CHARLES CHRISTIAN's
LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

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

LAW SOC SAYS SON OF HSSK ON ITS WAY

With the uncertainties and mud-slinging of this year's presidential campaign behind it, the English Law Society is now returning its attention to ways in which it can provide IT assistance for smaller High Street solicitors practices, with two key developments taking place within the last few days.

The first is that having reviewed four options for a replacement for the now abandoned High Street Starter Kit (HSSK) project, the Society has rejected three of them (a wholesale *kite marking* product approval scheme, outsourcing the entire project to a third-party and *badging* three or four suppliers' systems) in favour of awarding an exclusive contract to just one supplier.

Final details have yet to be announced but the way the scheme is envisaged working is the project will be put out to open tender and awarded to the supplier who can closest meet the Society's specifications on product, price and service levels, with particular emphasis on training and support.

It is also Chancery Lane's intention that while the product will carry a Law Society brand name, it will actually be marketed, sold and supported by the supplier.

At the time of going to print, the Law Society was still waiting for a further report from a working party looking at the project. Once this is available, the Society will finalise the financial side of the proposals and draw up an invitation ➡

to tender (or ITT) that will set out the areas of practice management the software is intended to address. This is expected to be ready by the early autumn.

The second development is that the Society's July council meeting threw out a proposal to abolish the practice development committee (PDC) and to replace it with three separate bodies. This means the related areas of legal business development and IT will, sensibly, continue to be run by one department. ❏

Insider exclusive

VALID IN 2p PER PAGE ARCHIVING INITIATIVE

Valid Information Systems has given LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER an exclusive briefing on its new secure document archiving and electronic retrieval service.

Called Valid Vault, it is being run by Valid in association with the Securicor Omega group and is formally launched at the end of this week, with the service commencing business at the beginning of September.

Valid, already well known for its ICiRis scanning/OCR technology and R/KYV document image processing (DIP) system, has worked with Securicor to create what managing director Bill Cannings believes is the most secure and cost effective way for law firms, and other heavy users of documents, to store large volumes of paper in an immediately accessible format.

Significantly, Valid Vault will be available for just 2p per page, which is about 3-to-4p cheaper than comparable services.

TCO distances itself from old Dart

In the wake of the furore surrounding the recent abrupt closure of Dart Legal Systems Ltd, which caused considerable ill-will among the creditors left with unpaid bills, Kevin Sparks of TCO Legal Systems (which now sells Dart software) has made a statement pointing out that TCO acquired the intellectual property rights to the Dart program from an individual (*believed to be Geoff Morris*) and had no commercial transactions with Dart the company (*proprietor Geoff Morris*). Sparks also confirmed that Geoff Morris is now employed by TCO.

The Long Vacation

Please note that the next edition of *Legal Technology Insider* (No.45) will be published on Tuesday 26th August.

TWO NEW CONTENDERS FOR THE HIGH STREET

Having been the Cinderellas of the legal IT market for too long and with little to choose from but old DOS-based products, the last 12 months have seen a surge of interest in the small High Street firms sector – and this week two more new systems have been announced...

Joining the ranks of Osprey from Pracctice, Kestrel from Laserform Law and the new system from Mountain Software are the Legal Ledger FiLOS package from Jackson Computer Solutions (JCS) and Solace Legal Systems' Millennium Suite.

The JCS product is effectively a major upgrade to the company's existing Legal Ledger II range and provides the same modular approach, allowing users to start with accounts and time recording, to which can be added a practice management database and the CasMan case management system.

FiLOS (Fully Integrated Legal Office System) is a 16-bit Windows product but a 32-bit version is also under development. Pricing starts at £1700 for accounts and time recording, the database is an additional £500 and CasMan £900 extra. (Add VAT to all prices.) There is also a basic Legal Ledger SoHo (small office/home office) product for very small firms that don't envisage ever needing to add case management software.

Although FiLOS has just been announced, the product is shipping now and has already been installed at 10 existing JCS sites, so it should be thoroughly bug-free.

JCS can be contacted on ✆ 0121 355 6789. The company has also opened a new web site at http://www.jcs.co.uk but some of the Java features are still under construction.

The second system – Millennium from Solace – does not become available until the end of August but first reports from *beta* testers suggest it is going to ➨

➨ be an attractive package, not least because of its competitive pricing. For example, the entry-level single user accounts module will cost circa £750 although it should be noted that the time recording module (scheduled for launch later this year) is an optional extra.

According to David Walker of Solace (✆ 01780 764947) over the next year the company will roll out a range of additional software applications to create a fully integrated accounts, practice management and case management suite.

Walker describes the 32-bit Windows system as being suitable for practices of between two and 50 fee earners and to this end, while the initial release is optimised to run on Microsoft's Access database, it will be followed by a larger SQL Server version. ❑

JOE PUTS MILES BEHIND HIM

Joe Amerasinghe, until recently head of the legal software division at Miles 33, has quit the company. Unlike his immediate predecessor Clive Deen, last heard of selling furniture, Amerasinghe is remaining within the legal systems sector and has taken up a new post with database products developer Oracle, where his brief will be to expand Oracle's links with legal software developers.

Pending a formal review of the division's structure, Amerasinghe's place at Miles 33 has been temporarily taken over by his long-time deputy Andrea Pointing.

Miss Pointing refused to comment on the company's longer term plans, save to say Miles 33 remained fully committed to its flagship Precedent system and that the company was "forging ahead".

Further announcements are expected later this year however **LTi** understands from its own sources that two areas under consideration by Miles are: facilities management/outsourcing/ bureau services and *thin client*/network computer technology. ❑

Litigation support

LEE RESURFACES AT TEXT SYSTEMS

Tom Lee, one of the original team at distributor Quintec and until recently with its successor PC Docs Europe, has resurfaced at technology integrators Text Systems, where he is heading up the company's new dedicated legal services division (Text is also active in the insurance market).

Lee's team includes long-time Text account manager Gary Levy and Ernie Kramer, another former Quintec employee and widely rated document management systems whiz.

The new division's brief is to be able to supply solicitors practices with an integrated suite of case management, document management and litigation support solutions that are compatible with modern desktop PC tools, including imaging. Text also plan to offer a web browser front end (*see NUI feature in Issue No.43 of the Insider*) so information can be accessed not only internally but also from any web enabled PC, terminal or hand-held computer.

Summation

No prizes for guessing that the market leading DOCS Open will be the company's preferred document management offering however Text's choice of the Summation litigation system may need a little more explanation.

Originally developed in the USA by Summation Legal Technologies, first as a DOS program back in 1988 and more recently as a 16-bit Windows application (a pure 32-bit version will be released in 1998), a number of independent surveys, including the most recent Chicago-Kent study, have consistently rated it the market leader in the US.

The product's closest US rivals are Concordance and ISYS but where it seems to score over the competition is in its ease of use, logical interface, full ➡

➡ text search capabilities and the fact it was specifically designed by an attorney for use in litigation applications. (It can also be integrated with real-time court transcription systems, such as LiveNotes.)

Text Systems now have exclusive distribution rights for Summation in the UK, where it is already in use in the London offices of a number of US law firms, including Baker & McKenzie.

Initially the company will be targeting law firms in the "top 100" size bracket however Gary Levy believes it is also suitable for mid-range practices.

☞ **Comment…** The UK pricing structure for Summation is keen, with an entry-level single user licence costing £2000 but falling to £5000 for a five user licence. Interestingly Text Systems see their most serious UK competitor as being Kelvin McGregor's team at DPA-Egami.

A useful free demonstration version of Summation is available on CD-Rom – call Text on ✆ 0171 403 4033 or check the respective web sites at http://www.summation.com and http://www.textsys.co.uk ❒

TREASURY SOLICITORS IMPLEMENT SOLCASE

The Bona Vacantia division of the Treasury Solicitor's Department has just completed the implementation of a 37-user case management application based on Solicitec's SolCase software.

The project included creating a computerised storage and retrieval facility for the 11,000 *live* cases already on the department's books relating to the assets of dissolved companies, as well as people dying intestate with no known kin.

A key element of the system is that it will help staff trace existing cases in response to telephone and postal enquiries even when they only have minimal information at their disposal, such as individuals with multiple aliases, companies that have changed their names or just part of an address. ❒

Norwel upgrade

Toller Hales & Collcutt, in Northamptonshire, is spending nearly £100,000 on upgrading its IT systems, including installing the latest version of Norwel's practice management system. The firm has been a Norwel user since 1978.

Linetime orders…

Derbyshire law firm Timms is investing £70,000 on upgrading its systems. The firm is an established Linetime user and, as well as installing the latest version of the Practice II accounts and time recording software, is also implementing Linetime's Context conveyancing package.

☞ **Linetime has also won a contract from Savages in Newcastle to supply the three partner firm with computerised accounts and time recording. The firm previously used a manual ledger cards system.**

Mercury secures two more deals

Two more law firms have placed orders for the InControl Legal workflow and case management system, which was developed by Mercury Computing (✆ 01628 778222).

Welsh giant Morgan Bruce will use the system in conjunction with its LegalMIND practice management system and is already running a pilot installation. LegalMIND was supplied by Admiral Legal Systems, who are now also distributors of InControl.

The second order was placed by Lawrence Tucketts in Bristol, who intend to install InControl across all departments and train 60 fee earners and staff to work with it.

Web-enabled systems

HATTON BLUE'S VECTUS GETS WEB ENABLEMENT

Case management developer Hatton Blue has added a web browser front end to Vectus 3.2, the latest version of its software.

According to Hatton Blue's Craig Smith, the new release takes what he describes as "relationship management" a stage further by automatically generating overviews of all dealings an organisation has with each individual customer or client. This feature enables a law firm to *profile* their clients and build an accurate picture of their "buying patterns" over time, thus permitting a more focused marketing of new services.

On the technology front, a major feature of release 3.2 is web enablement. As well as permitting, for example, law firm staff to access the system from home without costly ISDN or network links, it also opens up the possibility of clients (subject to security measures) being able to call up case management records via an internet link to check the status of particular matters.

Hatton Blue (✆ 01789 470493) says it is already talking to a number of firms about web enablement and expects the concept of an interactive web front end to also be of interest to law firm marketing departments.

Two other new features in 3.2 are: the option of a VisualBasic (VB4) graphical user interface, so firms have a standard Vectus screen or create their own; and the adoption of the RTF format for faster processing of documents and integration with wordprocessors. Vectus now also supports the DB2 database as well as Informix, Oracle, Ingres, Sybase and SQL Server.

☞ **Related Developments...** Neil Ewin, the technical director of rival case management supplier Solicitec, has ➤ just returned from a conference in the US where database developer Progress was showing the latest enhancements to its products.

These include the Web Speed internet development tool, which is designed to make it easier to create inter-active web enabled front ends to database applications. Like Hatton Blue, Solicitec says it is also receiving enquiries from law firms interested in creating internet links to case management systems.

Ewin adds that Progress has also announced changes to its 4GL development tools and made improvements to its ODBC links to make it easier to *port* applications developed with Progress onto other open standard databases, including Oracle, DB2 and SQL Server.

☞ US legal publisher Matthew Bender has launched a new web site at http://www.bender.com Called *Authority On-Demand*, it has been developed in conjunction with Informix to create an internet-based legal research service that allows users to purchase specific *slices* of publications rather than complete volumes.

In addition to purchasing publication content "at a granular level", visitors can access a web catalogue of Matthew Bender titles before paying on-line using a credit card. Informix describe this as a "database driven commerce environment".   ❒

CONTEXT IN PRICE REVIEW

Electronic legal publisher Context has confirmed that it is reviewing its pricing and copyright policy, in consultation with the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting. The aim is to create a two tier structure that differentiates between commercial users of products, such as solicitors practices, and not-for-profit organisations, such as law schools who want to reproduce material from the *Electronic Law Reports* series in course notes for students.   ❒

DIBBS OUTSOURCE DEBT SYSTEMS BULL INTEGRIS

Dibb Lupton Alsop has awarded Bull Information System's outsourcing division Integris a contract to provide complete mainframe and bureau services to support the firm's debt management and recovery systems.

Dibb's Bradford-based debt operations, where recent projects have included chasing non-paying *Names* at Lloyd's of London, had shared data processing resources on the Environment Agency's mainframe in Peterborough but recent changes at the EA meant these were no longer available. The firm will now use the Integris facilities, which are located at Newhouse in Scotland and also offer full disaster recovery, help desk and support services.

More details can be found on Bull's web site at http://www.bull.co.uk ❐

NEW LEGAL LIBRARY CONSULTANCY LAUNCHED

Specialist software house Euroserve has launched a new legal library consultancy service for law firms wanting to reorganise or automate their practice libraries.

Euroserve is probably best known for its low cost Masta-lib library software systems, which include indexing, ticketing and bar coding. Call Gary Simpson on ✆ 01582 455322 for details. ❐

VOICE CONTROL FOR WORD

The Belgian-based speech technology software vendor Lernout & Hauspie has announced that it will introduce a voice-controlled software editor for Microsoft Word in the autumn.

Users will be able to select a sentence, underline a group of words, and change the colour or size of a font, all by naturally spoken voice commands.

The Lernout & Hauspie product uses what the company calls the ➡

➡ "discrete dictation pathology software", it acquired from Kurzweil earlier this year. This artificial intelligence technology allows the software to prompt users for answers as if they were entering information onto a form.

The initial product will be aimed specifically at pathologists, with other versions for the legal profession and police reporting to follow over the next few months. ❐

VALID ARCHIVE INITIATIVE

➡ *continued from front page…* The way the new service operates is Securicor couriers collect the documents to be archived at predetermined intervals from the client and take them to a secure paper storage centre.

There they are electronically processed – this includes scanning, OCR work and indexing. The electronic text and images files created at this stage are then loaded onto Valid's own extranet server, where they can be accessed, searched and retrieved on screen by users with a desktop PC and telephone link using Valid's encrypted HTML software.

☞ **Technical note…** The search process uses web-browser style plain English commands rather than the Boolean logic of some retrieval systems.

As additional security, along with the paper archive and the files on the Valid server, a further copy is sent to Securicor's TeleVault secure (and secretly located) repository for electronic data.

The 2p per page per annum price (less for firms who already have their own scanning facilities) includes collection by Securicor, scanning, Valid's secure online retrieval service, paper storage and the TeleVault back-up.

As well as being technically secure, the service would also seem to be financially safe as the Securicor/Valid partnership is backed by substantial venture capital investment. For details call Valid on ✆ 0181 518 1414. ❐

RPC to gut old network

London law firm Reynolds Porter Chamberlain has placed a contract worth £200,000 with Trescray Network Communications (✆ 0171 680 7200) to replace its old Token Ring network with a new system that can support a broader bandwidth. The change was necessary because the firm had found its existing system was having difficulty coping with the movement of large files to and from its document imaging (DIP) and litigation support systems.

☞ **Trescray is installing a 3Com hardware solution based on FDDI (fibre optic cables) and switched Ethernet. The DIP workstations, previously a bottleneck, will each have a dedicated 10Mbits bandwidth.**

Seen around the Web...

☞ **Companies House has begun final *beta* testing of a new extranet service called *Companies House Direct*. This will give subscribers the ability to search for company data via a dial-in service linked to Microsoft's web browser. The new service will also offer *fuzzy logic* searches and mortgage information taken from its *Mortgage Register*.**

☞ **Online business data provider Financial Times Information has launched *FT Discovery for the Web*, a new company information and real time news alerts service that is accessible at a fixed price via a standard web browser and internet connection. For details check** http://www.info.ft.com

Communications & the Net

GROUPWISE IN PSION DEAL

Novell and Psion have joined forces to bring the groupware features of the GroupWise system to the Psion range of handheld computers.

By using a third-party synchronisation tool called LinkWise 2.0, Psion users can now reconcile their GroupWise appointments, notes, tasks, anniversaries and personal address books with data held on their Psion 3a, 3c or Siena machines. An additional feature of Link-Wise 2.0 is the ability to transfer GroupWise email to the Psion.

Copies of LinkWise can be downloaded free of charge from the web site belonging to the Advansys Corporation, the program's developers, at http://www.advansyscorp.com

This is a 30 day trial version and should a user decide to purchase Link-Wise a unique registration key, which removes the time restriction, will be sent to them. Advansys should also be contacted for further information about purchasing options and volume licensing.

In addition to LinkWise, users also need: the free Novell Envoy 7 stand-alone viewer, a 16 or 32-bit GroupWise 5x or 16-bit 4.1a Client for Windows, a Psion 3c, 3a or Siena and a Psion serial link cable.

☞ **Comment...** Curiously, the new GroupWise link is not available for Psion's recently launched Series 5 range. These are 32-bit machines that offer greater compatibility with Windows 95 desktop applications and are intended to compete with Microsoft's rival Windows CE system which effectively provides Windows functionality on a handheld computer.

Users contacted by **LTi** appear to have mixed views about the Series 5. According to management consultant Gareth Morgan, who has been using ➡

➡ one for nearly four months, the new Series 5 is "a much more powerful machine" than the Series 3 with "a very impressive real keyboard". Morgan also reckons the software applications are "considerably improved" over the Series 3 and "blow away Windows CE machines", such as the Hewlett-Packard HP 320 which he has also used.

On the otherhand Christine Gribbin, whose company Anya Designs launched the Psion 3-based Lawbrief application for criminal law practitioners last year, is rather less enthusiastic. She feels existing Psion users are getting "a bit of a raw deal" as Series 3 software is not upwardly compatible and so cannot be used on the latest Series 5 range unless the entire program is rewritten. ❒

X2 WINNING HIGH SPEED RACE ?

Although at one stage it looked like being a two-horse race, the competition between the rival standards for 56 kbps modem transmission speeds (which allow 33.6 kbps modem users to download material from web sites at nearly double the normal speed) seems to be swinging in favour of the *x2* system from 3Com/US Robotics.

Within the last couple of weeks IBM's Microelectronics Division, which manufactures modems, as well as the ISPs Prestel On-line and IBM Global Network have all announced support for *x2*. In addition, the US communications manufacturer Bay Networks and the UK's largest ISP UUNet Pipex have both said they will now be supporting *x2* as well as the rival *K56Flex* standard. ❒

DOCUMENT MANAGEMENT ON THE WEB

Lotus Development has announced the immediate availability of Domino.Doc, a new web-based document management system designed for the network infrastructures, so that departmental ➡

➡ workgroups, whole law firms or even *virtual communities* comprising of law firms and their clients or legal networks such as, for example LawNet, can share and collaborate on business documents.

Domino.Doc is based on the Open Document Management API (ODMA) industry standard and allows organisations to securely capture, file, retrieve and distribute documents via the internet using desktop applications, web browsers or Lotus Notes clients.

The system is based around a *library service* that enables any user to create file cabinets and folders, define multiple authors, assign access rights, control multiple versions and define hierarchies in a menu-driven format familiar to desktop applications and web browsers.

At the time of going to press UK prices were not yet available however further information is available on the Lotus Discovery web site at http://www.ddmdiscovery.com

☞ **Related development...** The FileNet Corporation, which now owns the Saros document management system, has just announced the release of its WebSeries software for managing document images and computer reports in intranet and internet applications.

FileNet describe it as a complete out-of-the-box application for document query, retrieval and viewing. WebSeries is fully compatible with both Microsoft and Netscape browsers and supports Java technology. Further information can be found at http://www.filenet.com ❑

HEXAR ANNOUNCES MAJOR UPGRADE TO FAXSWITCH

Communications specialist Hexar (✆ 0181 563 9000) has introduced a major upgrade to its FaxSwitch system that is designed to handle the heavy fax traffic generated by major law firms.

The new system is built around RedBox Technologies' Fax Router ➡

➡ software. This is a scalable Windows NT based product that tightly integrates fax capabilities within a firm's existing email systems, Windows programs and business applications, to provide fax delivery over a variety of communications channels including the internet, public telephone services, private intranets and other data networks.

Clifford Chance, which currently handles seven million fax pages a year, Freshfields and Simmons & Simmons are already planning to upgrade to the new version of FaxSwitch. ❑

Legal IT Diary Dates

↻ **September 22 & 23 – Rundle Walker Workshops** Exeter solicitors Rundle Walker, winners of the 1997 Society for Computers & Law IT Award, are launching a series of one day seminars on IT for High Street firms. The first two of these take place in Exeter in September. The cost is £295 (+VAT), call Jeremy Wickham on ✆ 01392 209205 for details.

↻ **September 25-27 – Take Two: the 1997 Carpe Diem User Conference** Organised by the ProSoft Corporation, the developer of the popular Carpe Diem package, the event takes place at the Texas movie-making location of Las Colinas. The standard conference fee is $495 however there are discounts for additional delegates from the same firm and early reservations. ProSoft has also organised special rates for hotels. For details call Carrie Reilly on ✆ (+1) 972 386 7769 or email creilly@pscorp.com.

☞ The movie *RoboCop* was made at Las Colinas and a tour of the studio area is included in the conference price. UK visitors should note international flights are to Dallas/Fort Worth and that in September the weather is "warm" – this is defined by ProSoft as a temperature ranging from 85 to 95°F during the day.❑

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Next issue...
**Issue No 45 of
the Insider will be
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miss it.**

Bar News

BAR IN TELECOMS NETWORK PILOT

You could be forgiven for thinking the Bar Council's latest videoconferencing initiative was just another photo opportunity for the ubiquitous Cherie Booth QC but there is a serious side to the project, as LTi reports...

Since the early 1990s the Bar Council has been actively championing the use of videoconferencing technology as an alternative to having barristers, solicitors, witnesses, prisoners and clients travelling around the country to attend routine meetings and court appearances.

Having enjoyed some success with early projects, the Bar Telecom Working Party (chairman Cherie Booth) began looking at ways to extend videoconferencing to the broader legal community and, following the issuing of an ITT, appointed the alternative telecoms network Energis and videoconferencing technology supplier PictureTel to coordinate a more extensive pilot involving Queen's Bench Masters, Shrewsbury Prison and various sets of chambers in London, Birmingham and Southampton.

This pilot, including the subsequent evaluation of results, draws to a close this autumn. However according �ľ Energis, one interesting finding has already emerged:namely that there is no demand for the creation of a high band-width *virtual private network* within the traditional Inns of Court area of London.

As most chambers are within about 5 minutes walk from each other, barristers feel there would be no benefits in linking them by videoconferencing.

So, what does happen next ? Assuming the evaluation draws positive conclusions, at a local level Energis and PictureTel are expected to be named as recommended suppliers to all barristers chambers. (☞ *Although these companies will be offering special deals on hardware and services, videoconference users will still have to install ISDN lines.*)

At a broader level, the results – particularly if they reveal a potential to reduce legal costs through cutting travel times etc – will strengthen the Bar Council's arm in lobbying the Home Office and the Lord Chancellor's Department to install videoconference links throughout the courts and prison systems.

Energis is also optimistic that by offering chambers a videoconference package, it will give the technology the boost it needs to become a mass market medium. Afterall, if more chambers have videoconferencing, it will make sense for more solicitors practices to also install the technology as there will finally be someone to videoconference with. ❐