

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

ROBSON RHODES '98 - THE WEB CHANGES EVERYTHING ?

If the results of the 1998 Robson Rhodes Legal Survey, which are published this week, are anything to go by, the legal profession suffers from a bad case of schizophrenia when it comes technology.

For example, over three-quarters of law firms in the sample believe the internet and the web will change the way they do business - yet over 80 percent say the only reason they developed a web site was to improve the image or profile of the firm and 45 percent also admit keeping up with the competition was a primary motivation. Of the rest, less than a quarter said the reason was to develop innovative *Blue Flag* type legal services and only three percent are allowing their clients access to information via extranets and similar online links.

There is a similar ambivalence when it comes to the reliability of IT systems. A total of 47 percent of firms said they could only survive for one month if their IT systems failed and 13 percent said they would be out of business in a week yet only 45 percent have prepared disaster recovery plans. As for the Year 2000, the majority of firms will not be completing their Y2K compliance projects until next year, including nearly 20 percent whose projects are scheduled to finish by October or November of that year. It is also worrying to note that 55 percent of firms have not made any contingency plans to cater for the Y2K failure of a major client or supplier. But is this hardly surprising given that in 60 percent of firms the managing partner has little or no involvement in Y2K matters. Nor, apparently, any interest: when asked what were the biggest challenges facing law firms today, Y2K was only rated the twelfth most important priority!

Turning to the aspect of the Robson Rhodes report that always stirs up controversy - the supplier market share ratings - it should be noted the results are heavily biased towards larger law firms in the South-East. Over 57 percent of responses came from firms with 11 or more partners and more half the firms were in London and the South-East area. So, although out of a sample of 1000 practices only 188 returned questionnaires, which represents just 2.1 percent of firms in the UK, because the survey focused on larger firms, it actually encompasses firms employing a total of over 16,000 partners and fee earners - or about 28 percent of all solicitors working in private practice today.

Continued on back page

SYSTEMS DELAYS MAY SLAY WOOLF

Speaking at last week's Civil Justice conference in London, Ian Magee, the new chief executive of the Court Service, confirmed earlier reports that the courts will not have the necessary IT systems in place to handle Lord Woolf's civil justice reforms when they come into effect on 26th April 1999. Instead, courts will have to make do with manual methods until the technology becomes available "sometime in early 2000".

Mr Magee went on to say he felt this was "a blessing in disguise" as the delay would provide "a breathing space" to get the business processes up and running before installing the support systems.

But, one senior judge told the Insider this argument was about as plausible as a bank launching a cash dispenser service before it had any money to put in the machines and warned that if the IT systems were not in place by late 2000 or early 2001, there was a risk that the whole of the Woolf reforms could collapse.

Civil Justice - Hello Big Brother ? Page 5

DIGITAL AGE ALMOST SOLD OUT

The first print of *Legal Practice in the Digital Age* by Insider editor Charles Christian has almost sold out and will be reprinting in the New Year. Published in November by Bowerdean and named "book of the week" in *The Lawyer*, some copies are still available at Hammicks or directly from Bowerdean (0181 788 0938).

SEASONS GREETINGS

This is the last issue of Legal Technology Insider before the Christmas and New Year holiday break, so season's greetings to all our readers and we will back again on Wednesday 27th January.

Christmas IT Competition Page 7

BIG EVENT FOR SMALL FIRMS

Centaur Conferences, in association with the Solicitors' Chambers Association, is holding a one-day conference in January on the future of sole practitioners and small firms. The conference sessions will put particular emphasis on the potential role of "solicitors' chambers" and "virtual" law firms as ways in which lawyers can enjoy the benefits of technology and still remain profitable.

Speakers include Neil Davidson, who founded the Peterborough Solicitors' Chambers, Keith Wilson of legal systems house Lexology, which supplied Peterborough Chambers with its IT infrastructure, plus representatives from the Law Society and Legal Aid Board.

The conference will take place on Saturday 23rd January 1999 at Westminster Central Hall, London SW1, with registration starting at 9.30. The fee is £150 (+ VAT) and the event qualifies for 5.5 hours CPD points. Call Centaur on: 0171 970 4770 for more details.

KEYSTONE AGREE BHL DEAL

After spending the last couple of months resolving the red-tape, Keystone Software has finalised a deal to buy back the Australian distribution rights for its own practice management software from legal systems supplier BHL.

Keystone originally sold the rights to BHL in 1994 in order to raise funds to finance product development. Under the new deal Keystone will sell directly to the largest "top tier" law and accountancy firms (defined as those with 200 or more fee earners) in Australia, while BHL will distribute the Keystone software under licence to all other Australian customers.

● COMMENT

Of the three major deals placed in Keystone's home market of New Zealand this year, two - Rudd Watts & Stone and 270 fee earner Bell Gully - were won by Keystone. The third, Russell MacVeagh, went to CMS Data but initially had to be supported by Keystone until CMS organised its own office in Auckland.

CSG IN GATEWAY PC DISTRIBUTION DEAL

Litigation support market newcomer Combined Solutions Group (0171 538 8800) has been appointed a reseller and distributor for the Gateway 2000 range of PC hardware. Under the deal, CSG will not only sell Gateway PCs but also provide comprehensive after-sales services, including hardware configuration and software integration. "The aim," says CSG managing director James Spencer, "is to give law firms and barristers the support they need with just one telephone call".

In terms of the prices CSG can currently offer: the entry level Gateway GP6 333 model, which sells for £600 (+ VAT), has a 333MHz Intel Celeron processor, 32Mb of Ram, a 3.2Gb hard disk, CD-Rom drive plus 15" colour monitor and comes ready loaded with Windows 98 and Microsoft Office 97. The top-of-the-range GP6 450SE, which has a 450MHz Pentium II processor, 128Mb of Ram, a 10Gb hard disk, CD-Rom drive, 17" monitor plus Windows 98 and Office 97, retails for £1200.

● COMMENT

Although the cheap prices offered by direct resellers, such as Dell and Gateway, may be attractive, the lack of decent after sales support facilities - often based on impenetrable voice mail systems - has in the past undoubtedly deterred many lawyers from placing orders. If CSG really can deliver a combination of low cost hardware plus lawyer-friendly support services, the company could be on to a winner.

SOLICITEC OPEN IN SCOTLAND

The Solicitec group has formed a new Scottish subsidiary company Solicitec (Scotland) Limited, in association with Richard Scott and Colin Kennedy who, respectively, become managing and sales director of the new venture. Both men are already well known in the Scottish legal IT market and were previously with Glasgow legal systems supplier Axiom.

Commenting on the new company, Solicitec founder Neil Ewin said: "We have had some success in Scotland in the past, notably with the Bank of Scotland and Henderson Boyd & Jackson, however it is clear to us that local knowledge is essential if we are to become a major supplier. We are convinced Solicitec (Scotland) has the right team not only to sell SolCase but also to meet our standards of customer support."

● Solicitec has also entered into a distribution agreement with Dublin-based Hera Systems to sell its Forcesight marketing software as a fully integrated add-on to the SolCase case management system. Both products have complementary database structures and so can handle real-time bi-directional data transfer.

Solicitec has opened a new southern area office at Rownhams in Southampton (01703 739768)

ANOTHER HOPEFUL ENTERS IT MARKET

Altrincham-based Jonathan Beck & Associates (JBA) has taken the unusual step of trying to enter the legal market and launch its Carydan case and accounts management system just at that point in time when the profession is winding-down for Christmas.

The new system, which has its roots in a bespoke case management product developed in 1991 for medical negligence specialists Alexander Harris, is currently being rolled out at Kennedys in London.

Although the Access-based system, which had its first public airing at the recent Association of Personal Injury Lawyers conference, is described as a "case management" system, it does not follow the conventional "workflow" approach to matter handling but instead offers the same sort of critical date reporting, file management and automatic document production facilities of systems such as Fransys, OMS from FWBS and Sentinel from DMA.

● COMMENT

Nothing wrong with a bit of fresh blood but JBA (0161 941 3790) gives the impression of having not quite got its marketing act together as, for example, its demo CD does not work, and it does not seem to be aware of how much competition it faces from already established suppliers offering often very good products. An eight user site can expect to pay £16,000 for the software plus an annual maintenance charge of around 20 percent. JBA managing director Jonathan Beck points out that although this may sound expensive, the maintenance charge also covers the cost of all system enhancements and upgrades.

DPS CRIME PIONEER DEFECTS

Stevens Solicitors, which specialises in criminal legal aid work and has two offices in the Stoke-on-Trent area, has ordered the QNIX Crimsoft case management product from Sanderson Systems. The firm will initially pilot the system in its Longton office before rolling it out in Burslam.

Although a relatively small firm, the practice is actually one of the pioneers of criminal legal aid software - back in 1990 it was one of the original reference sites for the DPS Crimdata system from MCS. At the time, senior partner Richard Stevens estimated that by automating clerical chores and form filling the system was saving 150 billable hours a year per fee earner.

● Sanderson reports that in addition to new business deals, since the summer it has also received upgrade orders worth £500,000 from existing QDOS, QNIX and LegalMind users. Recent upgrades include: Dickson Haslam, Sheltons in Nottingham, Fanshaw Porter & Hazlehurst and Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, which has now added time recording and billing software to its existing QNIX case management system.

DEALS AND TENDERS

● Rotherham-based OXLEY & COWARD has installed a 66 user LINETIME fee earner information and Dataflow case management system. Running in conjunction with Linetime's accounts software, the system will be used by staff in both commercial and private client departments.

● The MR GROUP has won a seven year sub-contract worth an estimated £3.5 million to scan evidential documents, including microfilm and microfiche, for the SERIOUS FRAUD OFFICE. The scanned material will be converted into PDF files and used in the SFO's new document management system which has been developed for it by IBM.

● RADCLIFFES in Westminster has awarded ULTIMA BUSINESS SYSTEMS (0118 902 7500) a contract to upgrade its 16-bit Novell NetWare 3.12/Windows 3.1 network and replace it with a 32-bit thin client solution based on Microsoft Windows Terminal Server. The project, which will also see the firm migrate from Lotus cc:Mail and Word 6 to Microsoft Exchange and Office 97, is scheduled to complete its roll-out to the firm's 160 members of staff by the end of January.

● TAYLOR VINTERS in Cambridge and WITHY KING in Bath have upgraded from COREL WordPerfect 6.1 to 8.0. In both cases the reseller was BEI METASTORM (0171 371 0222). BEI say one of the key attractions of the upgrade route is it provides users a 32-bit environment without the potential disruption and costs associated with migrating to Microsoft Word.

● PALSER GROSSMAN, one of the largest firms in Wales, has begun a £250,000 project to expand its IT infrastructure. The project will include linking its Cardiff head office with its Bristol, Swansea and Southampton branches via a wide area network and installing new Arista accounts plus fee earner desktop and case management systems from AXXIA SYSTEMS. GOWER BUSINESS SYSTEMS will handle the networking aspects of the project.

LEGAL PUBLISHING NEWS IN BRIEF

● AMLAW SAY NO INTEREST IN COMMERCIAL LAWYER

The New York-based publishers of the *American Lawyer* magazine have denied rumours currently circulating in London that they are about to takeover the Chambers & Partners Publishing group, whose titles include *Commercial Lawyer* magazine and the *Chambers Directory*.

American Lawyer Media president and CEO William Pollak told the Insider: "We would very much like to expand our presence in Europe, and particularly London, and are actively trying to figure out how best to do that. All that having been said, we're a long way from deciding how best to proceed. We've certainly spoken to many of the legal publishers in London. But rumours notwithstanding, we have no solid plans to buy or launch or develop anything at this stage. What the future holds, I cannot say."

● PDF INTERIM TECHNOLOGY ?

Responding to criticism from American beta testers that the forthcoming version 5.0 of the HotDocs document assembly applications suffers from the drawback of being unable to import PDF files directly, Russell Shepherd, managing director of HotDocs' UK distributor Capsoft UK, said he did not see this as an important issue as he believes the PDF file format is an "interim technology" that will be replaced by XML (extensible mark up language).

Up to a point Lord Copper. PDF may have made little impact on the electronic forms market but it is attracting growing interest within the litigation support sector, with suppliers, such as DocuLex, and users, such as the Serious Fraud Office, all recently adopting the format.

● REED TAKES A DIVE

Butterworths' parent company Reed Elsevier has issued a warning that profits for 1998 will be six percent lower than in the previous trading year. Reed said margins were affected by continuing investment in the transition from paper to online and electronic formats and admitted its legal operations were facing stronger competition in North America.

DIALOG LAUNCHES AUTOMATED INDEXING

At last week's Online Information event in London, the Dialog Corporation launched a web-based information management system called LiveIntranet that will allow firms to automatically index and categorise both internal and external sources of information, such as online databases, to the same standard. Dialog believe the new system will prove very popular with organisations seeking to create intranet-based know-how and knowledge management systems.

LiveIntranet incorporates Dialog's proprietary InfoSort indexing system which allows users to search for material by context, such as "mergers and acquisitions", as well as by content, such as "Zeneca" and "Astra". Another feature of InfoSort is each main categorisation term incorporates a subset of broader, narrower and related terms that build up into a thesaurus. For more details call: 0171 930 6900.

<http://www.dialog.com>

PAY-AS-YOU-GO FOR WILLS

Following its recent foray into pay-as-you-go pricing structures with the Probate Plus probate management and calculation software, Sweet & Maxwell has extended the concept to the latest version of its *Express Wills* package.

The software is designed to help practitioners draft wills by taking the user through an onscreen question and answer routine, which in turn determines the clauses that appear in the finished document. While most lawyers may find this a bit ponderous, it does mean fee earners have the option of discussing the terms and assembling the will in the company of the client.

Pricing is based on a charge of £5 for every engrossed copy of a will produced - there is no charge for producing draft wills - and the initial retail price of £75 (+VAT) includes the production of the first five wills.

Since Sweet & Maxwell first acquired the rights to *Express Wills* in the summer of 1997, the software has been upgraded to include a notes facility for creating reminders, a personalised will application form for clients to complete, a client correspondence facility and the ability to specify up to four attorneys for both enduring and non-enduring Powers of Attorney. The system can also prepare client bills. To buy the software or to order it on 28 days approval call 01264 342724.

● KEMP & KEMP SELL OUT

In the course of November Sweet & Maxwell received over 1200 pre-launch orders for its new *Personal Injury Practice* CD-Rom, which is based on *Kemp & Kemp Quantum Damages*. Sweets admit this was nearly four times more than expected and meant having to make an emergency print run to cope with demand. The CD will be available at the special offer price of £270 until the end of December.

CIVIL JUSTICE REFORM HELLO BIG BROTHER ?

Last week's conference on the *civil.justice* consultation paper may have been meant to crystallise views but in the event it merely helped identify just how far the Lord Chancellor's Department still has to go.

The watchwords for the day were "access to justice" and making the judicial system more "citizen facing" however while there was general agreement on the technologies that could deliver such benefits - the internet, interactive digital TV and videoconferencing - as the event wore on, it became apparent the LCD had little idea of either what people really want or how to pay for these proposals.

On the financial front, one LCD official raised the decidedly chicken-and-egg argument that because IT intensive "virtual courts" would avoid all the costs involved in running conventional face-to-face courts, the money saved could be used to pay for the technology to build those self-same virtual courts. There was also talk of using the PFI private finance initiative but in the same breath it was admitted that there was currently little positive in return to offer investors. And, it was also suggested that access to justice would be funded by solicitors who, it was assumed, would be willing to pay large amounts of money to have their firms' logos displayed - web portal style - on a government legal information internet super-site.

At one point it was suggested that the cause of access to justice would be advanced by putting the full text of not only every statute but also every judgment (and not just the decisions in reported cases) on this hypothetical web super-site but the Civil Service then proceeded to shoot itself in the foot by conceding that with an estimated eight million adults in the UK "functionally illiterate", it would be hard for them to gain any benefit from such measures.

Some aspects of the presentations from the LCD and the central government computing agencies also hinted at an alternative agenda, with speaker after speaker singing the praises of "joined up government". This seems to be a euphemism for linking together all government computer systems as part of the firewall protected GSI Government Secure Intranet project. Of course it makes life easier for citizens if there is one-stop shop access to all sources of official information. But the corollary is it also gives the Big Brother tendency within government one-stop access to all sources of information about individual citizens.

Undoubtedly the defining moment of the day was when, in a comment from the floor, Lord Justice Brooke said: "It is quite clear central government still does not understand the role of the courts or how to provide a framework to support citizens' rights and make the law more accessible." The remark, incidentally, reduced a hapless spokesman from the Central IT Unit, who until that moment had been praising Singapore's *Government Shopfront* web site - it carries official information and allows you to buy Christmas cards interactively - to jabbering incoherence.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

- **FOOTBALL'S COMING HOME**
Avenue Legal Systems is holding a day of seminars at the Manchester United Football Club on 17th December 1998 to promote its Wisdom suite of case and practice management software. On a lighter note, there is the option of a tour of the club grounds and a chance to win a football signed by the United team. Call Clare Wynn at Avenue's Manchester office on: 0161 776 4387 for details.

- **LEGAL MARKETING**
Centaur Conferences is holding a one day conference *Winning Business* at Lord's Cricket Ground on Monday 25th January on law firm marketing, including the use of relationship management software and how to differentiate a firm. Speakers include Elizabeth Rantzen of Denton Hall, Mitch Grossbach of Interface Software, Tim Clement-Jones of ICM and Hugh Donald and David Sanders of Shepherd Wedderburn. The event is sponsored by Tikit and the chairman is James Broomfield of Allen & Overy. Starts at 9.00 and closes at 16.45. Tickets £417 + VAT, with discounts for extra delegates. For details call: 0171 970 4770.

- **1999 SCL AWARDS**
The Society for Computers & Law will be announcing the winner of its 1999 IT award at the Law Society's Hall in London on Monday 25th January. The event, which also provides an opportunity to see demonstrations of the four short-listed entries, starts at 18.30 and the award will be presented by LCD Minister of State Geoff Hoon QC. Call the SCL on: 0117 923 7393 for details.

- **NEW YORK LEGAL TECH**
North America's leading legal IT event Legal Tech New York takes place at the New York Hilton from 10.00 on Monday 25th to 15.00 on Wednesday 27th January. The event offers a combination of conference sessions and exhibition stands. For details call LegalTech LLC on: 001 212 877 5619 or visit their web site at: <http://www.legaltechshow.com>

E-DOCS WINS FIRST DEAL AND EXPANDS

The new E-docs electronic document exchange service has secured its first new contract. The order was placed by the barristers' set Lancaster Chambers in Manchester and will encompass at least a dozen solicitors' practices in the North-West who regularly brief the chambers with intellectual property work.

The Insider also understands E-docs is in an advanced stage of contractual negotiations with three large London firms and that Reynolds Porter Chamberlain is investigating using the system to streamline communications with some of its professional indemnity work clients, including the Solicitors Indemnity Fund.

Sales director Peter Richmond says that in response to user requests, the company is also broadening the portfolio of services it offers so that E-docs can become a more integral part of a firm's internet and e-commerce infrastructure. Recent developments include: support for Verisign's commercial encryption system, S/MIME support and integration with Lotus cc:Mail and Microsoft Outlook.

● COMMENT

In September it appeared E-docs was clueless and would have rings run around it by the rival new service from Lawlink UK. But, three months' later, it is E-docs that is making all the running and Lawlink that seems to be stalled. With BT still lurking in the wings with its "Project Eagle" and a California-based consortium currently having a £150,000 offer on the table to buy-out another UK legal network operator, this market is becoming interesting.

WEB MARKETING

Ian Cooper Communications, which has been involved in the law firm marketing business since the 1980s, now has a web site. Along with the usual corporate information, the site offers a "marketing clinic" facility. This allows practices to submit questions on legal marketing-related topics that the consultancy then answers in confidence.

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

WORDPERFECT TO WORD CONVERSIONS

Although Corel has in recent months managed to staunch the flood of WordPerfect users migrating to Microsoft Word, there are still a growing number of firms facing the task of converting old WordPerfect documents into Word files. The following translation resources may help lighten the load...

● MICROSOFT WORD CONVERSION WIZARD

This is not the WordPerfect converter accessed through the Word 97 "FILE, OPEN" command, which has been known to corrupt documents, but the CONVERT8.WIZ file that should be located in the \Office\Macros directory on the Office 97 CD-Rom. Use this facility if you need to convert entire directories of files in WordPerfect 5.x and 6.x format.

● DATAVIZ CONVERSIONS PLUS 4.5

A useful software utility for Windows 95/98/NT platforms that provides a third-party alternative to Microsoft and Corel's own conversion programs. Dataviz has been specialising in file conversion applications for over a decade and you should be able to buy this in PC World or software catalogues, such as Inmac, for about £80.

● PAYNE CONSULTING CONVERSION UTILITY

This program, which can be downloaded free of charge from the web, is a Word add-in utility designed to clean-up some of the problems that can occur when WordPerfect documents containing complex formatting are converted into Word files.

<http://www.payneconsulting.com/word/convert.htm>

● WORD 97 FOR LAW FIRMS

If all else fails, buy the book *Word 97 for Law Firms* (ISBN 07615 13167). Published by Prima and written by Seattle-based Payne Consulting, the same people who produced the conversion utility download, although heavily slanted towards the US market, it does devote a whole section to conversion issues, including step-by-step instructions on converting tables of contents and numbered paragraphs. It is on sale in the UK for £27.49 and can be obtained by mail order from The PC Bookshop (0171 831 0022).

MORE INFO FROM JUNIPER

ICC Information has upgraded its Juniper Online service to provide additional data and reports for subscribers to its company documents and analysis services. New facilities include an automatic update service called *Account Alert*, and an "adverse", "risk" and "statutory" monitoring service that will track the progress of target companies for new information, such as County Court judgments and audit qualifications. From Monday 11th January, Juniper will also carry two new *Family Tree Reports* identifying business and corporate relationships.

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

CHRISTMAS IT COMPETITION WIN CYBERTRANSCRIBER TIME

Not only are lawyers one of the least recognised groups of mobile workers but they are also frequent users of hand-held recording devices, a fact not overlooked by UK speech recognition technology innovator Speech Machines.

Its flagship CyberTranscriber service offers lawyers the opportunity to have dictation automatically transcribed simply by speaking into a phone. The dictation travels to Speech Machines' headquarters in Great Malvern where a bank of computers converts spoken word into text, which is then forwarded to a specified email address. Users can call CyberTranscriber 24 hours a day from anywhere: at home, in a taxi, while waiting outside a court or on the way back from visiting a client.

Although it has the potential to eliminate hand-held recording devices, it can also be used in conjunction with digital recorders by linking them to a PC and a modem and sending the dictation directly to CyberTranscriber as voice files attached to emails. As well as reducing transcription budgets, CyberTranscriber will also free secretarial staff from the often tedious task of transcription.

CyberTranscriber is based on technology originally developed for the military market, a pedigree that means it is both highly accurate and can deal with background noise. Unlike other speech recognition systems, Cyber Transcriber also needs no training time or investment in special technology and hardware.

● TO WIN FREE CYBER USAGE TIME

To win a free account with CyberTranscriber for you or a member of staff, answer the following questions, complete the tie-breaker and return your entry before 15th January to: CyberTranscriber Competition, Firefly Communications, 25 The Coda Centre, 189 Munster Road, London SW6 6AW or email your entry to competition@speechmachines.com

The first prize is two months' free user time with Cyber Transcriber. Three runners-up will each receive one month's free user time.

1. The article mentions three of the benefits Cyber Transcriber can offer lawyers, can you name any more?
2. What equipment do you need to use CyberTranscriber?
3. How does CyberTranscriber differ from other speech recognition technologies?

Complete the following sentence in 25 words or less: "I deserve to win CyberTranscriber this Christmas because..."

READER SERVICES

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● NEXT ISSUE

Issue 74 of the Insider will be published on Wednesday 27th January 1999.

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1998 ROBSON RHODES REPORT

Continued from front page...

In terms of market leaders, the two largest suppliers, with almost a 20 percent share each, were AIM and Axxia although it is worth noting that compared with the last survey in 1996, AIM's share has contracted while Axxia's has substantially increased. The joint runners up were TFB and Avenue, who both have 8 percent shares.

On the case management front, DPS remains the market leader with a 19 percent share, followed by AIM and Laserform level pegging with 12-13 percent, and Axxia, Linetime and Solicitec who all have 7 percent shares. Debt collection work remains the most popular form of case management application.

That's the good news. The bad news is that when it comes to law firms judging the most cost effective IT systems they have introduced, wordprocessing remains the runaway winner. Over one third of the firms said the management reporting sides of their practice management systems were so poor that they still had to export data into spreadsheets and third-party applications for further analysis. And users are still complaining that the level of after sales service and support they receive is inadequate.

● Copies of the full report will be sent to everyone who participated in the survey over the next couple of weeks. Copies may also be purchased from Robson Rhodes, contact Richard Blasdale on 0121 697 6104. A summary of the findings can also be accessed via the Insider web site.

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

STOP PRESS

● SCL ANNOUNCES AWARD SHORTLIST

The Society of Computers & Law has announced the four shortlisted entries for its 1999 IT Award. They are the DIRECT ACCESS SERVICE from the LAND REGISTRY, the INTERACT case management and client reporting system developed by BEVAN ASHFORD, the AXXIA ADVANTAGE web enabled reporting system, and SOLCASE ONLINE web enabled case management system from SOLICITEC. The winner will be announced on 25th January.

See Diary Dates for details. Page 5

● NEW HEAD OF IT AT LAW SOCIETY

The English Law Society has appointed Al Freimanis as its new head of IT services. He succeeds Ashley Sollitt who left Chancery Lane earlier this year.

● WINDOWS 98 Y2K UPDATE

Microsoft admits there are "minor year 2000 issues" in its Windows 98 operating system. Microsoft says they "pose no risk of data loss or PC damage and customers would be unlikely to encounter them during normal daily use of their computers". Bug fix details can be found at <http://www.microsoft.com/directaccess/rdr/1209/y2kupdate.htm>