

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

ESPRIT BREAKS PRICE PERFORMANCE LIMIT

Legal systems supplier MSS Management Support Systems this week launches AlphaLAW-esprit, a new accounts and time recording system specifically designed for smaller firms, including sole practitioners.

As with most modern accounts systems, this is based on 32-bit Microsoft Windows architecture. However, MSS has probably taken the product further than most of its competitors in terms of price performance, by delivering a comprehensive package of cashiering and financial management tools for the relatively low price of £895.

The system includes a client deposit interest calculator, the ability to handle time recording on multiple work types, full integration with Microsoft Excel and Word and an integrated nominal ledger that can be used to produce trial balances, profit & loss reports and balance sheets.

Remarkably the system, which receives its first public airing at the Manchester GMEX this week, can also offer multi-currency accounting and is "Euro-ready" - a feature John Meehan of MSS says will effectively make the product "future proof".

As a companion product to esprit, which does have the limitation of only being a single-user accounts system, MSS has launched AlphaLAW-esprit desk. This is a fee earner desktop type product offering client/matter analysis reports and on-screen time recording so all individual members of staff can have access to the back office accounts system.

Once again MSS is setting the pace in terms of price performance, with the desk product incorporating an innovative client email link (so information or reports can be emailed directly to a client at a click of a button from within the application, rather than requiring the user to go in and out of a separate email program) yet still managing to retail the product for £275 per user.

- AlphaLAW-esprit uses an Access database and will run on Windows NT/95/98 and Novell platforms. MSS is also finalising development work on a more comprehensive SQL Server based practice management product for larger firms. This, along with a new case management system, will be launched during the course of 1999. AlphaLAW-esprit commences shipping at the end of this year and, while it does take the entry-level niche formerly occupied by AlphaLAW-junior, MSS will continue to support the DOS-based junior product (which has recently been upgraded to Year 2000 compliancy) for the foreseeable future.

IT suppliers roll out their autumn collections Page 4

TIMESLICE SET TO MAKE COMEBACK ?

Timeslice, one of the older names in the UK legal systems market - but one which has kept a relatively low profile in recent years following its merger with City Computers - is on the comeback trail.

Legal Technology Insider has received an exclusive demonstration of the company's new 32-bit Windows practice management system, code named Lawman 2000, which is due to be launched in the first quarter of 1999. Along with the functionality now expected in all modern PMS products, Lawman is Euro-compatible, has some powerful financial accounting features and offers users a data warehousing approach to information management.

STOP PRESS

• EX NEW LAW BOSS CHARGED

The City of London Police has charged former Crown Court deputy judge Kenneth Bagnall QC with nine counts of theft totalling £375,000 between October 1997 and March this year.

The money is alleged to have been stolen from "next day" law reports publishers New Law Publishing, of which Bagnall was the former chairman and chief executive. The Insider understands the allegations relate to financial transactions that took place during and in the immediate aftermath of the November 1997 takeover of New Law Publishing by Croner Publications.

LEGAL KILLER APPS

Insider editor Charles Christian's new book *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* is published early next month. In his review of the book, Richard Susskind describes it as essential reading that will "horrify some and yet enthuse others".

"Pour a stiff drink and read..." Page 5

NORWEL WIN AT MARTINEAU JOHNSON

Birmingham's Martineau Johnson who, as first reported in LTI 67, has taken the distinctly unfashionable decision to upgrade to WordPerfect 8.0 and install GroupWise rather than move to Microsoft Word, has now ordered Norwel's practice management system to replace its existing AIM/Ushers accounts system.

The firm will also be installing Norwel's fee earner desktop, case management, EIS and marketing/client contact systems across a 230-user network. Implementation work has already begun and the site is expected to be up and running by early 1999. The consultant on the project was Richard Lambert of PricewaterhouseCoopers in Birmingham.

LIKE SENDING COALS TO NEWCASTLE

In a development which sounds like sending coals to Newcastle, CMS Data has appointed Horwath Computer Systems in Auckland, New Zealand, as its official distributor for the CMS Open practice management system.

Despite the fact Auckland is the home of the rival Keystone system, one of New Zealand's largest law firms, Russell MacVeagh, has already opted to order CMS rather than Keystone. Derek Giles, previously with CMS in London, has now relocated to New Zealand to head operations there.

KEYSTONE KEY MAN

Keystone Software, which earlier this month held a champagne reception, complete with string quartet, to celebrate the opening of its new London offices, has appointed Tony Caplin as its new non-executive chairman to replace Dan Taylor, who has now retired from the board. Mr Caplin, who is a director of a number of other IT companies including Easynet plc, has a reputation as a "company doctor" and is expected to help shore up Keystone's credibility in the City and limp share price, as well as overcome the negative coverage it still receives in publications such as *Investors Chronicle*.

AXXIA TAKES UP ARMS

In a break from its no-collaboration-with-the-competition strategy, Axxia Systems has announced that its Arista practice management product can now be integrated with the Beaver Corporation's Legal ARMS 32-bit all Windows debt collection software. According to Legal Technology Insider figures, ARMS is currently one of the top three best selling debt collection packages in the UK. The other two systems are Solicitec's SolCase and Deptime from Linetime. (SolCase is also a Windows package whereas Linetime is a character-based product.)

Axxia has also launched Axxia Advantage, a new reporting package that allows reports to be created in a web enabled format so they can be distributed via email or accessed via a standard web browser across an intranet or, for firms offering client access, an extranet. Advantage will receive its first public outing at this week's GMEX.

● COMMENT

Every grey cloud has its silver lining and with the country heading back into recession, there has been a renewal of interest in debt collection systems. There again, according to some suppliers this sector of the legal software market actually received its first boost earlier this year as a result of what was felt by some users to be the heavy-handed way AIM informed customers that its Debtco2 system was not millennium compliant - and that users who did not order the £2000 upgrade to Version 6 by 1st July 1998 would have their support contracts terminated. With AIM also saying it would not support non-compliant versions of Debtco2 after the end of 1998 yet at the same time warning it could not undertake to maintain the current £2000 "offer price" for Version 6 nor guarantee delivery before the end of 1998, many users felt they had little practical option but to move to alternative suppliers.

LAWGROUP MARKETING MOVE

In an unusual marketing initiative, the LawGroup UK network of independent solicitors' practices has teamed up with Complete Business Solutions to provide the legal input for a series business advice software programs. The series, which includes *Complete Contracts & Agreements* and the *Complete Legal Advisor*, is designed for businesses who want to be able to draft contracts or access advice on areas of commercial law without having to consult a solicitor. But the software also includes a solicitor/client interview "simulator" to help users prepare for meetings with their legal advisors and a geographical listing plus full contact details of 200 offices of LawGroup member-firms.

The software's legal contributors include a solicitor with Simmons & Simmons and Nick Roche, a partner with Hardwick & Co. The *Complete Legal Advisor* retails for £149 (+VAT) and is available through branches of PC World. Free demo CDs have also been advertised in the national press and there is an internet-based update service.

MOUNTAIN GO SOUTH

Mountain Software reports its recent appointment of the Professional Computer Group as its southern dealer has paid dividends, with PCG talking of an "explosion in sales" and new enquiries running at the highest volume it has seen in 26 years in business. In the past two months Glanvilles, King Prior, Dixon Stewart & Webb, Tanner & Taylor, Harris Evans, Mackarness & Lunt, Clifford Cowling & Co, Janet Sinden & Co, E J Winter, S M Reed and C M Lewis have all ordered Mountain systems from PCG.

THE LIFE OF BRIAN

The Toronto head office of PC Docs Group International has announced the appointment of the company's second new president and CEO in less than twelve months. The latest incumbent is Craig Wallace, who previously headed PC Docs' internet software division. He replaces Brian Zanghi, who was only appointed president earlier this year but is already leaving the group.

- As part of the ongoing integration of PC Docs' document management operations with its more recently acquired Fulcrum knowledge management business, the group has changed the name of the Fulcrum Knowledge Network product to DOCSFulcrum. These cosmetic changes aside, the continuing managerial upheavals within the group are calling into question PC Docs' ability to reposition itself as an internet/intranet-oriented document and knowledge management systems supplier.

Is iManage the new challenger ? - see next issue

LWD IN INTERACTION DEAL

Lovell White Durrant has confirmed earlier rumours that it was planning to buy Interface Software's InterAction client contact management system by announcing an order for a 1300 user installation. The roll-out, scheduled to begin in early 1999, will see the system being used by all personal computer users in the firm's 12 offices around the world. The order was won by InterAction's UK sole distributor Tikit Ltd, who will also provide technical support during the implementation phase.

CONSULTANCY NOT STUMPED

For the past five years independent IT consultancy R & B Consultants (01904 728650) has concentrated on projects for solicitors' practices in the Midlands and North of England. However as part of a promotional campaign to expand its operations throughout the whole of the UK, including Wales and Scotland, the firm has taken a stand at the Northern Legal Exhibition at the Manchester GMEX.

- GMEX visitors who complete one of R & B's IT questionnaires at the show will be entered in a free draw for two tickets to watch "World Cup England 99 Cricket".

<http://www.randb.freemove.co.uk>

NEWS IN BRIEF

- **CRIMETIME UPGRADE**

Gateshead-based Crimetime (0191 477 7728) has released a new lower cost version of its CrimeTime legal aid billing and forms package. CrimeTime 2, which can produce LAB forms Claim 7, 8, 9, 10, 13 and 14, runs in conjunction with a Microsoft Excel 97 spreadsheet and retails for £250 (+VAT). This is half the price of the original CrimeTime system reviewed in LTI 25 in October 1996.

- **NEW COSTS PLUS**

Wordwright Associates (01473 212752) has announced a major upgrade to its Costs Plus taxation costing software. It can now produce multi-part bills automatically - these are required where there has been a change of solicitor during the lifetime of a case or in cases involving pre or post-legal aid work. In response to client feedback, Wordwright has also added specific itemisations to the contents of the bill, to provide the increased detail many taxing officers now demand.

- **LEXOLOGY PHONES HOME**

Legal systems supplier Lexology Ltd has upgraded its phone system. The new main switchboard number is: 01642 282000 and for fax: 01642 288200.

- **COPITRAK RELOCATES**

Cost recovery systems specialist Copittrak has relocated its UK operations. The new address is: Copittrak Systems Ltd, One St. Thomas Street, London SE1 9RY. Phone: 0171 234 3000, fax: 0171 234 3003 or email: info@copittrak-europe.com

- **DICTAPHONE NOW TALKS CONTINUOUSLY**

Dictaphone (01926 821111) has just announced its network-based digital dictation system Enterprise Express is now available with a fully integrated continuous speech recognition function. The Dictaphone system uses specialised vocabulary modules called "contexts" which have been designed specifically for lawyers to combine a high level of accuracy with near real time voice to text transcription. Enterprise Express runs on a Windows NT/SQL Server platform.

MEDIA NEWS BRIEFS

● NEW EDITOR AT THE LAWYER

Business journalist Sean Brierley has been appointed editor of *The Lawyer* magazine. According to sources although new to the world of legal journalism Brierley, who has worked on a number of business magazines including *Marketing Week*, is expected "to bring a fresh perspective to *The Lawyer*" and in this week's *Guardian* is advertising for eight new editorial staff, including a features editor and four reporters.

Brierley replaces Mary Heaney, who has joined former-publisher Mark Wyatt, along with display ad manager Selina Hayball and a number of other ex-Centaur staff, who are now reported to be working on new projects, including a possible magazine to rival *The Lawyer*. But, as the head of another legal publishing group told LTI, "This seems a brave thing to do with the winds of recession blowing into the legal recruitment advertising market."

● ARMITAGE LEAVING LINK

Nigel Armitage, the business manager for the LINK online information network, is leaving legal publisher Legalease at the end of October to take up a directorship with a new intranet service for doctors. Armitage was also a contributing editor for *Legal Business* and editor of the *IT & Communications Newsletter*.

ONLINE FILING AT COMPANIES HOUSE

Companies House in Cardiff has formally launched its new electronic filing service. This will allow businesses to file certain companies documents via email rather than on paper. The British government hopes 25 percent of all Companies House filings will be handled electronically by the year 2002.

The documents that can now be filed electronically include the annual return (Form 363) plus Forms 287, 288a, 288b and 288c relating to changes of directors, secretaries and registered offices.

● Jordans is to upgrade its PC Sec company secretarial software so users can take advantage of electronic filing.

IT SUPPLIERS ROLL OUT AUTUMN COLLECTION

The autumn used to be a quiet time for new product launches but with more firms commencing their IT buying cycles after the Long Vacation, so a growing number of legal IT suppliers have begun rolling out their latest offerings at this time of the year, with this week's Northern Legal Office Exhibition at the Manchester GMEX providing an obvious focal point. Along with the new products and services from MSS, R & B and Axxia (mentioned elsewhere) other suppliers launching new systems include:

● **LASERFORM LAW** (01565 755154) is showing its new Legal Accounts 32-bit, Windows NT-based practice management system. The product is based on the Microsoft Access database, so it should appeal to smaller firms. Laserform will also be offering free upgrades to users of their existing accounts software.

● **DATA MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES** (01554 741144). This South Wales-based newcomer will unveil an integrated case, document and practice management system called Sentinel. Long-time Solace/Stukely manager Kirsty McDonald is now with this company.

● **SANDERSON SYSTEMS** (0121 359 4861) will be giving the first public demonstrations of its new Galaxy range of integrated practice and case management systems for the local government inhouse legal department and solicitors' private practice markets. This SQL Server system builds on the strengths of the older Qnix and Admiral LegalMind products.

● **ECLATECH** (01772 827607) is a spin-off from Preston law firm A D Varley & Co and is making its debut at GMEX with Conveyancer's Assistant, a DPS-like file management and document production system for conveyancers working in the residential property market. An evaluation copy of the software is available on disk or can be downloaded from the web. <http://www.eclatech.com>

● **ECLIPSE LEGAL SYSTEMS** (01274 395299) is showing the latest additions to its range of personal injury case management systems, including a new module for handling specialist NHS hospital work.

● **LEXOLOGY** (01642 282000). Along with the company's office management system, which incorporates a "virtual case file, Lexology will be showing a new South African document assembly system call GhostFill.

● **FWBS** (01604 828228). Late entrant Franklins Walker Business Systems, another law firm spin off, will be showing its OMS office management software on stand 40 in association with systems integrator Pericom.

POUR A STIFF DRINK AND READ THIS BOOK

Insider editor Charles Christian's new book *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* is launched this week. Richard Susskind, the author of *The Future of Law* has this to say about it...

"My advice to all lawyers in the land is to block three hours out of the diary, pour a stiff drink and read Charles Christian's *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* in one sitting.

"Written with the punch and panache that is characteristic of the UK's leading legal technology journalist, Christian convincingly points to an increasingly competitive legal marketplace, he presents an arresting account of how rapidly IT is changing our world, and he does not leave any doubt that lawyers must embrace technology to survive.

"Along the way, Christian rejects the over-optimism of evangelistic futurists, he condemns the complacency of those who deny that radical change is upon us and he also disposes of the doom merchants who are predicting the imminent demise of the legal profession whatever IT has to offer.

"He rightly recognises that the legal marketplace is so diverse that there is no single application of IT (no "killer app") that of itself will change the work of lawyers. Yet Christian argues with conviction that a group of technologies - telephony, email, document exchange systems, information access systems, the world wide web and video conferencing - in combination are vital for the legal profession of the future.

"This is a vision which will horrify some, nonplus many, and yet enthuse others. Whatever the reactions may be, it is a future Christian compels all lawyers to face squarely."

● *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* by Charles Christian. Paperback, 128 pages, price £19.99 (ISBN: 0 906097 35 5). Published by Bowerdean Publishing, 8 Abbotstone Road, London SW15 1QR (phone: 0181 788 0938).

NEW ACCOUNTS SUPPORT SITE

Irwin Associates, who now sell a Y2K compliant DOS version of the Kestrel legal accounts system for £99 +VAT, can also offer user support facilities via their web site.

<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/irwin>

HR TRAINING VIA INTRANET

Human resources (HR) software provider PWA Personnel Systems (01628 404538) has been awarded a £70,000 contract by Hammond Suddards to provide a complete personnel and training system for 1200 staff based in four offices around the UK. The new system, which is based around PWA's Empower range of 32-bit software, will allow staff to access and update specific aspects of their personnel records via PWA's Employee Self-Service intranet application.

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

OLD BAILEY PUT IN THE PICTURE

Audio-visual specialist McMillan UK has opened a dedicated videoconferencing demonstration facility at the office furniture showrooms of Stavertons at 4 Old Bailey, London. McMillan is targeting City-based law firms and the facility is based around the Sony Tricom range of "roll about" videoconference systems. For details call: 0171 332 0332.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

● AIM SEMINARS

A series of free seminars around the UK (the Scottish dates are Edinburgh 27th October and Glasgow 10th November) until 17th November to promote AIM's case and practice management systems. Call AIM on: 01482 326971 for details.

● AVENUE SEMINARS

A series of free seminars running until 13th April to promote Avenue Legal Systems' Wisdom suite of practice and case management software. Call Clare Wynn at Avenue's Manchester office on: 0161 776 4387 for details.

● AXXIA SEMINARS

A series of free seminars running until 12th November on fee earner productivity and case management to promote Axxia products. Call Claire Jones or James Lambert on: 0118 960 2602 for details.

● LEGAL MONTE CARLO 98

Major "networking" opportunity for inhouse lawyers to meet law firms pitching for corporate business. The event runs from 30th October to 2nd November. Call: 0171 578 7235.

● KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

One day Centaur conference on Monday 16 November looking at the role of intranets and know-how systems within law firms. Speakers from Allen & Overy and Ashurst Morris Crisp. The chairman is Clive Whitfield-Jones of Jeffrey Green Russell. Starts 9.30, ends 17.30. Tickets £417 + VAT. Call: 0171 970 4770.

NETWORKS NEWS

● LAWLINK BEEFS UP

Following its recent launch, Lawlink UK is beefing up the technology side of its operations through a strategic alliance with Virtual Internet Provider Ltd. VIP is a joint venture company set up by Cable & Wireless, ICL and router hardware supplier Cisco to provide the comms infrastructure needed to support services such as Lawlink.

Lawlink's parent group IFG last week also launched Business Gold, a new online service for general business users.
<http://www.businessgold.com>

● WE CAN WORK TOGETHER

Lawyers Online, which earlier this month blitzed the English legal market with 84,000 CDs containing the software needed to access its new ISP-for-lawyers service, has told the Insider that it is hoping to collaborate with Lawlink on joint venture projects.

From comments the Insider has heard from some of the recipients of the CD, it would seem the Lawyers Online service is getting only a lukewarm reception. The main issues are: a reluctance to install another browser (Internet Explorer) by people who are already happily using Netscape, concern about incurring premium rate phone call charges and complaints about the inadequacy of the documentation accompanying the CD.

● MORE SERVICES ON WAY ?

If the market was not crowded enough already, two more companies are now sniffing around the legal sector.

The first of these is Sift plc, a Bristol-based company - motto "Sift before you surf" - set up by two former CompuServe directors to develop extranet/web portals for specific business "communities". Sift has already set up AccountingWeb for accountants and has been talking to publishers and content providers about a similar venture in the legal market.

The second potential player - and arguably the one that could have the greatest impact on the competition - is BT, which LTI understands is evaluating a dedicated communications plus online information service for lawyers.

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

AVOID BEING FRAMED

In the latest edition of *The Internet Lawyer*, US attorney Kenneth Johnson warns of the growing problem of law firms having information they publish on their web sites, such as legal commentaries, "actively borrowed" through the process of "framing".

This is relatively simple to achieve because most frame-based web sites split the screen into three separate sections: a vertical frame to the left that acts as the table of contents, a horizontal frame across the top displaying the firm's name and logo and a frame occupying the rest of the screen containing the "meat" of the site. To "frame" a site, all you do is create a link that displays the third frame contents of someone else's web site in the otherwise blank third frame of your own site. Because the other two frames contain your logo and branding, it will not be apparent to visitors to your site that the third frame's content actually belongs to another site.

Although you can include a <TARGET=_top> attribute on each <A HREF> anchor tag in a site's HTML coding, which will remove the side frames from the VDU screen, probably the more straightforward solution is to ensure a firm brands every page and frame with its name, logo and contact details so there can be no mistaking the original source of the material. Most web search engines (AltaVista, Yahoo etc) include facilities that allow you to search for sites with links to your URL, so you can check who is "borrowing" material.

<http://www.internetlawyer.com>

LINKLATERS NEW WEB SITE

After operating the innovative Blue Flag service as a commercial extranet for the last couple of years, Linklaters has now launched its first conventional web site.

It is a clean site, uncluttered by irrelevant spinning logos, pictures of office buildings or, worse still, mug shots of grinning partners, with logical links to information about the firm's offices, areas of practice (including a link to Blue Flag) and fee earners. The only complaint LTI has is some of the colour schemes (such as white on pale green) are so subtle that the wording becomes hard to read.

<http://www.linklaters.com>

FIND THAT BOOK

Waterlows has added a "Bookfinder" facility to its web site. This is a free service that allows users to search a database of current publications from major legal publishers in the UK. Waterlows say the site is still in its prototype stage and will eventually be expanded to allow books to be ordered directly via the internet. Presumably it still being a prototype explains why the Bookfinder service does not appear on the site's home page - you have to find it via the Solicitors & Barristers Directories sub-menu.

<http://www.waterlow.com/legalweb/>

PINSENT CURTIS CUT SUPPORT TIMES

As part of a strategy to reduce the ratio of support staff to fee earners, over the past two years Pinsent Curtis has been engaged in a major upgrade of its IT infrastructure.

By May 1998 the firm had installed 600 workstations and provided desktop or laptop PCs for every partner and fee earner. But, with a wide area network encompassing its Birmingham, London and Leeds offices, the firm decided that end user PCs and notebooks should be managed from a central help desk facility. According to IT manager Colin Smith, such a facility could also cut maintenance costs, optimise network performance, provide a more consistent service and assist with software distribution.

Pinsent Curtis's preferred IT supplier was Lynx Technology and they recommended the installation of the LANDesk Management Suite 2.51 system as this would give Smith's team the ability to monitor and manage the performance of NetWare and NT file servers. It also allows each site to operate in isolation from the other sites and yet still be managed centrally, which could be particularly useful if a problem occurred within the central help desk.

Subsequent upgrades to LANDesk, including software metering to control the number of concurrent users, have given the IT department even greater control and further enhancements are planned to make better use of software distribution when installing desktop PCs, upgrades and driver file updates, as well as allowing the remote takeover of Windows NT servers. Although the firm expects to realise additional benefits in the future, as a result of running LANDesk in combination with Lotus Notes, Smith reckons the system has already helped reduce typical support call times from 20 minutes to three minutes.

- The Pinsent Curtis WAN runs across a mixed Microsoft Windows NT and Novell NetWare environment. The firm has also recently implemented a Citrix Winframe "thin client" solution in some departments. Lotus Notes has been adopted as the practice groupware product and the firm is now developing a Lotus Domino-based intranet. There is also a practice-wide videoconferencing facility. Lynx Technology is on: 01773 826811.

PHONE CODES TO CHANGE

On top of Euro and Y2K compliance projects, law firm IT managers now also have to prepare for yet another major reorganisation of UK telephone codes. The latest changes, christened the "Big Number Plan" by the telecoms watchdog OFTEL, will come into effect on 22nd April 2000 although some areas of the country, including London, Portsmouth, Coventry, Southampton, Cardiff and Northern Ireland, where a new 02 code is being introduced (an 0171 234 XXXX London number becomes 020 7234 XXXX), will change on 1st June 1999. For details call 0808 224 2000.

<http://www.numberchange.org>

READER SERVICES

- **LTi-NET**

LTi-Net is the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. It is available in an HTML file format that can be delivered as an email attachment or accessed via a secure subscriber only web-site. LTi-NET comes complete with all hypertext links and is designed for firms wanting to publish the newsletter across intranets and Lotus Notes databases or individual subscribers who just want to read and print it from the desktop. Subscription rates start at £135 (£115 + VAT). For details phone: 01379 687518.

- **INSIDER INFO LINE**

If you are looking for a phone number, product name, contact point or any other elusive item of legal IT information, call the Insider Info Line: 01379 687518.

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

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- **E-PR@CTICE NEWSLETTERS**

A series of free current awareness email newsletters providing news and comment on areas of legal practice. Titles available: *Local Government Law Digital Newsletter* and the *Internet Law Digital Newsletter*. To subscribe, send a note of your email address to: info@cloudnine.co.uk

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● NEXT ISSUE

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MORGAN BRUCE SECURES NETWORK

Morgan Bruce has made a major purchase of network security, data encryption and virus scanning software from Reflex Magnetics (0171 372 6666). The firm, which currently runs a 400 PC network across four offices in London and Wales on a mixture of NT, Windows 3.11 and Novell NetWare platforms, is basing its security around Reflex's Disknet Data Security suite.

Morgan Bruce infrastructure manager Richard Martin said one of the attractions of Disknet is that it offers both a centralised approach to network security and a low cost "client" solution that can be installed on individual PCs. The client version will prevent the loading of all unauthorised diskettes until they have been pronounced "clean" of all viruses, including Word macro viruses.

VIRUS NEWS IN BRIEF

● **WATCH OUT THERE IS A MACRO ABOUT**
Latest reports indicate the three most frequently encountered viruses currently in circulation are all macro viruses. These are: the Excel virus "Laroux" and the "Cap" and "CopyCap" Word for Windows viruses - apparently nobody bothers to write viruses for the WordPerfect platform.

Although there are a number of good anti-virus programs available, on the premise that prevention is better than cure, the simplest way to avoid spreading a macro virus is to avoid sending Word and Excel files as email attachments. If you do need to send a Word document by email, save and attach it as an .RTF file, as this will omit any virus which may have been incorporated in a Word macro. With Excel, the recommended approach is to save files in a .CSV (comma delimited) file format. Charts created in Excel can be saved as bitmaps.

● **STRANGE BREW**
The October edition of the Sophos Anti-Virus (SAV) software has added two new viruses to its Sweep scanning and detection program. These are *Back Orifice*, a network "back door" written by a group of US hackers called The Cult of the Dead Horse, and *Strange Brew*, which is believed to be the first Java virus.

A beta version of SAV is now available for a number of Unix platforms, including Solaris, AIX, SCO and Linux. The latest beta can be downloaded from the web.
<http://www.sophos.com/downloads>

● **NEW MACRO CHECKER**
Reflex Magnetics (see *Morgan Bruce story*) has launched a new version of its Macro Interceptor 3.0 for Windows 95/NT PCs. Prices start at £19.00 for the program, which can now detect Word 97 and Excel 97 macro viruses.
<http://www.reflex-magnetics.co.uk>