

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY

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

In association with



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AUSSIE GIANT BUYS KEYSTONE "VISION THING"

One of Australia's oldest and largest law firms, Mallesons Stephen Jaques, has just ordered the Keystone practice management system.

MSJ spent 18 months evaluating what it describes as the three "big firm" products available in the world - Elite, Keystone and CMS Open - before selecting Keystone. This evaluation process included installing both Keystone and Elite on site in their Sydney head office for a full hands-on trial.

MSJ say the factors leading them to select Keystone included: the system's performance operating in multi-database mode across two servers - one Unix and one Windows NT; the system's support for multi office processing and Keystone's "vision thing".

The firm will now be installing Keystone on multiple servers in their Australian and international offices (the firm has branches across South East Asia as well as in London) and eventually have 1200 users online.

Comment... The Mallesons order comes at an interesting time for Keystone, as the New Zealand company has just been the subject of a reverse takeover by Calidore, a UK-based venture capital group. As part of the deal, Calidore has been renamed Keystone Software plc and floated on the AIM market in London.

Although support services and product development work will continue to be centred on Auckland, the head office will move to London, and both chief executive Graeme Frost and marketing director Kaye Sycamore will shortly be

relocating to the UK. Keystone will also be recruiting additional staff in both London and New Zealand over the next six months, for a number of projects including the creation of an international web-enabled 24-hour-a-day software support service.

Sycamore describes the takeover as "a very important milestone in our growth" that will position the company for future expansion "first in the UK and then in Europe and the United States". Among other things, the £3 million in capital generated by the takeover and flotation will be used to accelerate the development of new Keystone software modules, including case management. □

STOP PRESS - DPA-EGAMI LANDS FIRST US ORDER

In the late 1980s, the UK was a target for American suppliers of litigation support systems, who came over to this country hoping to corner the market. In the event they were unable to compete with the home-grown talent and most rapidly headed back across the Atlantic.

Now, in a "coals-to-Newcastle" move, UK-based DPA-Egami is hoping to reverse the trend and has just gained a foot-hold in North America with its first sale to a US law firm.

Manhattan attorneys Morrison Cohen Singer & Weinstein have bought DPA's Egami Legal litigation support package after seeing it in use and having heard its praises sung by London lawyers Manches & Co, who were co-counsel with them in a recent action.

MCS&W partner Fred Perkins says the combination of full text retrieval and the potential to create paperless litigation could represent "huge financial savings in large cases where the stakes are high". □

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Dorman buy Practice

London solicitors Dorman & Co has installed the Linetime Practice II accounts and time recording software on the firm's existing Novell PC network. The order was a direct result of a visit to the Linetime stand at this year's SOLEX exhibition. Senior partner Guy Dorman says that although the software has only been in place for a short time, it is already producing benefits, including cutting the time it takes to produce client invoices.

Smith Bernal "first step"

Following the story in the last issue about the law reporting joint venture with Context, Smith Bernal publishing manager Sarah Andrews told LTI this was "very much the first step... and one of a number of internet based services that we intend to launch through our web site". This can be found at <http://www.smithbernal.com>

CASE MANAGEMENT GOING "LITE" ?

Since Dibb Lupton first showed the legal world back in the late 1970s it was possible to make money out of high volume, low margin services such as debt recovery work - provided you computerised the legal process - case management systems have become a feature of most law office automation projects. But, is the technology now about to change direction?

While there clearly remains a role for the conventional workflow/business process reengineering approach which, through a combination of boilerplate procedures and management monitoring techniques, allows work to be delegated to relatively junior/low paid staff, there has been a growing awareness that such systems have little to offer fee earners.

The requirement here has been for a system that complements or assists the work of lawyers but does not, in the words of one managing partner "stifle their creative juices".

The solution now finding favour is what might be termed the case management *lite* system that allows fee earners to automate some of the routine chores associated with legal work (and which otherwise would have to be delegated to secretaries - such as producing standard documents, logging reminders in diaries and document management) but still leaves them free to direct the pace and direction of a matter.

The DPS system from MCS was the first of these *lite* products but since then Avenue has followed with DACS, Mountain with Rich Text (see below) and LTI understands another major legal IT supplier will be launching a comparable product within the next few weeks. □

MOUNTAIN CHALLENGE DPS

Earlier this year Mountain Software caused a stir in the legal market when JM Computing ceased to be a distributor ➔

➔ for the DPS case management system so it could instead sell Mountain's new 32-bit Windows fully integrated accounts, PMS and case management suite. Now Mountain is directly challenging DPS with the launch of its Rich Text Format Document Production System.

Like DPS, Rich Text is effectively a case management *lite* system (see main story on this page) that simplifies the production of standard documents by fee earners, while at the same time automating the document management side of the job, such as ensuring documents are stored in the correct directory.

Steve Kendrick of Mountain (☎ 01476 573718) says that as well as being able to create automatic entries on a fee earner's electronic time sheet and trigger diary reminders in the main practice management system, one of the major benefits of Rich Text is it replaces the need to use macros for the management of standard documentation. □

Scottish news...

PILGRIM TO PLUG CPD GAP

It is a common complaint among IT suppliers that users will nag and nag for the creation of a formal user group. However, once one is set up, the meetings are always poorly attended. But Pilgrim Systems thinks it may have found the answer with its Pilgrim Legal User Group (PLUG) meetings.

In a recent letter to PLUG chairman Alan Grosset, a partner in Edinburgh firm Alex Morison & Co, the Law Society of Scotland has confirmed that attending PLUG meetings was a "very suitable" way of fulfilling the management and professional development elements of the Society's continued professional development (CPD) training requirements.

The next PLUG meeting takes place on 8th October, for more details about this and CPD certification, contact Mike Smith on ☎ 0131 226 5528 or visit <http://www.lawssoft.co.uk> □

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NEW LEGAL AID BILLING SYSTEM TO DEBUT

A new legal aid billing system will be making its public debut at the Northern Legal Office Exhibition at the GMEX in Manchester at the end of October.

Called Legal Aid Wizard, this new Windows software package calculates bills from figures keyed in by fee earners, replaces the cost claim part of the bill sent back from court and produces the summaries, Legal Aid Taxation Certificate and CLA 16.

Threshold Computing, who developed the system in conjunction with Alsters Solicitors of Leamington Spa, say the software is suitable for High Court and County Court work and should reduce the time it takes to calculate the cost summaries on taxed bills by as much as 80 percent. Julie Allen of Threshold says one of the key features of Wizard is it recognises cases can drag on for years and has been designed to handle changes of both solicitor and/or VAT rate.

Legal Aid Wizard will retail for approximately £350, including telephone support. Visitors to GMEX will be able to take the product on a 30 day trial basis. For further details call Threshold on ☎ 01926 622501 or check <http://www.threshold.co.uk/law> □

AXXIA BEEFS UP FINANCIALS

Axxia Systems has beefed up the financial side of its Arista practice management system with the announcements of two billing enhancements.

The first is an auto billing module that will automatically generate draft bills on behalf of a fee earner or the accounts department. The second is integration with the Minisoft ARCS accounts receivable collection system, which is designed to help chase outstanding balances on high volume, high frequency billing projects. ➔

➔ Axxia is also recruiting new sales, support and development staff in a big way, taking on 17 staff in the past three months. Along with Andrea Pointing, (see L*Ti* 46) these include former AIM Professional manager Peter Richmond, who becomes an account manager with responsibilities for sales in the North, and Chris Widden who joins the case management implementation team from competitor DPS.

☞ **Comment...** There is an obvious synergy about the billing enhancements. One reduces the time it takes to get bills out to clients, while the other cuts the time it takes to get them paid. Together they should make a useful contribution to a firm's cash flow.

But, fascinating though this is, L*Ti* suspects the product most existing and would-be users want to hear about is the Windows NT/SQL Server version of the Arista PMS system that Axxia has been promising since May last year. □

LEATHES PRIOR TO INVEST IN WISDOM

Norwich-based Leathes Prior, one of the largest firms in East Anglia, has placed an order for Avenue Legal's Wisdom practice management system. This will replace the firm's old Kienzle Kisol Gold accounts package as the first stage in an IT project that will eventually see the firm installing new fee earner support and case management software.

Wisdom was selected in a four cornered race with LawSoft from Pilgrim, QNIX from Sanderson and Arista from Axxia. Leathes Prior's selection criteria included: having a practice management system that ran on Windows NT now, and having a supplier that could also deliver a compatible case management system when the firm comes to implement the second stage of the project. The order was placed with and will be supported by Avenue's regional dealer Saxon Computer Systems (☎ 01284 702562). □

Sanderson claim £1 million

The legal division of Sanderson Systems (☎ 01753 621721) reports that it has installed over £1 million worth of systems since the beginning of the year. Firms placing major orders for its QNIX software include Cuff Roberts, Tofield Swan & Smythe and Denison Till.

Window on imaging

Eastman Software, part of Kodak, has launched Imaging for Windows Professional Edition 1.1, a new desktop imaging application for Windows 95/NT that simplifies scanning, OCR, archiving and annotation, so incoming paper documents, including faxes, can be converted into editable electronic files. For details call ☎ 0181 231 3200.

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Litigation support news Computacenter (☎ 0171 493 4000) has released some details of the "paperless litigation" project it handled for London law firm DJ Freeman in the *Mowlem v. Eagle Star* case.

The project involved installing a Unix based imaging system at the firm and a PC network supporting all parties and the judge in the High Court. The 100,000 page trial bundle was stored and exchanged on CD-Rom, Livenote was used to create an electronic transcript of proceedings and DJ Freeman's team in court had email and megastream links to support staff in the office.

☞ Significantly, DJ Freeman obtained an order from the High Court to the effect that the imaging and related coding costs were "in the cause" and so fully recoverable on behalf of the client.

DEBT RECOVERY - IS IT WORTH IT ?

A new study conducted by business information group Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) suggests using conventional legal proceedings to recover debts is "costly and inefficient".

In a study of 3000 UK businesses conducted between January to July 1997 and involving total debts of £7 million, with an average debt value of £2,500, D&B found that initiating proceedings in court to recover outstanding debts leads to successful full recovery of debt and associated costs in only 26% of cases. For those cases where further legal action is required to enforce judgment, only 15% are successful.

According to D&B, the average cost of taking a debtor to court, up to and including summons, is £138. For cases involving enforcement proceedings the cost rises to £197. In terms of time scales, the minimum period a creditor can expect to wait for payment is 28 working days, while for cases involving enforcement, the duration of a case is likely to stretch to more than three months.

☞ **Comment...** Dun & Bradstreet say these figures help explain why instead of instructing lawyers, in some industries there is growing enthusiasm for using the services of debt collection agencies operating on a "no recovery, no fee" contingency basis. According to D&B, some of these agencies enjoy a 65% success rate with recovery times cut to as little as four days.

By coincidence, legal affairs minister Geoff Hoon MP told a Policy Studies Institute conference last week that the British Government was "reconsidering" its policy on US-style contingency fees for lawyers and looking into extending the present "no win, no pay" conditional fee scheme, introduced in 1995, beyond personal injury claims and insolvency proceedings and into other areas of legal practice. ☐

LEGAL IT SKILLS CRISIS SPREADING

Following on from the story in the last issue of *Legal Technology Insider* about the problems facing IT directors in large law firms (see *LTi 46*, page 4), a further indication of the depth of the legal IT skills crisis can be gauged by the number of recruitment consultancies now opening divisions specialising in finding IT staff for law firms.

Although Longbridge Consultancy has been involved in this area for the past 18 months, within the last few weeks rival consultancies Quarry Dougall and ZMB have both jumped on the band wagon and opened departments handling legal IT personnel. (This week Longbridge goes "live" with its revamped web site which can be found at <http://www.longbridge.com>)

☞ **Comment...** Interestingly (or worryingly, depending upon your point of view) it is not just IT "professionals" who are in short supply. According to Reed Employment there is also a growing demand for computer literate secretaries. Reed suggest the London area rate for temps who possess "premium" skills (defined as the ability to use email, spreadsheets and presentations packages such as PowerPoint, as well as wordprocessing) is now approaching £12.50 per hour. ☐

FRANSYS CUTS PRICE

Fransys, the franchise, document and case management system from Lexology (☎ 01642 489800) – the product it was widely felt *should* have won this year's Society for Computers & Law IT award – has had its price drastically cut.

Originally Fransys retailed for £4500 per user and although this did include PC hardware, the price was criticised for being too steep for its target market of legal aid practices. As a result of the latest price cut, the software now sells for a marginally more acceptable £1000 per user. ☐

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NOVELL BOUNCES BACK FROM GRAVE

One month ago Wall Street was predicting the company was on the verge of collapse and about to be sold to IBM. Last week Novell bounced back with a series of new product launches.

The launches include additions to the BorderManager family of network and internet security products and the launch of GroupWise 5.2, the latest version of Novell's groupware system.

Among the changes to GroupWise are: a new email gateway to Microsoft Mail; closer links between workflow and imaging applications; additional support for internet access and collaboration over internal intranets; and extended platform support, so users can run Macintosh as well as a wider range of Unix *clients*. The Windows 3.1, 95 and NT clients have also been improved. For more details of the product and Novell's upgrade policy check <http://www.novell.com/groupwise/> □

MICROSOFT AND COREL RETHINK STRATEGY - AGAIN

After several months of dithering Corel has abandoned attempts - at least for the time being - to produce a Java version of its WordPerfect application. The company will now concentrate on a client/server product that will run on an NT server and be capable of supporting a range of end user *clients*, including Windows 3.1 PCs. Corel is also working on a Windows 98 product to be launched next year.

Meanwhile Microsoft has given in to pressure from Windows 3.1 users who want to be able to upgrade directly to Windows 98, rather than have to move to Windows 95 first or wait several months for a direct upgrade. The change of policy means when it ships Windows 98 will be able to upgrade both Windows 3.1 and 95 systems. The bad news is the extra development work needed to support this feature will further delay the launch of Windows 98 until at least April. □

COMMUNICATIONS NEWS...

☞ City of London "first division" law firm Herbert Smith has awarded Cable & Wireless Communications a contract to provide it with high speed internet access. Herbert Smith is one of 13 London firms that belong to the LegalNet PSTN-based telecommunications network managed by Cable & Wireless. (C&W is itself the creation of the recent merger of Mercury Communications and cable companies NYNEX and Videotron.)

☞ Core Technology Systems (☎ 0171 626 0516) has just launched Faxination 3.0, a new version of its integrated fax server software which the company claims can save users of Microsoft Exchange Server 3.0 "up to 70%" off the cost of all fax, telex and mobile (ie calls to cell phones and pagers) messages.

Incoming faxes are directed straight to the addressee's Microsoft Exchange (or Mail) in-box, there are built-in report writing and cost billing facilities and further call savings can be made by "bundling" faxes to frequently used destinations into one call.

☞ Netstore UK (☎ 01344 395762) has launched what it believes to be Europe's first secure off-site disaster recovery service that operates over the internet. (Compare with the Valid Vault service reported in L*Ti* 44.)

Once configured with Netstore's *client* application, the user's PC will automatically connect with the Netstore secure Data Centre at scheduled intervals or on demand to back up all files that have been modified since the last session.

Although Netstore's *mirrored* data repositories are located in Leeds and Bracknell, because the system employs the internet to transfer files (which are protected by 40-bit encryption) a user can dial-in from anywhere in the world. A single user licence is priced typically at £10 per month. Users include Bond Street solicitors Jeffrey Green Russell. □

Macintosh... forget the new upgrade

Several readers have contacted L*Ti* to ask if it is worth upgrading to the latest version of Apple's operating system (Mac OS 8.0) particularly as it comes just four months after the last major upgrade 7.6. This was notorious for reformatting (and in the process erasing the contents of) users' hard disks.

☞ The view at L*Ti* (a Mac using publication) is stick with Mac OS 7.5.5. Leaving aside the fact most of the version 8.0 "enhancements" appear to offer few real benefits for most users, unlike the later upgrades, 7.5.5 is a proven stable, bug free operating system that will not crash when you try to run your favourite applications and is fully compatible with earlier Mac hardware models, including the 68030, PowerPC and PowerBook ranges.

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Seen around the Web...

☞ The latest version of the Microsoft HTML editor and web creation tool has just been launched. Called *FrontPage 98*, it retails for £100 (£79 for an upgrade) but is only available for the Windows 95 platform. Further information can be obtained by calling ☎ 01734 270001 or visiting <http://www.microsoft.com/frontpage> From tomorrow (30th) Microsoft's new Internet Explorer 4.0 browser can be downloaded free from <http://www.microsoft.com/ie/>

☞ A group of lawyers have set up a new information site covering legal aid, consumer law and similar topics of interest to the general public. The site can be found at <http://www.lawrights.co.uk>

☞ The European Court of Justice web site can be found at <http://www.europa.eu.int/cj/index.htm>

CLOSE CALL FOR LINK AND LAWTEL

The precarious nature of both the US and UK online legal services markets has been vividly demonstrated by a number of recent developments.

Following criticism in the press Legalease, the operator of the Link legal information network, has confirmed that its ill-fated Link 96 internet-based service only attracted 150 subscribers and that by the time Legalease pulled the plug on the service in August of this year, only a few dozen users remained.

This contrasts with the 6000 plus users the original Link service had at the height of its popularity. According to Link business manager Nigel Armitage, over 2000 users have already logged on to the new Link 3.5 service.

However, Armitage also concedes that not all these have accepted Link's terms and conditions of use and there remains a question mark over how many Link 3.5 users will be prepared to pay for the service when the annual membership fee is introduced in January 1998.

Another service to have been through a rough patch in recent times is Lawtel, now part of the Centaur group.

According to manager Rachel Lesiter, while it is true Lawtel has been in operation in one form or another for 17 years and is now in use at 1500 sites, almost all this growth has taken place over the last two years since Centaur took over and redeveloped the service.

LTi sources suggest that at the time of Centaur takeover, the Lawtel user base had almost totally collapsed and may have been as low as just 15 paying subscribers. Set in this context, the turnaround by Lawtel, which is a pay-to-use rather than free service like Link, is a truly remarkable come-back, perhaps only equalled in recent years by Tony Blair and the Labour Party!

Compared with other parts of the market, Lesiter is remarkably bullish about Lawtel's longer term prospects. ➔

➔ Along with the new internet-based service announced at the end of June, a number of other initiatives are now being piloted, including the use of *push* technology as a way of delivering legal information. "We've come a long way in a relatively short time," says Lesiter, "but we have definitely turned the corner." Lawtel is at <http://www.lawtel.co.uk>

Elsewhere in the online legal services market, Butterworths has expanded its *Law Online* web facility with the launch of what it calls the *Online StudentNoteBook*. Located at <http://www.butterworths.co.uk> this is intended to be a one-stop source of legal and general information for law students. It also includes an online book ordering service, a digest of the latest case reports and a chance to win £250-worth of student law books every term in an online quiz.

Over in the USA, Lexis-Nexis (another part of the Reed Elsevier publishing group, which also includes Butterworths) has announced an "alliance" with Microsoft to develop what is being described as "a web-based resource for the legal community capable of answering any practice related need".

Further details are still to be announced but this new "community" is expected to contain a mixture of law reports, legal resources, private and open discussion areas, email and document exchange facilities.

☞ **Comment...** Opinion in the USA is divided on whether this is the start of a significant commercial initiative or just another legal internet site with a few extra bells and whistles. Past experiences suggest the latter.

For example after several attempts to reinvent the service, the West publishing group recently shelved its *West Network* service, while *Counsel Connect*, widely regarded as the US market leader with over 26,000 paid subscribers, is rumoured to still lose money each year. Lexis-Nexis can be found at <http://www.lexis-nexis.com> ☐

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MANORIAL DOCUMENTS GO ON THE WEB

As part of a project to put the Manorial Documents Register for England & Wales on a computer database, the Royal Commission on Historical Documents (HMC), which has maintained the Register since 1959, is to provide remote access to parts of the database via a public web site at <http://www.hmc.gov.uk>

The site includes a search engine that can check 3,500 records in 15 seconds although at the moment the database only covers some areas of Wales and Yorkshire.

ITU TO RESOLVE 56K MODEM STANDARD ROW ?

With manufacturers of the rival x2 and K56Flex high speed modems still arguing over 56 kbps technology, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) has convened a sub-committee meeting in Geneva to consider setting a standard for 56 kbps modem communications.

The ITU uses a two stage process, first setting a "determined" (or interim) standard which, once ratified, becomes the final standard. Although the final standard for 56 kbps is unlikely to be announced before the summer of 1998, there are hopes a determined standard will be agreed by the end of October.

For further information check the ITU web sites at <http://www.itu.ch> and www.itu.int/itudoc/itu-t/com11.html

SPECIAL OFFER ON ISDN

British Telecom is running a special offer cutting £80 off the price of installing a high speed ISDN connection. Instead of the normal start up price of £199, the BT deal means it will now cost £119 (plus the usual quarterly line rental of £133.75 - add VAT to all prices). There is however a catch in that the offer ends on 12th October and lines must be installed by 9th November. Call FREEfone 0800 800 800 for details.

LEGAL IT DIARY DATES

October 1 - Services for the Legal Profession, Leeds. Breakfast briefing (starts 8.15am) organised by Coutts & Co, Technology for Business (TFB) and Coopers & Lybrand looking at latest developments in electronic banking, voice recognition plus case and practice management systems. Takes place at Coopers & Lybrand's Leeds offices. Call Jacqueline de Gernier of TFB on ☎ 01932 781120 for details.

October 8 - Interactive Internet Sites for Lawyers, Newcastle. Two half-day seminars hosted by Michael Kaye of Kaye Tesler looking at the way law firm web sites using the NKT Interactive system can generate new business. Sessions commence at 10.00am and 2.00pm. Cost £40 (+VAT) and the event qualifies for 3 CPD hours. Further seminars to be held in Birmingham (29 October), Leeds (12 November) and Bristol (27 November). Call NKT Computer Consultants on ☎ 0181 802 6817 for details.

October 17 - Mobile Computing for Lawyers, London. One day conference organised by Society for Computers & Law looking at technical and practical issues associated with mobile computing, including "hot desking" and its use by High Court judges. Takes place at No.1 Great George Street, London. Starts 9.30. Cost: from £195 (+VAT) and qualifies for 5+ CPD hours. Call SCL on ☎ 0117 923 7393 for details.

October 21 & 22 - Northern Legal Office Exhibition, Manchester. New two day IT exhibition organised by the same people who run the annual event at the Barbican. Takes place in the Windsor Hall at the GMEX Centre in Manchester. Admission free. Opening times: 9.30am to 7.30pm (Tuesday), 9.30am to 5.00pm (Wednesday). Call Truemist on ☎ 0181 742 3399 for details. *PLUS complimentary ticket enclosed with this issue of LTI.* ➔

➔ *Legal IT Diary Dates continued...*

November 26 - LITigate '97, London. Second annual one day conference and mini exhibition looking at case management technologies and litigation strategy. This year's event, which is once again sponsored by **Legal Technology Insider**, will include speakers from Davies Arnold Cooper and Dibb Lupton Alsop, as well as sessions looking at web enabled case management and intranets. Takes place at Café Royal, Regent Street, commences 9.00am. Cost £380 (+VAT). Call Forum Conferences on ☎ 0181 445 8060 for details.

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Next issue...
Issue 48 of the Insider will be published on Monday 13th October.

SUBJECTS IN THIS ISSUE

In addition to an issue-by-issue index, a cumulative index for **LTi** for 1995/6/7 will be published early next year.

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