyer" web site sector, with three of the services launched at last year's Solicitors NEC event already either closed or moribund.

Attempts to locate the Local-Legal.co.uk home page produced error messages. The LegalWeb2000 site consisted of one blank page, while the Law2U.co.uk URL directed visitors to a placeholder site containing no content.

Another of last year's launches - Law4Today.co.uk - is still in operation but the site has evolved into a general news site with legal links. For example, the Soap Zone section carries a link from a current story line in the TV series *Emmerdale* to legal advice on crime. However when we checked out the Find a Lawyer Zone, the categories (for different types of legal work) were empty. Some said they were still recruiting and others promised they would be up and running by "the end of the year 2000".

THE 40 PERCENT SOLUTION

■ 40 percent - the proportion of lawyers in a recent *Legal IT* magazine survey who said they felt the introduction of technology had made their lives more stressful.

■ 40 percent - the proportion of lawyers with internet access in a recent Legal Technology Insider survey who receive more than 40 email messages a day.

■ 40 percent - the proportion of lawyers with internet access in a recent survey by Interactive-Law.co.uk who check their own email. Apparently the other 60 percent still rely on their staff to deal with their email messages.

ONLINE NEWS

■ JORDANS IN EASI DEAL

Legal publisher Jordans has joined forces with grants specialists Enterprise Advisory Service International (EASI) to provide practitioners and their clients with web access to a database of more than 2500 grant providers, business angels, venture capitalists and other sources of funding. The service costs £250 per year + VAT for unlimited multi user access via Jordans' web site.

www.jordans.co.uk

■ LAWTEL CHANGES EU NAME

As part of an ongoing rebranding exercise, LAWTEL is changing the name of its European law service from EU interactive to LAWTEL EU.

www.lawtel.com

■ SCOTS GET DEDICATED SERVICE

Scottish legal publisher W Green last week launched the first ever online legal research service specifically dedicated to Scottish law and legal materials. Called Westlaw UK Scots Law, it runs on Sweet & Maxwell's Westlaw UK platform. Its content includes the *Scots Law Times*, a daily current awareness service, as well as the latest legislation from Holyrood.

www.wgreen.co.uk

■ WOOLF OPENS CLAIMROOM

Last Thursday saw the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf, formally open the first in a series of roadshows to promote TheClaimRoom.com online claims negotiation and settlement service at the Law Society's Hall in London. The roadshow will be moving on to other local law society locations throughout May. Call 0151 336 2002 for details.

The service's CEO is Graham Ross, a well known personal injury lawyer in the North-West who has also had a long involvement with legal technology. He worked with Tony Landes on the development of Quill's first pre-DOS solicitors accounts software package and in 1979 he was the co-founder, along with Gerald Impey, of the original Prestel version of LAWTEL. This service was acquired by Centaur in 1994 and totally redeveloped as an internet product.

www.theclaimroom.com

LAW SOC SUPPLIER HIT BY £30 MILLION CLAIM

The IT services company ITNet, which is probably best known in the legal market for running the English Law Society's IT operations as part of a three year outsourcing contract, is being threatened with a £30 million claim for compensation by the London Borough of Hackney. The claim comes after the 10 year outsourcing contract was terminated by the council after just four years amid allegations that ITNet's alleged "failings" had resulted in council taxes being left uncollected and the build-up of a backlog of over 40,000 housing benefits applications.

ITNet, which began its FM contract with the Law Society in February 1999, says it believes Hackney's allegations cannot be substantiated and is discussing a possible counterclaim with its lawyers, on the grounds that the contract was not lawfully terminated by Hackney.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ ELLIOTT SLONE GET A NEW MONIKER

With its integration within the Williams Lea Group now complete, litigation support specialist Elliott Slone has changed its name to Williams Lea Legal Solutions. The division will be headed by Howard Slone, previously the managing director of Elliott Slone.

■ NEW RELEASE OF ALPHA LAW

MSS Management Support Systems (01252 371121) has issued a new release of its AlphaLAW-vantage accounts and practice management system for mid-to-larger sized firms. Enhancements include greater flexibility in billing formats, support for firms holding a criminal legal aid contract from the Criminal Defence Service and extended diary and task manager schedules for synchronising people resources and events.

■ NEW SECURE EMAIL SERVICE LAUNCHED

The iomart (0845 272 0052) telecoms services group has launched a secure managed email service that will operate across the internet as well as intra-branch networks.

Called ThinkMail, the service uses best-of-breed encryption and firewalls to manage all email traffic in and out of customer networks. Users access their messages in the usual way via standard email client software, such as Microsoft Outlook and Outlook Express. In addition ThinkMail also allows Hotmail-style web mail access to email from anywhere in the world through a web browser.

Pricing is based on £10 per mailbox per month plus a one-off set up fee of £10 per mailbox. Each box has a 20Mb capacity. Extra space is available at a rate of £5 for each additional 20Mb block required. Special rates can be negotiated by firms wanting large numbers of mailboxes.

www.iomart.com

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LANDMARK WINS COPYRIGHT DISPUTE

The Landmark Information Group has accepted "a substantial sum in damages" to settle a High Court action it brought against Sitescope Ltd for the infringement of Landmark's copyright in its Home Envirosearch environmental search reports service.

Landmark launched Envirosearch two years ago - the service provides solicitors acting for home buyers with data on contaminated land and environment risk factors - however last year Sitescope launched its rival Homecheck Pro service which contained features Landmark claimed had been copied from Envirosearch. After Landmark commenced proceedings, Sitescope admitted infringement and the case was settled out of court on payment of an undisclosed sum in damages. Sitescope has also given an undertaking not to infringe again and agreed to changes in the design and content of its Homecheck Pro report.

In a statement Landmark said "We felt we had to bring this case to protect our clients, who were understandably confused at the launch of a product that was so obviously modelled on our own... This action was not about stifling competition. We think there is plenty of room in the marketplace for competing products but it is important that all the players stand or fall on their own merits".

At the time of going to press it was unclear whether Sitescope would still go ahead with a major marketing campaign for Homecheck on the LawZone internet portal.

L&H FOUNDERS THROWN IN JAIL AS SCANDAL GROWS

Lernout & Hauspie co-founders Jo Lernout and Pol Hauspie spent last Thursday night in custody after they were detained at an Ypres prison for questioning by Belgian state prosecutors. Both men were subsequently charged with stock manipulation and falsifying the accounts of the troubled speech recognition company.

In a related development, last week also saw L&H file a criminal complaint in South Korea against the former president of its Korean subsidiary, accusing him of fraud. The move came after an auditor's report revealed that 70 percent of the \$160 million sales reported by the Korean subsidiary between September 1999 and June 2000 were fictitious. The report alleges L&H Korea used fake customer invoices to inflate its reported income, pay bonuses and drive up its stock price.

Meanwhile, on the civil proceedings front, Lernout & Hauspie returns to court in Belgium on 5th June, when it will face claims totalling €563 million from 335 approved creditors. The proceedings will give the creditors an opportunity to vote on whether to extend a court order shielding the company from its creditors under the Belgian equivalent of a Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ **FISHER MEREDITH GO FOR AIM**
South London-based legal aid specialists Fisher Meredith are dropping their old TCO Dart IT system in favour of AIM's Evolution Client Server accounts and practice management system. The firm, one of the first in the country to be awarded a Legal Services Commission franchise kitemark, also plans to install AIM's case management software as part of the next phase of its IT strategy. Although Fisher Meredith was Dart's flagship site, it enjoyed an unenviable experience with the system after its original supplier Dart Legal Systems ceased trading in 1997 and then, last year, Dart's successor TCO announced it was pulling out of the legal IT market.

■ **AXXIA WINS 3-FOR-1 SHOOTOUT**
Argles Stoneham Burstows, which has offices across the South-East from Maidstone to Brighton, has chosen Axxia Systems to be the supplier of its new 350 user IT infrastructure. As the product of a merger between three firms, each with its own separate IT systems, ASB selected Axxia over the other two incumbents Avenue Legal Systems and Linetime because, in the words of chief executive Christopher Honeyman Brown, the firm wanted "a long term IT partner of substance" with the resources to help ASB "keep pace with the fast changing world of legal IT".

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