
CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO WHAT'S HOT (AND WHAT'S NOT) IN LAW OFFICE SYSTEMS

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LITIGATION SUPPORT FOR THE MASSES ?

Bowhawk Consulting in conjunction with Oxford Law & Computing have launched a new service which they hope will open up computerised litigation support technology to all lawyers.

With the new service, once given all the case documents, Bowhawk will scan/image process them and build a fully searchable coded and indexed database using Oxford Law & Computing's Openlaw litigation software. They will also install the database and the Openlaw software onto PCs in a law firm's offices and train fee earners to use it. If necessary, they will even supply the PCs.

Where this service differs from the competition is on cost, for it is priced at a fixed rate of £1 a page.

"The aim of this initiative," says Bowhawk (☎ 01252 716694) managing director Nigel Murray, "is to give litigators, in whatever size of firm, the opportunity to learn about the technology on small to medium-sized cases in the easiest possible way.

"We provide everything that is needed to produce the discovery list, without any capital investment and at the lowest possible cost per page. Using Openlaw software, fee earners will be able to sort their documents, produce a variety of lists, create and store document sets and queries for the life of the case, using and re-using the original information."

This view is echoed by Richard Brockbank of Oxford Law & Computing: "Many firms are ready to turn to new

➔ technology but are put off by the start up cost and the burden of implementation and training. This combination of software, services and training is designed to make it easy to start - and at a very reasonable cost."

☞ **Comment...** One of the recurring complaints from vendors of litigation support technology is that although a lot of firms express interest in their systems, most will only consider buying if they have a multi-million document "mega case" looming.

In fact Martineau Johnson, in Birmingham, is the only firm **LTi** has ever encountered that has been prepared to cost-justify the investment in litigation support technology to help it handle a regular caseload of smaller matters.

Bowhawk say the initiative with Oxford Law is aimed at smaller firms with one-off cases falling into the 1000 to 10,000 documents scale. For them, even if they were as enlightened as Martineau Johnson, acquisition would be out of the question.

As these are also the sort of firms who would normally shy away from using bureaux (because of fears it could turn into an open-ended costs commitment) the cut-and-dried £1 a page deal now on offer could be just the incentive they need to adopt litigation support technology. Lord Woolf at least should be happy. ☐

INTERNET DEMOGRAPHICS

What do cigar smokers and *Financial Times* readers have in common? And why should this be of interest to law firms considering establishing a presence on the Internet? *For full story see page 7* ➔

NELSONS SEE NO DEBTS

Nelsons of Nottingham has chosen the Deptime system from Linetime (☎ 0113 250 0020) to help automate the routine aspects of its debt recovery work. The last month has also seen Linetime win orders from Blackhurst Parker & Yates, Percy Hughes & Roberts and from Hall Clark in London for a workflow management system to handle personal injury cases.

SIF FIGURES NOW MAJOR CONCERN

According to Geoffrey Rossetti, managing director of C-Law Systems (☎ 01548 857775) and a solicitor in private practice, the most pressing concern in legal accounting today is the preparation of Solicitors' Indemnity Fund calculations.

PRACCTICE OFFER 32-BIT UPGRADE AS STANDARD

This week sees the launch of a new range of 32-bit financial and practice management systems from Pracctice Ltd offering DOS and Windows 3.1x users the option of moving to Windows 95 or Windows NT.

According to Pracctice managing director John Taylor, the new system has been developed using Delphi so as to give users the maximum choice. Smaller firms can opt for a Windows 95 peer-to-peer network with Borland Paradox as the core database, whereas larger users can go the full client/server route with Windows NT and a choice of ODBC compliant database.

For existing Pracctice users on support contracts, an added attraction is that the 32-bit enhancement is being treated as a standard upgrade and no extra charge will be made for it.

Later this year Pracctice (☎ 01432 351041) will be announcing details of its "open systems" collaboration with document management specialists MCS. □

OYEZ COMPLETE REFINANCING DEAL

SLSS (Holdings) Ltd - better known as the Oyez/Solicitors' Law Stationery Society group - has just completed a £20million "secondary buy-out", with NatWest Ventures paying £7million for "a substantial majority interest".

☞ **Comment...** In effect NatWest has bought-out the First Charterhouse holding in Oyez, which it acquired in 1989 when it financed the original MBO from Robert Maxwell's Pergamon. All the Oyez senior management team - David Cox, Peter Cahill and John Hickford - remain in place although it is interesting to see former McGrigor Donald senior partner Ian Bankier has joined the board as non-executive chairman. □

NEW GUIDE TO IT SECURITY

In the face of figures suggesting computer related crime has risen by 60% over the last two years, legal IT consultancy Irwin Associates (☎ 01234 376319) has published a new guide to security planning.

Called *How to Survive a Computer Disaster*, the guide shows how to prepare an IT security plan and includes practical advice on what preventative measures can be taken, how to reduce the impact of a security breach, and how to recover from one, should disaster occur.

The guide is available post paid from Irwin Associates, price £37. □

AIM ON THE ROAD

Usher Systems and AIM Professional have commenced a programme of regional seminars, which will be taking place at weekly intervals between tomorrow 2nd July (Leeds) and 8th October (London). Scottish venues include Dundee, Peebles and Glasgow. For details call Joanne Hunter on ☎ 01482 326971.

As part of a reorganisation of the AIM Holdings Group, Stephen Taylor Parker has been appointed managing director of AIM Law Data. Changes relating to Usher Systems and the U-Litigate litigation support product are expected to be announced later this month. □

SOS ADDS AN EIS

Solicitors Own Software now offers a bolt on executive information system (EIS) for users of its Windows-based accounts and time recording system. The EIS product is Cognos Powerplay and provides a full range of tools for analysing revenue and expenditure for each department.

SOS (☎ 01225 448664) has also launched a new Windows probate package. Called Probate Manager, it also offers links to LaserForms for completion of probate oaths and Inheritance Tax forms, as well as an online help facility cross-referenced to Butterworths Wills, Probate and Administration Service. □

EMPLOYMENT SOFTWARE OPENS NEW WINDOWS

The ExeComp system, the first expert software program for calculating compensation on the termination of executive employment contracts, is now available in a Windows version.

Launched as a DOS package last summer, the original ExeComp system was a runner-up in the Society for Computers & Law's 1995 IT award and is already in use in Fox Williams, Baker & McKenzie and Macfarlanes.

The new version – which will run under Windows 3.1x, Windows 95 and Windows NT – keeps the same core legal framework but now has the ease of use and added functionality of Windows software. In particular, screen displays of results have been enhanced and print-outs made more comprehensive.

ExeComp for Windows is available from Cadence Europress (☎ 0171 274 5957) with prices starting at £395 + VAT for a single user licence version. □

FAX BY EMAIL

Leading Internet access provider Easynet has announced the launch of a new communications service called JFAX, which integrates two of the most widely used forms of electronic communications: email and fax.

On subscribing to JFAX, users receive a dedicated telephone number. Any faxes sent to this number are then automatically converted into a graphic file and sent as an *attachment* to a predefined email address. The free viewing software (JFAX Personal Communicator) enables the user to read the fax on-screen, file for later use, or print it out.

Although the user still needs a conventional fax machine or PC fax modem to send the fax, from there it can be forwarded on to anyone, anywhere in the world with just an email address. Easynet suggest one of the main

➔ benefits of JFAX over PC fax systems is that the receiving computer does not need to be kept switched on 24 hours a day to receive incoming faxes.

Easynet will shortly be opening a similar service in Ireland and are also testing a new system for integrating voice mail with email and fax transmission.

JFAX service costs £8 per month, with a set-up cost of £15. As this is an off-shore service VAT does not apply and existing Easynet customers can subscribe to the JFAX service without paying the initial set-up fee.

Call ☎ 0171 209 0990 for details. To download the free viewing software (available in Windows 95, Windows 3.1 and Macintosh versions) point your Web browser at <http://www.jfax.co.uk> □

JUST THE FAX

Ashurst Morris Crisp is the latest "Legal 500" firm to have moved to the RightFAX computerised network fax system. Other recent orders from major UK firms include Slaughter & May and Shoosmiths & Harrison.

RightFAX *client* software is available for DOS, OS/2 Windows and NT platforms and enables users to send faxes from any software application that can print to a network queue or output a file to a network directory. Pricing starts at £895 and the UK distributor is Fontware (☎ 01329 221121).

☞ **Comment...** Although at least two recent RightFAX orders have been placed by users unhappy with their existing Braid systems, it looks like the big match will be between Fontware and Hexar.

For the last 18 months Hexar has been making most of the running at the legal sector end of UK network fax management market with its FaxSwitch system. However, these wins by RightFAX, plus the fact Fontware is either on the short-list or in contractual negotiations with over a dozen other firms, suggest Hexar now faces serious competition. □

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT SALES BOOM

Quintec International (☎ 01268 270601) say the last three months have seen record sales, worth in excess of £1million, for the DOCS Open document management system. Recent legal sector orders have come from Clifford Chance, Cameron Markby Hewitt and Reynolds Porter Chamberlain.

MSS SIGN UP 27 SITES

MSS (☎ 01252 371121) report that in April and May AlphaLAW Junior systems were installed in 21 firms and full AlphaLAW-NET systems went into another 6 sites. MSS also handled a number of Junior to NET upgrades. John Meehan of MSS says firms are opting for Junior to handle their immediate accounting needs, then upgrading to AlphaLAW-NET when a full IT strategy is in place.

ACRONYM CORNER

Just when you thought you had mastered computer jargon, up pops another acronym to contend with. Meet the SWAN - or Secure Wide Area Network. This is where two or more organisations open up areas of their networks in order to collaborate on specific projects.

For example a corporate client might open a SWAN with its legal advisers for the purpose of exchanging data on a major piece of litigation. Or a banking client might require a SWAN link to the firms instructed to handle debt recovery work.

SCHRODERS FOCUS ON FINANCE EXTRAS

With the majority of law firms now using HP or leasing deals to finance major capital acquisitions, such as new computer systems, competition is hotting up among finance houses to win business. However, according to Schroder Leasing, competitive rates are only part of the story...

Having been involved in the legal market for over a decade and seen the way the use of IT was evolving, Schroder Leasing's Roger Farley says the company became aware that the traditional approach to finance - the provision of a lump sum to pay the supplier for the equipment - was becoming increasingly irrelevant.

"The market has moved on from buying boxes that are paid for on delivery. This may be fine for cars but IT projects are increasingly phased in over a period of months, with firms incurring substantial expenditure long before the system finally goes live."

Farley says a good example of this is the installation of network cabling or the way firms will roll out a system in branch by branch or department by department stages rather than go for the big bang approach.

To meet this need for interim finance, Schrodgers (☎ 0181 422 7101) has devised what it calls a "pre-lease" scheme. This allows funding to be paid to suppliers in tranches over a period of months, as different phases of a project are completed, but with the formal leasing period only commencing on the final completion of the project.

Schrodgers believes it is the only company in the UK currently offering this flexible facility. According to Farley, it is proving very popular with law firms as it gives them "one stop funding" for the whole project whereas previously they may have been forced to extend their overdrafts to meet interim expenditure on network cabling etc. ➡

➡ ➡ **Comment...** A recent survey of 500 solicitors practices in England & Wales by TSB Asset Finance found that 58% of firms now use HP or leasing deals to finance capital expenditure. Top of the list of assets requiring finance were computers, followed by office equipment and cars.

In the light of this research, TSB (☎ 0171 356 2495) has now launched a range of *Professionals' Asset Finance* schemes specifically aimed at solicitors. ☐

PRESENTATIONS - WILL IT BE ALRIGHT ON THE NIGHT ?

Whether for client presentations, internal training or to illustrate talks at seminars and conferences, the last couple of years has seen the legal profession abandoning slides and OHP film in favour of electronic presentations, typically Microsoft PowerPoint software running off a laptop PC.

But, this still leaves the problem of the projection system. For example, multi-lens Barco type projectors are expensive and usually only available in permanent seminar facilities, while the portable LCD panel on top of an overhead projector combination can sometimes produce a poor image.

One alternative now attracting interest is the digital projector system. These are self-contained, single lens units that are compact enough to be portable but project a far clearer image than can be obtained from a LCD panel.

The latest to be launched in the UK is the InFocus LitePro 210 system (the distributor is Steljes on ☎ 0181 213 2100) which can be linked to PCs, Macs and even VCRs. Prices start at £4995. Similar devices are also available from Polaroid and Philips in the £4000/£6500 bracket.

Another option is the new DP4100 from Proxima (☎ +31 43 35 85 200) This avoids the need for a PC as it contains integrated Adobe Acrobat software and so can run from a floppy disk containing the presentation saved as a PDF (Portable Document Format) file. ☐

ME AND MY PC

This month sees the publication of Richard Susskind's new book *The Future of Law*. This predicts that over the next quarter of a century the legal world will be dramatically transformed by the impact of technology. But what about today? How does IT impinge on Susskind's current role as a special adviser at Masons?

What is your main PC hardware set up? A Compaq LTE 5100 Pentium at 90MHz, with 24Mb of RAM and an 808Mb hard disk.

Which operating system do you use? Windows 3.1 on MS-DOS 5.0.

What are the main applications you run? Wordprocessing, email (internal & external), presentation software plus diary and project management.

What are your key software programs? Microsoft Word, MS Mail, PowerPoint, Schedule+, Milestones and various CD based information libraries.

What is your favourite program? I could not live without PowerPoint and the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition) on CD-ROM - or a screen saver.

What is the most disappointing program you have encountered - and why? Nintendo for my boys (age 6 & 8). It has become an obsession well beyond a bit of fun. The main problem is I don't get an opportunity to play.

What was your worst moment with a computer? Backing up a new chunk of my doctoral thesis in 1983 - and overwriting the new with the old. Everyone should have such a disaster once - but only once.

When does your PC go on in the morning - and get switched off ➔

➔ **again at night?** On a normal day in the office: at 7.45am in the morning until 6.45pm in the evening.

How many times a day do you check your email? There should be a name for this neurosis but certainly not more than every 30 seconds or so.

What do you never leave home without? A Psion Series 3a and a bag of cheese & onion crisps. ☐

WHAT, NO VERSION 2 ?

Several sharp eyed readers have emailed to ask why the latest edition of IBM's VoiceType software has jumped straight to Version 3.0 from Version 1.3 (see *Issue No 17* for details).

No mistake or mystery. In fact there is a Version 2.0 but that relates to a product never been launched in the UK and only available in the USA. ☐

L*T*i INFORMATION - A NEW SERVICE FOR SUBSCRIBERS

Need a telephone number, a product name, a contact name or any other elusive item of information concerning legal technology?

We can help.

As a free service - and only available to subscribers - you can call **LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER** on ☎ 01379 687518 (or fax us on 01379 687704 or email jcxian@cloudnine.co.uk) and we will provide you with the specialist information you require.

We are happy to provide the names of specific products, information on systems, suppliers, telephone contacts etc between 9-30 and 17.00 Monday to Friday.

However, please note the information we supply should not be regarded as an official endorsement - and nor do we offer IT consultancy services. ☐

NEW LASER PRINTERS

Lexmark (☎ 01628 481500) has launched two new desktop 16 page per minute (ppm) laser printers and one 6ppm Post-Script model. The company has also increased the memory of its entry level models from 2Mb to 4Mb but without increasing prices which still start at £1220.

THE ART OF PAPER FILING

We have all heard of *Origami* - the Japanese art of paper folding. Now litigation support specialists DP Advisers (☎ 0171 834 4068) has coined a term to describe its imaging and document management services. Say hello to *Egami* - the art of paper filing. It is also the word "image" spelled backwards. What will they *knih*t of next?

BRINGING AS/400 OUT OF THE COLD

Systems house Wick Hill (☎ 01483 772280) has launched WRQ's Reflection for IBM, a new terminal emulator giving Windows 3.1X, Windows 95 and Windows NT users direct access to applications on IBM mainframes and AS/400 systems over SNA or TCT/IP. Prices start at £295 for a single user licence.

NT IS FAST

Recent benchmark tests have shown that Microsoft SQL Server 6.5 running on Windows NT is now the most efficient database in terms of price and performance measured in transactions per minute. SQL Server clocks in at \$136/per tpm compared with \$151/per tpm for SyBase on NT and \$186/per tpm for Oracle on Unix.

SKINNY CLIENT SYSTEMS LINING UP - BUT IS HARDWARE AN ALTERNATIVE ?

Although the first products supporting the new concept of "thin" or "skinny" client/server technology running across practice-wide intranets (see *Issue 17 for first report*) should be available in the UK by early next year, one alternative now being mooted is a return to *dumb* terminals...

One of the driving forces behind the whole current intranet, skinny client, network computing debate is an attempt to reduce the cost of desktop computing. In other words, do users really need such enormously powerful - and expensive - Pentium PCs when all they do is record time and keep a diary?

Progress Software, developers of the PROGRESS 4GL database (which lies at the heart of a number of UK legal software systems) plans a US release for its new Internet Transaction Processing (ITP) architecture by "this Fall". This will provide an intranet alternative to the conventional client/server database architecture. And, in a similar vein, Corel will be releasing pricing details and beta test editions of its Java version of WordPerfect by the end of this year.

But, Wyse Technology (☎ 01734 340749) is now offering an alternative approach using hardware. Called the Winterm terminal, it is described by Wyse as "the world's first Microsoft Windows compatible terminal".

These are linked to an NT server (which actually stores the data and runs the applications programs) in the same way that *dumb* terminals are currently linked to Unix servers. However, as far as the user is concerned, it appears they have a Windows PC on the desktop and are using it to run Windows applications.

Wyse claim their *virtual* PCs have a number of benefits, including lower capital cost - the entry level price is just £395 - and reduced network

administration and management costs. Over a 5 year period Wyse estimate a firm could reduce the "cost of ownership" by 53% using Winterm terminals instead of a comparable number of PCs.

👉 **Technical Note...** Wyse claim that Winterm terminals are the lowest cost method of bringing Microsoft Windows applications to the desktop yet available with the same functionality and a Mean Time Between Failure (MTBF) of up to four times that of a conventional PC. ☐

SAGE TO UNVEIL TIMESLIPS

Later this week the Sage Group, the UK's leading developer of PC-based accounts software, will unveil a new Windows time billing and expense tracking system specifically "targeted at the accountancy, management consultancy and legal professions".

The new product is based around the TimeSlips system Sage acquired in 1994 and the company says it has spent the last year enhancing it for the UK market. A full report will appear in the next edition of **LTI**.

👉 **Comment...** The new Sage product looks as if it might provide competition for ProSoft's Carpe Diem. Meanwhile ProSoft Corporation president David Goldstein promises that the annual user conference, which takes place later this summer at Lake Texoma in Texas, will see the launch of some "cool" workstation productivity enhancement tools.

Goldstein has also scotched rumours that the company is to open a branch office in London. "We will be making more trips to the UK but with 45,000 users in 27 countries around the world, we feel it more useful to concentrate resources on one good central help desk facility. Users who opt for our premium support service have a 24-hours a day, 365 days a year package with toll-free calls and a guaranteed two hour response time. ☐

COMMUNIC@TIONS FUTURES

Web site operators are welcome to create hyperlink jumps to the **LTi** site at <http://www.cloudnine.co.uk/cloudnine/>

INTERNET DEMOGRAPHICS LOOKING GOOD

The senior partner of a solicitors' practice recently contacted **LTi** to say that although his marketing consultants had suggested his firm should establish a WWW site, he was not so enthusiastic because he felt "it is only children and techies who are registering on the Internet". Was this correct, he asked?

Two years ago the Internet may have still been the preserve of academics, techies, hippies and equally penurious school kids but the latest research in the UK suggest we are starting to see an increasingly sophisticated market.

The following figures are drawn from surveys conducted by Consumer Surveys, Interactive Media in Retail and the International Data Group.

These include the facts that 69% of Internet users are male and the largest concentration of users (29%) live in London, followed by East Anglia (12%).

Some 57% are earning over £25,000 a year and - more importantly - 29% of Internet users earn over £40,000 a year. (Over the country as a whole, only 7% of the population earn this much.)

The surveys also found that 14% of Internet users are managers, 10% are company directors and 23% are "professionals". Perhaps not surprisingly Internet users are four times more likely to be *Financial Times* readers than the man in the street.

With the number of *Fortune 500* companies with a Web presence expected to grow from 34% in December 1995 to 67% in December 1996, and the total number of Web users worldwide to reach 50 million by 1997, it looks like we are ➔

➔ starting to see the rise of what **LTi** has christened *The Digitally Awariat*.

The surveys also found that 59% of respondents expect their competitors' use of the Internet to become commercially threatening - and a massive 79% believe their career opportunities will be enhanced by having personal expertise in electronic commerce.

And in case you were wondering, Internet users also favour motorcycles and cigars but are not keen on bingo or caravanning. ☐

MERCURY TO TARGET DATA

Over the next five years Mercury Communications will invest £300 million in new data services. Mercury says the move is to capture a larger slice of the data market, as "electronic mail with text and graphics attachments become the standard way to transmit information".

According to Mercury "there are around five million networked PCs in the UK today and this number is expected to grow three-fold over the next four years".

Mercury is starting its initiative with the launch today (1st July) of the DataLink Frame Service, a high speed relay service that supports file transfer, LAN interconnect and Internet access.

Initially this will offer customers a 2Mbps (mega bits per second) service, which will be extended to higher 8Mbps and 34Mbps speeds later in the year. These faster speeds are designed to support "bandwidth hungry applications" such as multimedia, corporate intranets and desktop video conferencing.

The 2Mbps service is the same speed as that widely used for leased line services, such as BT's MegaStream but Mercury (☎ 0171 528 2000) reckons its prices will be about 10% cheaper.

👉 **Technical Note...** 1Mbps = 1024Kbps. To set these figures in context, most PC modems used for email and Internet access currently operate at speeds of 14.4Kbps or 28.8Kbps. ☐

NATWEST PLANNING INTERNET BANKING

The NatWest is to commence trials in the autumn of a 24-hour online banking service using the Netscape web browser as the software interface. NatWest IT staff are currently developing programs in HTML and Java.

👉 Last month Lloyd's opened an online service based on the CompuServe network.

EXPLORER GOES TO JAVA

Microsoft has announced that support for Java with Microsoft Internet Explorer 3.0 is available for immediate download at no charge from Microsoft's Web site at <http://microsoft.com/ie/>

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Don't miss the next edition No 19 out: 15th July.

Alexis Byter's
COMPUTER LORE

Wanted. Cool technology. By *cool* I don't mean trendy or gimmicky but technology that actually works. And works first time - without making me irritable and hot under the collar.

In common I suspect with most lawyers, I want technology to help ease my workload. What I don't want are systems that stop me from getting on with my work and earning a living while I try to master technology that appears to have been developed by people with only a passing acquaintance with either the real world or commonsense.

Yes, I know I can always find the answer in the user manual - but having to wade my way through something that makes *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* look like holiday reading and has been written by someone whose first language is Gibberish, not English, is not my idea of a constructive use of my time.

Of course modern technology is wonderful. The power of a Pentium PC or the sophistication of Windows 95 software is a joy to behold. But I don't really care what is "under the bonnet". I just want it to do the tasks I set it and without being required to jump through hi-tech hoops in the process.

For example, if I want to speak to someone in Australia, I just pick up a ➔

➔ phone and dial their number. But, if I want to contact them by email or transfer a file to their computer system, despite the fact I may be using exactly the same telephone line, I have to start fiddling around with software and worrying about such arcane topics as parity, local echoes, handshaking and whether I should have 7 or 8 data bits.

Excuse me but this is just meaningless drivel. I don't know what it means, I don't care what it means and, more to the point, I shouldn't be expected to know. I just want it to work and I want it to work now!

It is often said that the legal culture - wigs and gowns and all that - makes lawyers inherent technophobes who would not recognise a mouse even if they found one in with their cheese. But this is not the problem.

The difficulty is lawyers have chosen to practice law and most of them resent the fact that having spent a lot of money on IT to increase their efficiency in the delivery of legal services, they then have to drop everything and retrain as computer operators.

Why should they? Afterall no-one suggests that you should go on an automotive engineering course when you buy a new car. Or, that you need to be a consumer electronics whiz before you even contemplate heating up *Pot Noodles* in a microwave oven. □

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