



Prices still tumbling for digital dictation

This time last year the price was nearer to £1000 per seat. Last month Lexacom announced it was selling digital dictation software for £199 per seat. And this month iDOiNK Technologies (01473 405000) has announced a special offer on its VoiceFLO digital dictation workflow management software of just £125 per user. The offer runs until the end of the year and is open to firms wanting to place orders for 10 or more users. *For more DDS news see pages 4 & 8.*

Insider web site traffic doubles in 12 months

Latest web traffic data reveals that the LegalTechnology.com site is now averaging 85,000 page views, 12,000 sessions and - for those of you who still count them - over 200,000 hits a month. This represents over a 100% increase in traffic on 12 months ago although the fastest period of growth began with the redesign of the site earlier this year. After the home/news page, the most frequently visited pages are the jobs board, the diary of events and the case studies/top 200 downloads feature.

■ For news, jobs, events and information visit what The Times newspaper describes as the "definitive online resource for the latest news about legal technology"...

www.legaltechnology.com

AIM in Infographics best of breed alliance

AIM Professional Systems have given the first indication that they are serious about breaking into new sectors of the legal IT market with the surprise announcement last week that they had formed a strategic alliance with the Scottish-based workflow, BPR and case management systems developer Infographics.

As part of the deal, Infographics' Teamflo case management software - a product the Insider recently identified as the only serious competitor to the Solicitec SolCase system - will now be marketed and supported by AIM. AIM are also reorganising their sales force to include a team who will focus specifically on top 100 type firms where Teamflo's best of breed architecture is more appropriate.

Teamflo has already been successfully implemented by firms running Elite, Solution 6 and Miles 33 practice management systems, and it will now also be offered as an option for firms using AIM's own Evolution PMS. However AIM are keen to stress that Teamflo will remain a stand alone, best of breed system and that there are no plans to replace the company's own Evolution case management module. This will continue to be supported and developed for firms wanting a fully integrated, out of the box case and practice management system. Similarly, AIM will continue to develop its library of predefined case management workflows for smaller firms with little or no inhouse IT expertise.

As part of the new alliance, AIM acquires control of the source code, IPR and future design direction of the Teamflo product. In addition, the current Teamflo R&D staff will now join AIM and be based out of the company's Edinburgh offices.

So where does this leave Infographics? Although the company now becomes a Teamflo reseller ...*continued on page 7.*

And another one bites the dust

More bad news on the events front with American Lawyer Media last week issuing the following terse statement: "It is with regret that we announce the cancellation of this year's LegalTech Europe conference in London. Despite the support and commitment from our conference faculty and sponsors, the current UK economic and industry climate does not seem to justify the event (which had been scheduled to take place on 4th & 5th November) being run in 2003."

Undoubtedly the market is flat at the moment and this is hitting delegate ticket sales, as well as vendor sponsorship and advertising, but we still think a major problem is the tired format of so many events. Or, as the IT director of one top 10 firm put it, when explaining why he would not be attending a forthcoming conference this year: "We're fed up with listening to consultants and members of 'the great and good', who know nothing about running law firm IT departments, telling us how we should be doing our jobs." *For more events news see page 6.*

News in brief

■ BAKER MACK COMMITS TO 5.1

Baker & McKenzie has just announced the purchase of an 8500 user global licence for the new DM 5.1 version of Hummingbird's document management system. The firm's chief technology officer Craig Courter said 5.1's "powerful email management capabilities" was one of the main reasons why, after reviewing some of the alternative solutions available, the firm had decided to extend its relationship with Hummingbird.

■ NEW QUOTES TERMINAL DEAL

Edinburgh-based Turcan Connell is the latest law firm to subscribe to the Quote Terminal live financial news and data service from Knowledge Technology Solutions (020 7623 3399). The service aggregates and analyses data before delivering it via internet and wireless platforms. Turcan Connell, which also has offices in Guernsey, will be using the system to support personal financial planning and investment management services for its private client practice. www.ktsplc.com

■ NLIS - ONE MILLION SEARCHES

The National Land Information Service (NLIS) has just seen the completion of the one millionth online search since the service was launched in the autumn of 2001. Since then - although it was only in the spring of last year that NLIS really began to take off - over 3250 law firms have used the service. This is currently delivered by three channels: NLIS Searchflow (www.searchflow.co.uk), TM NLIS Search (www.tmproperty.co.uk) and Transaction Online (www.transaction-online.co.uk).

■ LANCS TRIALING BLACKBERRY

Lancashire County Council's legal services group is currently piloting the Blackberry PDA/phone for instant email, calendar, mobile phone and text applications on behalf of the whole authority. The department is also using Outlook tasks to record file notes and the longer term plan is to link the Blackberrys to their new Norwel case management system. It is estimated that councils like Lancashire could break even on the cost of rolling out Blackberrys if their fee earners could increase their chargeable productivity by as little as half-a-percent.

New kid on the case management block

BPE Solicitors in Cheltenham is the latest firm to diversify into the legal systems market with the development of a new conveyancing package. Called ICON, the system is intended to automate and commoditise residential conveyancing transactions "to allow smaller firms to work in the same way as factory conveyancers". The system also has a strong focus on risk management in the design of the workflow processes, which are intended to deliver significant costs savings as firms "won't need to employ so many experienced fee earners to do the same job."

Based on the Solicitec SolCase platform, BPE are claiming ICON will be "the most fully developed, turnkey application of its kind." The firm has also set up a new venture - Intelligent Conveyancing LLP - to market the system to other firms under the slogan of "see the difference". Although the system has yet to be formally launched, BPE says it already has a healthy order book with 28 buyers lined up, as well as several indemnity insurance brokers expressing an interest because of ICON's ability to reduce the kinds of errors that commonly lead to claims against solicitors. The first full scale implementation scheduled for November and ICON is also being previewed at next week's Legal IT Forum at Gleneagles. For more details call Michael Swift on 0845 230 4266 or visit www.intelligent-conveyancing.com

Levison quits Baker Robbins

Andrew Levison, generally recognised as one of the UK's top two most influential independent legal IT consultants, has quit the Baker Robbins & Co consultancy after successfully building up their UK and European operations (the company has just reported its best ever figures for its UK operations including a 27% increase in turnover) over the past three-and-a-half years since his team joined Baker Robbins from Grant Thornton.

Levison says he wants to offer a broader base of management services to a wider group of clients and for this reason is leaving to concentrate on something "new and different" from the New Year. Levison (07860 584812) will working with Baker Robbins on some future projects but will also be able to offer other management services directly to law firms.

Hard times mean desperate measures

The lethal combination of another quiet period in the legal IT market plus too many suppliers chasing after too little business is producing some desperate measures. In a recent PMS tender in the London area, one of the vendors bidding for the contract offered to develop, free of charge, a brand new legal aid/LSC billing module for the firm in question - and that particular vendor still did not win the contract!

Brokers say buy Tikit but data shows market is flat

As reported elsewhere in this edition, the legal IT market has stumbled into another of its periodic flat spells however one company that seems to be bucking the trend is the systems integrator and consultancy Tikit. Stockbrokers Charles Stanley this week published a research note rating AIM-listed Tikit shares a long term buy and accumulate option. And if you are interested you probably do need to buy now (that is if you still have any faith in equities) as Tikit Group shares have increased in value by nearly 50% over the last couple of months.

The research note also contains some interesting data on the value of the UK legal IT market. Excluding personnel costs (which account for about one third of the total spend) Charles Stanley reckon that IT expenditure last year (2002) was worth £244 million. But as this represents less than a 3% increase on the previous year's figures (£237m) and just under 9.5% growth since 1999 (£223m) the market would appear to be not so much flat as flatlining.

Major iManage upgrade on the way for Q4

iManage (www.imanage.com) has announced details of the latest version of its Worksite DMS/content management system, which the company believes is the most important upgrade in recent years as it takes the product into a whole new league and - by implication - further distances itself from Hummingbird, its major competitor in the legal market. Worksite Version 8, which supports .NET and email management, as well as introducing the concept of 'matter centric collaboration,' is due for release in Q4 this year. *For more new product launches see page 5.*

Care gets to grips with new child cases protocol

With the new 'protocol for judicial case management in public law Children Act (1989) cases' (typically social services care proceedings in county courts) becoming compulsory from 1st November, family law software specialists Class Publishing (01652 652222) has introduced Care, a new application designed to help automate compliance with the protocol.

The system can handle all time tabling requirements, generate real time 'protocol calendars' with dates for all required steps in each case, produces all standard forms, documents and covering letters and contains a library of standard variable directions plus case management checklists and questionnaires.

The software is available at a special pre-publication price of £99.95 (+ VAT) for all orders received before 1st November, when the price increases to £199.95. There is a similar 50% discount on the cost of additional user licences.

News in brief

■ **BOND PEARCE WORKSHARE DEAL**
Bond Pearce is to roll out the Workshare 3 document utility suite for Microsoft Word across all its offices in London and the South West, with the software eventually being used by over 600 staff. The firm will run Workshare primarily in redliner and email based document collaboration and revision applications.

■ **EDWARDS DUTHIE STAY WITH TFB**
After reviewing their IT operations, East London based criminal practice Edwards Duthie has decided to stay with TFB and upgrade to the latest version of the company's Partner for Windows (P4W) software. Edwards Duthie selected TFB in a competitive tender against Axxia and a CMS offering from Solution 6. TFB picked up in total over £1 million worth of new orders in the English market during the summer months, other sites including Jacobs & Co in Cheshire, Robinson & Allfree in Kent, Yarwood & Stubley in the North, Harold Benjamin in Middlesex, Milford & Dormor in the South West and Clarks in Berks.

■ **FOUR TIMESLICE SIGNINGS**
A 54 user Timeslice Lawman integrated case and practice system has just been ordered by Lee & Pembertons in London to replace their current Norwel system. Other recent Timeslice wins include 50 user Hutchinson Thomas in South Wales, who are switching from Curat Lex to Lawman; 52 user Symes Bains in Scunthorpe, who are replacing a Meridian SolPak system and London start up firm Aldridge Parker.

Looking for IT staff ?

Looking for legal IT staff, including positions in sales, development, support and training? Then post your vacancies free of charge to the jobs board by emailing the details to jobs@legaltechnology.com

For details of the latest vacancies, which include an IT manager in the South-West, a £40K tax free application support role in the Cayman Islands, an ERP systems team leader at Norton Rose and an InterAction database manager in Australia, visit the Insider Jobs board at www.legaltechnology.com

People & Places

■ BALLARD JOINS TIKIT GROUP

Michael Ballard, who last year just missed out on winning the LOTIES vendor personality of the year award, has joined the Tikit Group as a senior sales consultant. Ballard, most recently with Solution 6, will be joining Tikit's sales & marketing team to work on financial systems projects and with the group's Aurra back office consultancy.

■ LONGHURST TO JOIN RESSOFT

Paul Longhurst is joining ResSoft on 1st November to take up the position of Head of Consulting. Longhurst has over 15 years experience of the legal IT sector, having held senior positions at Allen & Overy and Herbert Smith - his responsibilities at the latter for business integration and strategic services allowed him to develop a deep understanding of how IT can be used effectively to serve lawyers.

■ ECLIPSE EXPANDS SALES TEAM

Eclipse Legal Systems has made two more high profile appointments to its sales team. Former Laserform sales manager - and prior to that practising solicitor - John Donigan has joined Eclipse with responsibility for new business development. And Tina Jones, one of the best known faces in the legal IT market - most recently with Linetime, has been recruited to help expand sales in the East of England.

■ TFB TO SPONSOR SCOTS AWARDS

TFB is sponsoring the annual RJ Cuthbert Associates' Scottish Legal Awards for its second year. TFB will also be presenting the Law Firm of the Year Award at the awards ceremony in Glasgow next February. The inaugural awards ceremony earlier this year was attended by over 400 lawyers.

Keep up with the news

Keep up with the latest news between issues of the Insider by subscribing to our free ezine the *Legal Technology Insider Newswire*. It is delivered direct to your desktop as a plain text email. To be added to the distribution list, send a note of your email address, including the word 'News' in the header, to news@legaltechnology.com

SRC launches hosted DDS workflow service

SRC (020 7471 0100) has launched a new hosted digital dictation workflow service that will provide law firms with all the benefits of the full WinScribe system without having to invest in their own DDS infrastructure and operational support.

Instead, users will have secure access to a WinScribe system located at one of SRC's IT centres, with firms simply paying a quarterly charge based on the number of users they have. SRC say this approach "provides significant advantages" over the lower tech option of using standalone digital recorders and standard email to send files to secretaries for transcription, as it provides users with all the workflow management and reporting tools of a dedicated WinScribe installation.

Interestingly, in a move that also creates direct competition to the services offered by Voicepath (01926 821900), the Exigent Group (020 7229 0045) has just announced that it will be using the new SRC offering to provide its own law firm customers with DDS facilities, including outsourced transcription services. Unlike Voicepath however Exigent's transcription is carried out in Cape Town, South Africa.

Exigent reckon that by going offshore, firms can save over 40% on inhouse transcription costs and have already signed up Brachers in Maidstone, who are now outsourcing some of their transcription and document production services to South Africa. The firm has also used Exigent for database management and data profiling projects in connection with some major litigation.

www.src.co.uk + www.exigent-global.com

Voice technology news in brief

■ PETERBOROUGH WIN FOR STAT PLUS

Hunt & Coombs in Peterborough has purchased a digital dictation & workflow management system from the Speech Processing Solutions division of Stat Plus (020 8245 5116).

■ GOSSCHALKS WIN FOR TOTAL SPEECH

Following a 32-user pilot project, Hull-based commercial practice Gosschalks is now in the process of rolling out the BigHand (020 7793 8200) Total Speech DDS to over 100 users. The firm's IT manager Steve Savage reckons that, during the course of the TotalSpeech pilot, the firm saved at least three secretaries' salaries and associated costs by not having to fill vacant positions, with the result that within just eight weeks the DDS pilot effectively paid for the full firm-wide rollout of the system.

■ WEB POWER FOR VOICE POWER

DDS and speech recognition software vendor VoicePower (01943 468000) has relaunched its web site to provide users with unlimited access to downloadable voice macros for Dragon NaturallySpeaking and the facility to buy hardware and software online at discount prices. www.voicepower.co.uk

Latest product launches and upgrades

■ TART SYSTEMS GO LIVE WITH eBooks

Tart Systems, the company set up earlier this year by electronic publishing guru Ivan Darby, has just launched its first product range: a series of ebooks in conjunction with tax law publishers CCH. The interesting feature about these ebooks is they have all been specifically developed for use on PDAs, including Pocket PC/Windows CE devices, such as the iPAQ, the Palm Tungsten and Symbian smart phones, such as the Nokia 7650. This is in contrast with some other electronic book products that were originally developed for full screen PCs and then sold in a cut down version to run on PDAs.

The titles currently available include *The Finance Act - Mobile Companion* and for more details call Tart Systems (01483 742752). Also visit www.tartsystems.com/products.php which has a demo section where you can download sample ebooks of CCH's Red and Green Tax legislation volumes.

■ INTERACTION 5.1 CRM UPGRADE ANNOUNCED

Interface Software has announced the availability of InterAction 5.1, the latest version of the company's market leading CRM/relationship intelligence system for law firms. The company also announced the introduction of a new professional services offering: Data Quality Services, and a new optional module: InterAction Contact Verifier.

Explaining the background to the upgrade, the company's director of product management David Cutler said "Poor data quality is frequently cited as one of the primary reasons why CRM implementations fail. InterAction 5.1 is designed to reduce the time and expense associated with maintaining a high quality database both initially and on an ongoing basis.

"Many CRM products integrate with Microsoft Outlook and PDAs. However because end users' PIM and PDA use is not regulated by business rules, the data they contain ordinarily falls well short of corporate data quality standards. Accordingly, with hundreds of users synchronising their PDAs with a central database, integration of these devices has emerged as one of the primary means by which bad data infiltrates the system, thereby threatening CRM's success. InterAction 5.1 overcomes these challenges by incorporating data change management functionality directly into the synchronisation process."

■ NEW READY MADE WEB SITE SERVICE FOR LAWYERS

Hallmark International Marketing (0870 246 0344) has launched a new 'ready made' web site service for lawyers called LawSites. Based on a £69.95 (+VAT) monthly subscription, plus a one-off £99.00 set up fee, firms get web hosting and a choice of 21 ready-to-go web site styles. Although there are cheaper self-build options available, Hallmark's Peter Martin says the benefit of this approach is it minimises the amount of time - and consequent loss of fee earning revenue - lawyers spend on planning a site and dealing with designers. www.lawsites.net

Southall wins e-Loties online services award

Wragge & Co's head of strategic development Derek Southall was voted best online legal services champion at this year's e-LOTIES awards. Southall, a long-time advocate of bringing a lawyer's perspective on client service to the IT function, came in ahead of Kevin Doolan of Eversheds and Jonathan Maas of Simmons & Simmons. Wragge & Co also won the award for best knowledge management/information portal.

The e-LOTIES (a spin-off from the main LOTIES awards taking place in November) are organised by In Brief magazine in association with Legal Technology Insider. Among the other winners were iManage, who took the vendor of the year award and Tikit Granite & Comfrey who won the award for best knowledge management & information portal supplier.

Martindale-Hubbell won the best web site/online legal services developer award, and PLC beat both LexisNexis and Lawtel to take the best online legal information provider award. The award for best knowledge management team was won by Eversheds with Richards Butler and the English Law Society as runners up. However, having been pipped at the post in the previous award, in the best law firm library/information services team category it was Richards Butler that came in first, ahead of Linklaters and Allen & Overy.

The award for best online legal services project was won by Masons OUT-LAW.com (www.out-law.com). The award for best online legal services site went to Divorce Online (www.divorce-online.co.uk). TransactDirect (www.transactdirect.co.uk) was the runner up with Can-I-Claim (www.canicclaim.com) and Legal Budgets (www.legalbudgets.com) in joint third place.

In the awards for the best law firm web sites, the winner in the small firms (20 partners or less) category was Woolley & Co (www.e-lawfirm.co.uk) with Memery Crystal (www.memerycrystal.com) and Alexander Harris (www.alexarharris.co.uk) as runners up. In the big firms category, the winner was Reynolds Porter Chamberlain (www.rpc.co.uk) followed by Hill Dickinson (www.hilldickinson.co.uk) and Lewis Silkin (www.lewissilkin.com).

Legal technology events diary

- OCTOBER 15 & 16 LEEDS, Legal IT 2003 exhibition. *See next column*
- OCTOBER 15 - 17 GLENEAGLES, The Legal IT Forum at the Gleneagles Hotel. The event is now being run by the Informa Group and this year's show promises to be the biggest to-date, with multiple seminar sessions covering everything from how to win friends among managing partners through to the Bloody Sunday Inquiry. The event also offers an excellent range of social activities and networking opportunities. Delegate rates from £995 + VAT. For details email legalitforum@informa.com or visit www.legalitforum.com
- OCTOBER 17 BIRMINGHAM, Laserform is running a series of half day (morning) product presentations around England this autumn. Admission is free, the events qualify for 4 CPD hours. The event is followed by sessions in London - 28 October, Leeds - 5 November, Newcastle - 12 November and Bristol - 20 November. For details email jennet.ingram@laserform.co.uk
- OCTOBER 21 LONDON, ResSoft and Metastorm are hosting two seminars looking at the way a product like e-Works can streamline critical business processes within a law firm. The speakers include Martineau Johnson IT director Ken Agnew and Lisa Ingleby of Shoosmiths. The London event takes place at the Law Society and is followed by a similar seminar at the Le Meridien Palace Hotel in Manchester on 23 October. The seminar is free and you can register by calling 020 7421 4140 or emailing marketing@ressoft.co.uk
- NOVEMBER 5 SHEFFIELD, Norwel is running a series of one-to-one workshops on case management, the web and where the legal IT world is going. Each session is free, private, for one hour and by appointment. The Sheffield event takes place at the Sheffield Wednesday ground and is followed by a similar event at Bolton Wanderers FC on 10 December. For details phone David Phillips on 0161 945 3511 or email david.phillips@norwel.co.uk

Legal IT Leeds exhibition opens its doors next week

The Legal IT Leeds exhibition opens its doors at the Royal Armouries venue next week (Wednesday 15 & Thursday 16 October) providing visitors with their last opportunity to see most of the UK's leading case and practice management systems suppliers - as well as some of the bigger names in digital dictation - all together under one roof until next February.

We will be at the event and carrying a preview in our next edition however these are some of the new systems on show... **AIM Professional** will be providing more information about its new Teamflo best-of-breed case management offering. Leeds based **EMIS** will be showing the latest enhancements to its Seneca case management system, which now includes email management and integration with Microsoft Outlook and digital dictation. In addition, EMIS is launching YourCPD.net, a new computer based training system offering a range of CPD courses from as little as £9 per course to £175 for 12 hours of training.

MSS is tackling the demand for access to information 'anytime, anyplace, anywhere' with a new GPRS interface that will allow users of its AlphaLAW software to access data via a laptop or a PDA via a high speed wireless phone link. **TFB** is launching its Marketing Partner module which is a new system for firms wanting to develop and manage target marketing campaigns and can handle everything from one-off mailshots to chargeable seminar programmes. And **Timeslice** will be giving the first public demos of its new Cashiers Workstation, which has been 'designed by cashiers, for cashiers'.

The opening times are 9:30am to 5:00pm; there is a programme of two CPD accredited seminars running each day; admission to both the exhibition and the seminars is free and for fast track entry register online at www.legalitshow.com

Events news in brief

- **DIGITAL DICTATION ROI SEMINAR**
iDOiNK Technologies is holding a seminar at the Law Society in London on 30th October on law firm strategies for maximising their return on investment in digital dictation systems. There will be presentations from Insider editor Charles Christian, as well as iDOiNK and Philips. Admission is free. The event qualifies for 2.5 CPD hours and runs from 9:30 to 12:30. For details call Melanie Tuckwell on 01473 405000 or visit www.voiceflo.com
- **DOCUMENT PRODUCTION IN WORD 2003 SEMINAR**
Perfect Access Speer is running three half-day seminars next month (12 & 13 November) on maximising document production in Word 2003. This is an event for heads of IT, support staff and IT trainers who want a briefing on Word's new capabilities and the benefits it can offer law firms. The events will also be showcasing a new Word utilities product suite from Esquire Innovations. For details email Jo Viscusi at jviscusi@paspeer.com

Comms news in brief

■ BAILEY TELECOM WINS BLP COMMS DEAL

Bailey Telecom (0800 028 2229) has been awarded a contract by Berwin Leighton Paisner to install a new communications system combining voice and data over IP (internet protocol). The move is part of BLP's upgrading of its current Adelaide House and new St Magnus House offices. The two sites will be linked via IP over fibre optic cable. www.baileytelecom.co.uk

■ DAC INSTALLS RAINWALL FOR EMAIL

Davies Arnold Cooper has become the first UK firm to install the new RainWall for Clearswift MAILsweeper email management solution. The system combines Clearswift's email scanning anti-spam and virus software, with the RainWall email server and load balancing system, to protect both the content of DAC's email traffic and minimise any service delays or downtime. The firm's IT manager Stuart Cowell says RainWall has effectively doubled DAC's email capacity "thus giving ourselves a lot of headroom for future growth" while simultaneously removing a potential hardware bottleneck. The system was implemented by Rainfinity (01494 582014). www.rainfinity.com

■ GX NETWORKS TARGETING LEGAL SECTOR

GX Networks (08000 317 317) which was formed earlier this year following the merger and acquisition of five smaller telecoms companies and internet service providers, is now targeting the legal sector with a range of products designed to give smaller firms access to the same sort of telecoms services that previously only larger firms could afford.

One of the first GX sites is 15-user Philip Ashworth & Co in York, who have installed ADSL (asymmetrical digital subscriber line) with 512kbps of incoming bandwidth for the fast downloading of large documents. A router connects the ADSL into the firm's local area network to give everyone internet access and a splitter means phone calls and internet access can share the same line simultaneously, avoiding the need and cost of separate lines for voice and data communications. www.gxn.net

AIM & Infographics alliance

Continued from front page... and will continue to sell and provide consultancy and implementation services for the Teamflo application in the legal market, AIM are keen to stress that this is not a precursor takeover. In fact Infographics will remain independent and now focus its activities on its other product ranges, which include the FireWatch software for local authority fire brigades and the FloSuite system. Although the latter is currently in use in one law firm - Tods Murray - it is primarily a competitor to Metastorm eWorks and other BPR/workflow products in the broader commercial market.

Further information about Infographics (01592 750677) and AIM Professional (01482 326971) can be found on the web at www.infographics.co.uk and www.aimlegal.com The Insider 200 chart has also been updated to identify Teamflo sites.

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Document automation comes in from the cold

Although we have been hearing about the benefits of document assembly and automation since HotDocs first appeared on the scene in the late 1980s, within the last few months the technology seems to have finally come in from the cold and begun appearing in the 'must have' category of law firm IT department wish lists. In fact one of the sessions at the recent By Legal, For Legal event in Bath was devoted to a debate on the respective merits of different document automation products.

Interestingly, while Business Integrity's DealBuilder system was at one time seen as the main challenger to long established market leader HotDocs, it now seems to be increasingly viewed as a niche product for magic circle firms. Instead, among law firm IT directors the focus of attention is shifting towards Ghostfill, particularly now SJ Berwin are using it in conjunction with their Hummingbird document management system.

An added dimension here is that the Ghostfill project at SJB is being headed up by Terry Lawley who, thanks to his experiences in other companies of the Laserform, HotDocs, Rapidocs and Ghostfill products, probably knows more about legal document automation technology than anyone in the UK. Osborne Clarke also use Ghostfill to support their gamesbiz.net computer games industry portal.

A Microsoft .NET version of Ghostfill is scheduled for release in early 2004 and a number of Hummingbird DM 5.1 integration projects are currently underway both in the UK and United States. Ghostfill is now distributed in the UK by Ghostfill UK (08701 620680) and evaluation copies of the system can be downloaded from the main site at www.ghostfill.com

■ There is a HotDocs user group meeting at Lovells' Atlantic House offices on 20th October from 4:00pm-6:00pm. The meeting will be chaired by Derek Southall of Wragge & Co and features presentations by Lovells senior know-how analyst Terry Ponsford, who has been working with document automation systems for 13 years, and a preview of the new HotDocs 6.1 system by Seth Hanisek of Capsoft UK. For details email Simon Davis at simon_davis@wragge.com

It was 25 years ago today...

It is a double anniversary in the Insider household this month. Not only is it eight years since the first copy of Insider came off the presses to dazzle readers with its sparkling content and equally eye-catching halloween colour scheme but it is also 25 years since Insider editor Charles Christian filed his first story about legal IT. It was a feature article on a law firm that hoped its new Commodore PET microcomputer (as PCs were called back in 1978 - the PET had 4k of RAM, an audio tape cassette for data storage and cost £2500 + VAT) would replace visible record machines and "one day transform the way lawyers work". We know, some lawyers are still waiting for that transformation!

Cripps Harries Hall roll out DDS ahead of time

Cripps Harries Hall has rolled out a digital dictation workflow management system on a practice-wide basis to 150 users one month ahead of schedule because the pilot project went so well.

The firm's then IT director Tanya Collett (she has since moved to Masons) said she felt "the success of a digital dictation project lies in the initial adjustment in working practices, workflow engineering and making the cultural transition" to workload distribution. In Cripps' case the firm found that during the eight week pilot there was a 10% firm wide increase in inter-departmental work sharing with secretaries that had spare time actively searching other departments for outstanding work. The firm implemented the TotalSpeech system from BigHand.

It's a small world !

"Fancy seeing you here" was probably not the immediate reaction of Axxia staff and delegates checking into the Forest of Arden Hotel & Country Club last week for their annual user group conference, when they found the venue still occupied by Pringle clad staff and users from arch-rivals AIM Professional. AIM were just finishing off a golf tournament and both sides decided the most tactful solution was to politely ignore each other until the AIMsters checked out.

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■ **Coming soon:** The next newswire is scheduled for the 20th October. The next Insider newsletter (No.154) will be published on Thursday 30th October 2003.