

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

KEYSTONE BUYS STEPPING STONE IN US

Last Thursday Keystone Software gained a strategic foothold in the United States legal IT market through the acquisition of the assets of the software division of BISPoint Technologies Inc for US\$8 million (£5 million).

As part of the deal Keystone's new US subsidiary - Keystone Solutions US, Inc - is taking on the division's 60 plus staff, who currently work out of the head office in Buffalo, New York, plus area offices in San Francisco, San Diego, Washington and Dallas. As well as continuing to develop, sell and support the BISPoint product range, the staff will also be trained to sell, implement and support Keystone software.

Keystone international director Kaye Sycamore said the deal had two major benefits. The first was that it would "jump start" Keystone's entry into the US market for professional services software and secondly it gave Keystone access to a new "killer app" in the shape of BISPoint's LegalHouse suite of executive information and business intelligence applications.

LegalHouse, which is compatible with a number of PMS products such as CMS and Elite, is already in use in 25 US law firms and a number of commercial organisations, including Microsoft's web TV division.

Continued on the back page

LSC TO PILOT EDI AND XML

The new Legal Services Commission (which replaced the Legal Aid Board on 1st April) is now piloting a project with 17 legal service providers, including a number of law firms, that allows them to submit their civil contracting monthly returns electronically. The success of the pilot will be reviewed in October 2000, when the LSC will also publish a formal electronic data interchange (EDI) agreement.

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LEGAL TECHNOLOGY ONLINE

Visit the Legal Technology Insider web site for regularly

updated news reports, bookmarks to web sites listed in the Insider, links to additional free services, virus warnings, a diary of legal IT events plus access to an Insider archive in PDF format.



VOICE RECOGNITION L&H BUYS DRAGON

Dragon Systems, one of the pioneers of voice recognition software, as well as the current UK and US market leader in this category, has just been acquired by the Belgian Lernout & Hauspie Speech Products group for US\$587 million.

Although L&H is relatively unknown in the UK - its Voice Xpress system is outsold by Dragon's DragonDictate and NaturallySpeaking products, IBM's ViaVoice and the Philips' Freespeech range - the company earlier this year acquired Dictaphone and, as a result of its close relationship with Microsoft (which has a 6.5 percent equity stake in L&H), has been building a reputation as a developer of voice integration products for both office applications and a new version of the Windows operating system. Thanks to the Dragon takeover, Voice Express and Dragon products now hold a massive 84 percent share of the US voice recognition software market.

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STOP PRESS

■ LSSA TO INVESTIGATE XML

At its recent April quarterly meeting, the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) agreed to set up a working party to investigate the potential for using XML as the basis for EDI standards governing the exchange of data in transactions between lawyers, courts and regulatory bodies such as the LSC.

For more legal XML news, see page 4

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ PCLAW Ltd (01780 480764) reports that in the four weeks since the system was launched in the UK, the company has received 12 orders for its new PCLaw legal accounts and practice management software, including four orders directly stemming from the company's presence at the recent NEC exhibition.

■ MIKE FRANKHUIZEN joined the CAPSOFT UK GROUP as publishing director with a brief that includes "spearheading the development of EveryForm from a free forms provider to a digital age publisher". Frankhuizen has a background in publishing, with WOLTERS KLUWER and IT business development in his native Netherlands. ADAM CURTIS has also joined Capsoft as marketing manager. He will be based in the London (020 7448 9769) office.

■ RESOLUTION SOFTWARE has moved its sales, marketing, administration and consultancy teams from its offices near Croydon to new City of London premises at 39 Hatton Garden, London EC1N 8EL. The new phone number is 020 7421 4140. The company's development and support centre remain in Aldershot.

www.ResSoft.co.uk

■ MATHESON ORMSBY PRENTICE sponsored last week's launch of the Irish arm of the BAILII project, which aims to provide a free database of UK and Irish primary legal materials via the Internet.

BUZZWORD CORNER

■ POWER RESEARCHER (*noun*)

No, not a person who spends their time investigating electricity, coal and other sources of energy but someone who regularly uses online information services, such as Lexis or the Internet, in the course of legal research work. First heard at a Westlaw press conference, the term joins "information services manager" and "know how officer" as another modern euphemism for law librarian. So, next time you are accused of spending too much time surfing the web, just say you are conducting a power search.

DPS ON DOS REACHES THE END OF THE LINE

After almost a decade as one of the UK legal market's best selling case management packages, DPS Software plc has announced that from 1st May the DOS version of DPS and its DOS applications will no longer be enhanced, updated or supported.

User options now include: sticking with DOS - it has been around so long that it is effectively bug-free. Migrating to the existing 16-bit Windows version (DPS V.8) - this is available free of charge (subject to installation, conversion and training costs) to all DPS customers with valid support contracts. Or, waiting until June for the launch of DPS 32, the new 32-bit Windows product that includes a relational database. DPS demonstrated a final beta version of this product at the recent NEC show and a client/server version is also scheduled for release later in the year.

■ DPS systems developer Alternative Team Ltd has moved to new offices at 140 Offord Road, Islington, London N1 1PF. The new phone number is 020 7700 1616.

LIARS ONLINE - SURFERS LIE AS PRIVACY FEARS GROW

Concerns about Internet privacy are growing. In the United States the web advertising agency DoubleClick has had to rethink its policy on the use of customer data following a public outcry. Meanwhile in the UK, the Data Protection Commissioner is backing an "Information Padlock" initiative that was launched last week by the National Consumer Council to make it easier for web users to discover what is a site's privacy policy and, if personal data is collected, what it will be used for and to whom it will be disclosed.

www.ncc.org.uk/contact/options.htm

Privacy fears are now cited, along with worries about the security of online credit card payments, as one of the main reasons why people are reluctant to participate in e-commerce transactions. It is also throwing up some interesting market research data, including one recent US survey (conducted by Shephardson Stern & Kaminsky in New York) which found that nearly half the people in the sample had dropped a purchase midway through the virtual shopping process because of the cumbersome information requests and that 62 percent resented being asked such questions.

But, perhaps the most worrying finding was that over one-third of frequent web users now routinely lie online to avoid giving personal data, such as telephone numbers and home addresses, which tends to suggest that much of the data being gathered is commercially worthless anyway.

■ For the record, the Insider does not sell or disclose the names, addresses or any other contact details of its subscribers to anyone and the Legal Technology Online web site does not use cookies or similar technologies.

CALL FOR CHANGES TO THE ITT PROCESS

At its recent meeting, members of the Legal Software Suppliers Association (LSSA) called on legal IT consultants to change the timing of the ITT (invitation to tender) cycle so ITT questionnaires are issued after shortlisting rather than, as at present, at the start of the selection process.

LSSA vice-chairman Alan Richardson said moving ITTs to a later stage would provide suppliers with an opportunity to meet with customers and so gain a clearer picture of what they were looking for, whether it was a project the supplier really wanted to tender for and which aspects of a supplier's system should be highlighted in an ITT response.

■ Although most of the legal IT consultancy work in the UK is currently shared by just ten consultancies, in total there are closer to 40 consultancies, including a number of one-man bands who, according to LSSA members, still request a fee or commission from suppliers as the "price" for inclusion on a short-list.

Insider statistics suggest less than one third of all ITTs issued by consultants actually result in contracts being placed, with the remaining projects being either cancelled or shelved. And, statistics produced by the Grant Thornton consultancy reveal that over 35 percent of suppliers feel the sales process is slower when consultants are involved and only 29 percent believe they speed up the process.

OYEZ ORDERS TO GO ONLINE

OyezStraker, the legal forms to litigation support group, has moved its stationery supplies business into the digital age with the launch of its new "Intelligent Trading" service.

Although the basic service allows customers to order a wide range of goods over the Internet, via a web-based version of the Oyez catalogue, the company is also offering free consultancy and advice to assist law firms identify areas of waste and efficiency in their current stationery procurement procedures, so as to maximise the benefits of buying online. The company reckons that by investing just under two hours of management time on the Oyez survey and consultancy, a law firm could cut its office supplies costs by as much as 35 percent a year.

■ Unlike some of the e-commerce sites the Insider has tried, the Oyez service is both easy to use and sound from a technical angle - it will work on later versions of both Internet Explorer and Netscape, on PCs and even Macs. By way of further sweetening the deal for customers, Oyez is offering prospective users a free Internet access deal, called Oyeznet, that includes e-mail addresses, web space and even a free web site design service. Also on offer is Access to Law, a range of free legal resources including directories, newsgroups, databases and case reports.

www.oyezstraker.co.uk

www.oyeznet.co.uk

www.a2law.net

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ WALKER LAIRD, which describes itself as a "traditional Scottish law firm", based in Paisley, has installed a new Evolution case management system, with support from AIM PROFESSIONAL, in just 23 days. AIM say the project was one of the first to use the new "fast track" implementation methodology developed by independent consultants PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS.

■ Legal and IT staff recruitment specialist LONGBRIDGE INTERNATIONAL has reported a 38 percent increase in turnover to £7.8 million and a 45 percent increase in pre-tax profits to £1.03 million for its financial year to 31st December 1999. Longbridge, which is listed on the AIM market, has now diversified into e-business through its recently formed eBridge subsidiary.

■ LOYENS & LOEFF, the largest law firm in the Benelux region, has selected a CMS Open practice management system from SOLUTION 6 HOLDINGS to support its worldwide operations. The project will be handled by TIMESOFT-HANSCO, a Dutch IT company that specialises in the professional services market.

NEW PHONE CODES

In ten days' time (22nd April) many of the old phone codes for UK domestic calls will be discontinued. The new numbers involve entirely new codes for Cardiff, Coventry, Portsmouth, Southampton and Northern Ireland (for example Cardiff - 01222 XXX XXX - will become 029 20XX XXXX) and a new 020 prefix for London numbers (0171 XXX XXXX will become 020 7XXX XXXX).

www.numberchange.bt.com

■ Amazingly, there are already warnings of a potential problem with London numbers for people who use software applications, such as Microsoft Outlook, to locate and dial phone numbers. The problem - known as the "Egypt Bug" - stems from the fact software may confuse the London 020 prefix with the +20 international dialling code for Egypt. A mistake that could cost you about £1.20 a minute in additional call charges.

US COURTS BACK XML FOR E-FILING

To-date the PDF portable document file format has made most of the running in the US courts' electronic filing (e-filing) market however this could be about to change following the decision by the largest US online courts information and e-filing services group - the newly merged CourtLink and JusticeLink - to back the new Legal XML Court Filing Standard.

The standard, which was adopted by the Joint Technology Committee of the Council of State Court Administrators (COSCA) and the National Association of Court Management (NACM) at their March meeting in Kansas City, seeks to establish an open, consistent and non-proprietary method for all US courts to capture electronic filings and the information needed to automatically place them on the dockets in court case management systems.

The first version of the new standard, which is based on Extensible Markup Language (XML), defines a "legal envelope" that contains the filing data, as well as the documents to be filed.

www.courtxml.org
www.legalxml.org

HOAX DU JOUR

The latest e-mail hoax doing the rounds claims that if you forward the particular message via e-mail to ten of your friends, you will receive a free mobile phone from Nokia. No you won't, it is just a hoax that has nothing to do with Nokia. Just trash the message without even bothering to forward it to Nokia - they know about the problem and have already posted a suitable warning on their web site.

www.nokia.com/webcampaign

■ On a more serious note, the Insider's hoax and virus alert service continues to receive inquiries (primarily from our readers in mainland Europe) about the KAK virus. Sadly WScript/Kak.worm is a real virus, albeit more of a nuisance than a system killer. French in origin, it uses ActiveX and Windows Scripting Host to propagate itself through HTML formatted e-mail using Outlook Express 5.

www.legaltechnology.co.uk/bugalert.htm
www.microsoft.com/security/bulletins

US RIVAL CLAIMS LEXIS LACKS LEGAL RIGHTS

Lexis has just published details of a confidential 1988 agreement between its then parent Mead Data and West Publishing to share West's citation system and database of US case law for a license fee of US\$3 million per year.

The decision to disclose the agreement was made in the face of a new federal lawsuit - Jurisline -v- Reed Elsevier (Reed now owns Lexis) - involving allegations that Lexis does not own the cases it publishes.

Jurisline, which runs the LawForFree.com web site, has been offering over 100 CD-Roms' worth of Lexis case law free of charge on its web site and commenced proceedings in the US district court in Manhattan in December for a declaratory judgment that Lexis does not hold copyright to any judicial opinions and statutes. Reed-Elsevier and Lexis subsequently counter-sued in a New York trial court accusing Jurisline of fraud and breach of contract over the acquisition of the CD-Roms.

Jurisline's lawyers now argue that federal copyright law pre-empts state contractual attempts to lay claim to public domain data, a move which prompted Lexis to release details of the 1988 agreement (with the consent of West) to counter further allegations by Jurisline that the Lexis and West grip on the online legal publishing market illegally discouraged competition in violation of antitrust law.

SWEET & MAXWELL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ONLINE LAUNCH

Sweet & Maxwell has launched Localaw UK, a new online information service covering developments in local government legal affairs. The service provides subscribers with access to the equivalent of 75 volumes' worth of primary law and commentary, previously only available in seven separate encyclopaedias, plus a current awareness service and regular news updates.

Localaw UK commercial manager Simon Lancaster said this was the first time anyone had offered simultaneous access to all the leading local government works and that by having it all in one place, users stood to "save days of extended research time" during the course of a year.

www.localaw.co.uk

■ Sweet & Maxwell has also been revealing more details about its plans for the Westlaw UK service. Following the launch of the commercial law service last month, further Westlaw "products" covering other discrete areas of legal practice, including the currently highly topical human rights, will be rolled out in the months to come. Technical enhancements planned for the near future include the facility to integrate the Westlaw service with an inhouse know-how intranet. And, the company remains committed to enhancing the main Sweet & Maxwell web site.

www.smlawpub.co.uk

LITIGATION WOES FOR IT AND ISP COMPANIES

Two recent court cases could have serious implications for suppliers of legal IT systems and ISP services in the UK.

On Thursday 30th March, three days before it was due to come to trial, the Internet service provider Demon Internet agreed to settle a long running libel action with Dr Laurence Godfrey. Demon issued an apology, agreed to pay Dr Godfrey £15,000 in damages and will also be paying both sides' legal costs, estimated to be over £480,000.

The outcome of the case, which began with a defamatory posting to a newsgroup hosted by Demon, has caused dismay among ISPs as it exposes them to an unexpectedly wide liability for comments posted on to sites they host.

Although it is accepted that web content providers are liable for the material they publish, as are ISPs running "moderated" (ie where some editorial control is exercised) usenet newsgroups and bulletin boards, previously it was assumed that under section 1 of the Defamation Act 1996 ISPs and web site operators either were not "publishers" or else were covered by the "innocent dissemination" statutory defence when it came to unmoderated newsgroups. But now it appears ISPs are subject to notice-based liability and risk being sued for libel if they do not react promptly to any complaints made about postings.

■ The second case (Pegler -v- Wang) saw a computer user awarded £9million in damages for breach of contract.

Wang, whose conduct in respect of the contract was described as "appalling" by the judge, had attempted to rely on its limitation of liability clauses. However, in the 25th February judgment, the court held that, both as a matter of construction and under the Unfair Contract Terms Act 1977, the clauses were unenforceable. The court also ruled that insistence by a company on standard clauses for liability limitation, even where the rest of the contract was open to negotiation, made the contract "on the other's written standard terms of business" for the purposes of applying the 1977 Act.

Overselling by Wang sales staff and a misrepresentation of the degree of "fit" between the customer's needs and the system on offer, where in reality substantial bespokeing was needed, were identified by the court as further reasons why reliance on the exclusion clauses was not reasonable.

In his judgment Judge Bowsler QC said the case reflected badly on the company's internal management procedures. Quoting one of the expert witnesses the judge said "It is often the case that the line management of sales is separate from the line management for delivery and they have different motivations and there is insufficient control of what the salesman is offering."

■ Susan Hall, an IT partner at Cobbetts, said the damages award would have been even steeper if Pegler had kept full accounts records, particularly covering management time, relating to all the losses and costs associated in dealing with their computer problems.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ APRIL 13-15, LONDON - APIL National Conference. The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers celebrates its tenth anniversary with a three day conference and mini-exhibition at the International Hotel in Docklands. The full delegate fee is £475 (+VAT). For details, including exhibitor opportunities, call Marlene Lord of APIL on 0115 958 0585.

www.apil.com

■ APRIL 18, BIRMINGHAM - E-Commerce 2000. Sanderson Systems' roadshow takes place at the National Motorcycle Museum. There is a final opportunity to catch the event at the Cedar Court Hotel in Wakefield on 27th June. Admission free, call Lisa Quinn on 0121 359 4861.

■ MAY 11, LONDON - Knowledge Management Online, the fourth Lawyer conference on knowledge management and know-how systems. One day event takes place at Lords Cricket Ground and is organised by Centaur Conferences. Speakers include Elisabeth Tooms, head of library services at Allen & Overy, Paul O'Connor of Tikit, BT UK chief counsel Anne Fletcher and Derek Southall, head of strategic development at Wragge & Co. Full delegate fee £447 (+VAT) with discounts available. The event qualifies for 5 CPD hours. For details call Centaur on 020 7970 4770.

■ MAY 17 & 18, LONDON - LegalTech London. This is the new look, rebranded and refocussed Solex show which now has two distinct elements - a free to visit exhibition (doors open at 10.30am) and a pay to attend conference programme organised by PricewaterhouseCoopers that runs from 9.30am to 5.00pm each day. Conference fees start at £149.00 for a half-day session, with substantial discounts. Speakers include Richard Susskind, consultant Neil Cameron, magic circle IT directors Brian Collins of Clifford Chance and Simon Thompson of Linklaters, plus Elizabeth Broderick of Blake Dawson Waldron. For details call Imark on 07000 763 896.

www.legaltechshow.com/london

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ Media law specialists at S J BERWIN & CO, working in conjunction with KPMG, have launched MEDIA WIZARD, an interactive guide to UK broadcasting legislation that will allow media owners, investors and other interested parties to cross-check for potential conflicts of interest with regard to media ownership.

www.sjberwin.com/media

■ MARSH, part of the international MARSH & McLENNAN insurance group, has launched a new online service that will allow small-to-medium sized law firms to buy professional indemnity cover via the Internet. Called eFINPRO, the service will initially only be available in the UK. Call 0870 9000 933 for details.

■ East Midlands legal recruitment consultancy BYGOTT BIGGS has opened a web site to promote its activities and let candidates register details online.

www.bygott-biggs.co.uk

■ Online legal directory LAW 2U is offering all law firms a free listing on its pages. Firms with existing web sites can also have a hyperlink from the directory for an annual charge of £40.

www.law2u.co.uk

■ KEYLAW, part of the LEGAL PUBLISHING GROUP which publishes a number of local law society newsletters, is offering web site design, hosting and free e-mail accounts. Contact Michele Drinkwater (01782 635664) for details.

SECURE E-MAIL FROM ROYAL MAIL

Royal Mail's digital security operation ViaCode last week launched ViaCode Secure Messaging, a secure e-mail service for law firms that operates as an add-on to existing e-mail clients and servers, including Microsoft Exchange, Outlook, Eudora Pro and Lotus Notes. ViaCode offers users digital certificates to authenticate messages and 128-bit encryption to protect their contents. Prices start at £950 for a 10 user system.

www.viacode.com

LEGAL PROBLEMS? THEN JUST ASK !

Last week saw the launch of both the new Community Legal Service and its associated web site Just Ask! The site, intended to provide a first port of call for those members of the community who do not know where to look for legal assistance, takes the form of a simple-to-search directory of law firms and legal service providers that can be accessed via PCs, public information kiosks, interactive television and even web-enabled games consoles.

Information is available in English, Welsh and five other ethnic community languages and on first impressions this is potentially a very useful development that deserves to succeed. In fact probably the only people who will not like the site are publishers of online directories of law firms, as it effectively makes much of their offerings redundant.

www.justask.org.uk

LIES, DAMNED LIES AND WEB SITE TRAFFIC STATISTICS

The story in the last issue of the Insider about web site traffic statistics prompted a furious response from the operators of legal information and portal sites in the UK.

Lawyers Online report just over 7000 "unique users" during March - compared with the 1870 claimed by LawZONE for February. Delia Venables, whose Legal Resources site is one of the longest established in the UK, had over 22,000 unique users in February. John Pritchard, the chairman of Legalease which runs the International Centre for Commercial Law portal, reports web site traffic running at 15,000 unique users a week. And Daniel Brill, of Centaur's Interactive Lawyer service, estimates traffic in excess of 50,000 unique users a month.

■ With no universally accepted definitions, accurate Internet traffic figures are hard to come by. However from May, Legal Technology Insider will be running its own monthly Top 20 of the busiest commercial legal web sites. For further details email: info@legaltechnology.org

VIRTUAL CLERKS FOR THE BAR

Recent months have seen growing numbers of law firms move into the legal e-business world and now the Bar has a similar service. Called BookCounsel.com, the service allows solicitors (and other professions with direct access) to search an online directory of barristers to locate a suitable junior or silk to instruct on a particular matter.

The service is available free of charge to solicitors but barristers winning work through it will be charged an administration fee of up to three percent of the brief fee. Three percent is the maximum rate charged on brief fees of £500 and above.

www.bookcounsel.com

E-MAIL WITHOUT TEARS OR EVEN A PC ?

At the end of last month the Amstrad electronics group launched the E-m@iler personal communication centre - a low-cost telephone plus pay-as-you-go e-mail terminal.

At first glance this is an attractive product. The phone unit includes a digital answering machine, a 700 name address book (data is stored on a solid state memory card), a removable electronic organiser-style gadget that lets you take your address book with you, there is also a built in fax, the e-mail service is subscription-free and the device is cheap - the E-m@iler will retail for around £79.99.

But, there are also some potential drawbacks. The fax is a text-only, send-only facility. To obtain a hard copy of an e-mail you need to acquire a suitable printer. The device can only handle e-mail - there is no Internet/web access. Because there is no PC interface the system cannot handle the movement of larger documents composed on a wordprocessor. Sending and receiving e-mail messages incurs a 12 pence flat fee charge each time you log-on, in addition to the normal call costs. And the online, direct to your home advertising facility Amstrad is linking to the system sounds like the recipe for a junk e-mail blizzard.

To make matters worse, the product also faces a lot of competition from other non-PC systems.

BT has its own e-mail plus fax phone. The telecoms company Telenor has announced a SmartPhone product that includes a full web surfing facility. Some mobile phones (such as the Nokia Communicator) offer fax e-mail and web surfing facilities - this sector of the market is set to boom as WAP technology starts to take off. PDA devices, such as Psions and PalmPilots, can accommodate Internet access. And, both ONdigital and Sky Digital/Open offer pay-as-you-go e-mail as part of their interactive TV services.

■ Verdict? E-m@iler may be an option for the home user who occasionally wants to swap e-mails with Cousin Betty in Brisbane but, in contrast with the old Amstrad PCW which gave many small law firms a first taste of computing, it is hard to see it meeting the needs of serious business users. There again, Amstrad expects over one million homes will buy the system over the next two years and anything that helps more people go online cannot be all bad.

DESKTOP LAWYER US DEBUT

Having woken up the UK market with its online divorce kit last summer, Epoch Software, the company behind Legal Desktop, spent last week in Chicago for the American Bar Association's TechShow where the company gave US lawyers a demonstration of how web-based legal services can provide a viable alternative to conventional bricks and mortar law firms. According to American Lawyer Media, the presentations given by Epoch's Richard Cohen provided a "scary" insight into the future of legal practice and left delegates to the show "open mouthed" with amazement.

READER SERVICES

■ INSIDER E-ZINES

Legal Technology Insider also publishes two current awareness e-zines (e-mail newsletters). These are: *New Media Lawyer*, covering all aspects of the Internet and new media law industries, and *Watching Brief Online*, carrying comment on recent local government law cases. Subscription is free. To be added to the distribution list send a note of your e-mail address to:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

Copies of the latest issues, plus a full archive, can also be found on the web:

www.newmedialawyer.co.uk

www.watchingbrief.com

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info@legaltechnology.co.uk

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THE NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Legal Technology Insider - No. 100 - will be published on Wednesday 10th May, 2000.

LAW SOCIETY PLANS NEW SOFTWARE GUIDE

The English Law Society has announced plans for the next edition of its Software Solutions Guide. While the selection process stays the same - market research followed by a presentation to a Law Society panel - the selection criteria have been revised. Suppliers will now have to show their systems are suitable for very small firms - two or three users on a peer-to-peer network - and support LAFQAS, Woolf, Lexcel and e-commerce functionality. The scheme's price structure has also changed. Small suppliers will pay one-third less than last year but larger companies will be paying up to £3000 more than last year's £7250 fee.
 ■ The closing date for applications is 9th May, call Gary Day on 020 7316 55333 for details.

KEYSTONE BUYS INTO USA

Continued from front page

Sycamore plans to re-brand BISPoint's EIS products under the Keystone Net Results name for inclusion as an integral part of the Keystone practice management system but will also continue to sell them on a stand-alone basis, for integration with third-party PMS products.

BISPoint's hardware arm will continue as a separate company unaffected by the deal. The software division, the subject of last week's acquisition, originally traded as Barrister Information Systems and already has its own SQL Server PMS offering. Called Javelan, this is in use at over 200 law firms across North America and has recently been enhanced by the introduction of new web-enabled modules. Further redevelopment work is underway and Keystone anticipates offering existing BISPoint clients "easy entry and transition" to Keystone's own range of systems.

■ The acquisition is partly funded by a share placing that will raise £2.4 million, with the balance coming from an earlier placing that raised £7.8 million in February.

LCS TO PILOT EDI AND XML

Continued from front page

The LSC has already made a number of decisions about the technologies it will use in any longer-term EDI projects.

These include using the Internet as the carrier for EDI transactions, rather than a more expensive private network, and ensuring that all data can be entered and viewed from a standard Internet browser.

To ensure the security of data transfers between the LSC and legal service suppliers, the entry of data will be protected by user IDs, passwords and digital certificates. Perhaps most interesting of all, the LSC plans to have at least three law firms undertaking XML-based file transfer methods during the course of the current pilot project.

■ From 10th April the main switchboard number for the Legal Services Commission has changed to 020 7759 0000.