PUTTING RELATIONS INTO RELATIONSHIPS

One of the ironies of running relational databases is that unless the software is fully integrated, it may be impossible to extract data from one application and use it in another. But, Interface Software claims it has now cracked this problem with its new Time & Billing Collaboration module.

Launched in the USA earlier this week, the module allows users of the InterAction relationship management system to "subscribe" to other database applications on the same network, including accounts and practice management systems, case management software and HR products such as PeopleSoft, and "harvest" data for use in InterAction. For example, a marketing department may need access to billing information to discover how much business a particular contact has generated.

The module is already in use with two US law firms: Elite-users Fullbright & Jaworski in Houston and Perkins Coie in Seattle, who run it in conjunction with CMS Open. In the latter case the module was retro-fit into an existing InterAction installation and imported 30,000 records from CMS in just under one hour. Incidentally, InterAction users cannot change the data in the systems they subscribe to.

■ The Collaboration module is currently not available in the UK but is expected to be launched by InterAction's UK distributor Tikit during November/early December.

WHO NEEDS CLUSTERING ?

Is clustering technology just an excuse for IT suppliers to sell firms twice as much hardware to cover eventualities that may never happen - or does it have a real value? Irwin Mitchell discovered the answer earlier this summer.

WORLD FAILS TO END ON 9999

Despite earlier warnings of widespread computing-related disasters, because some COBOL programmers may have in the past used "9999" as a default figure or end of file marker command in date fields, the 9th of September 1999 (9/9/99) came and went without disruption. Coming just three weeks after another predicted IT doomsday - the automatic resetting of Global Positioning System (GPS) dates on 21st August - turned into a non-event, the net result has been to fuel optimism that the impact of the millennium bug at the end of the year will not now trigger the previously forecast technology meltdown.

GRANT THORNTON IT SURVEY LAUNCH

Legal IT consultancy Grant Thornton has launched a new survey that aims to determine not only which IT systems law firms are running but also how effectively they use them. Called the "Legal IT Interfirm Comparison", it will poll 1500 of the UK's largest firms to identify industry trends. A parallel survey of major legal IT suppliers will also be undertaken.

■ Grant Thornton plans to publish the survey results in early 2000. Firms with four partners or more who have not received a questionnaire by early October should call Andrew Levison or Richard Blasdale on 020 7728 2293.

SCL AWARD ENTRIES

The Society for Computers & Law has opened nominations for its annual award for the "most outstanding application of IT to the law" in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The closing date for entries is Friday 19th November and the winner will be announced on 24th January.

This year's judging panel includes John Howells of SJ Berwin, Matthew di Rienzo of Clifford Chance and Andrew Levison of Grant Thornton. The panel will be chaired once again by Ed Dean of Lovell White Durrant. Nomination forms are available from the SCL (01179 237393) and entries can also be submitted online.
http://www.scl.org/award

THE INSIDER WEB SITE

Visit the Legal Technology Insider web site for the latest legal and IT industry news, access to archive material and hyperlinks to additional services and information.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

■ PAM KENDRICK-ASTLE has been appointed legal systems director at SANDERSON SYSTEMS. She will report to managing director ALLAN HODKINSON, who retains responsibility for sales and marketing.

■ Just six months after first opening a training centre in London, SOLICITORS OWN SOFTWARE has moved into larger premises at IBEX House, 42-47 Minories, London EC3 1DY. Phone 020 7264 0636.

Delegates to the courses, which now include not just SOS software but also courses covering Windows, Outlook, Excel and Word, can use the health club facilities located at IBEX House. Training courses can also be booked via e-mail.

training@soslondon.co.uk

■ NETRIGHT TECHNOLOGIES, the company behind the iManage document management system, has changed its name to IMANAGE INC. Buzzword enthusiasts might like to note the arrival of a new TLA (three letter acronym). Apparently iManage is no longer a "DMS" (document management system) but instead should now be referred to as a "CMS" or content management system.

■ In the United States SAGE has reorganised its operations to combine in one new TIME DIVISION responsible for all time recording-related products, including Timeslips and Carpe Diem. KAREN FATE remains responsible for Carpe Diem in the UK and Europe.

■ PILGRIM SYSTEMS has appointed DAVID FRASER as a new non-executive director. Fraser, who was Microsoft's first UK managing director, will be working with chairman JIM CUMMINGS on the development of Pilgrim's corporate and business activities as the company moves towards its previously declared intention of seeking a public flotation in the medium term. Fraser will also be involved with Pilgrim's plans to make its software Internet-complaint. "We want to turn the LawSoft system into a 100 percent Internet-friendly product with similar simple usability to Windows web browser software," he said.

LAFQAS IT SHAMBLES

Over the last couple of weeks Legal Technology Insider has heard from a number of IT suppliers complaining about the difficulties involved in trying to get reliable information from the Legal Aid Board about the new LAFQAS franchise quality assurance standard.

One of the big issues for systems developers is that the sample LAFQAS reports produced as guidance by the LAB appear to contain incorrect fields and inconsistencies over the treatment of work-in-progress, total work done and billing dates. There is also a loosely defined exclusion column which, on one interpretation, gives individual fee earners total discretion as to how it should be completed.

"The LAB is trying to lay down standards," says Bruce Argue, of north London systems developers Alternative Team, "yet if they cannot provide definitive answers as to what these standards are, how can they expect solicitors to comply with them?" Argue adds that he has been contacting one LAB official since May in an attempt to seek clarification on the standards but so far had not even had his correspondence acknowledged.

WORDPERFECT FALLS BACK

The latest AmLaw Tech survey into the use of IT by US law firms reveals WordPerfect has lost the wordprocessing war with Microsoft. Word increased its market share to 75.3 percent (compared to 58 percent in 1998) while WordPerfect has fallen to 37.6 percent from last year's 49.5 percent.

■ Levit & James Inc, who specialise in wordprocessing software utilities, have released an upgraded version of their CrossWords program for converting WordPerfect documents into Word. The new version also includes improved integration with DOCS Open and iManage.

http://www.levitjames.com

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE COURT

The US magazine *Law Technology News* reports that WordPerfect users scored a surprise victory over Microsoft Word-using lawyers in a recent court case.

According to US Court of Appeals Rule 32, briefs must be no longer than 14,000 words. However one attorney submitted a brief in MS Word running to 13,824 words, only to have it questioned by the WordPerfect-using Seventh Circuit Court, who calculated it ran to 15,056 words. Why? Because unlike WordPerfect, Word does not include footnotes in word counts, prompting the trial judge to rule that "counsel who use Word are not entitled to a litigating advantage over those who use WordPerfect".

Microsoft has now posted onto its web site a free download macro for handling word counts with footnotes.

http://www.kentlaw.edu/7thcircuit/1999/jul/99-1745A.html
http://officeupdate.microsoft.com

VPM OPTS FOR FREEWARE APPROACH

Software house ByteDrive has solved the problem of how to minimise sales and marketing overheads when selling low-cost software to law firms. Instead of the conventional approach of advertising, exhibitions and demonstrations, the company has opted to give the product away.

Since August the company has been distributing its Visual Portfolio Manager practice management system free of charge on CD-Roms or via downloads from its web site. With this option the user gets a Windows 95/98/NT system that can handle basic case and document management tasks - users also need to have a copy of MS Word 95 or 97.

The core software also contains a number of more advanced features, including archiving, reminders, time recording, invoicing, correspondence templates, database and security, that can be accessed for firms taking out an annual subscription to the software. This costs £175 per practice plus £55 per user per annum. (The only other revenue stream is a £1 per minute premium rate help line.)

The net result, claims sales director Eric Lyle, is a system costing less than £500 for a five-user installation, compared with nearer £5000 for the more traditional approach.

The Insider will carry a review of VPM in the next issue.
http://www.vimsltd.com

DICTAPHONE GOES ON QUEST

Dictaphone has launched the Quest, a new portable digital voice recorder that combines conventional digital dictation facilities with a personal organiser, complete with miniature display screen, that can exchange audio and data files with any Windows 95/98 computer. Audio recordings are stored in a WAV file format that can be played back on a PC (providing it is equipped with speakers and a sound card), saved onto removable FLASH memory cards or attached to an e-mail message for transfer via the Internet. Quest units retail for an RRP of £249.99 (inc VAT).

RES-SOFT SELLS SUBSIDIARY

The Resolution Group Plc has announced the sale of its subsidiary Resolution SQL to a management team headed by managing director Steve Grob and backed by ABN Amro.

The MBO follows a decision by the group to focus on the legal and professional markets and shed the futures and options activities of its Resolution SQL subsidiary.

According to group managing director Ken Symons, the deal, worth £6.5 million, will free up management time, allow the group to completely de-gear its balance sheet and have significant working capital to develop its legal market activities based on Resolution Software's (ResSoft) FirmWare practice management system. "A number of new initiatives are planned, including a major investment in our Internet development capabilities".

DEALS AND TENDERS

■ SELECT LEGAL SYSTEMS reports booming sales for its fee earner desktop software over the past four months. The latest orders include CARRICK CARR & WRIGHT in Hull, ARCHER & ARCHER in Ely and BUTCHER ANDREWS in Fakenham.

■ VIZARD OLDHAM, one half of the recently demerged VIZARDS practice, has placed an order for an NT-based practice management system from TECHNOLOGY FOR BUSINESS. The firm is also taking TFB's new Web Server corporate portal product. Other new signings by TFB in recent months include KENNETH SHAW in Enfield, COOPER WHITEMAN in the West End and SIMMONDS CHURCH SMILES in Bedford Row, which is replacing a TIMESLICE system. Recent upgrades by existing TFB users include BLACKS of Leeds migrating to NT, ROWLEY DICKINSON in Manchester extending its Novell network and WHITEHEAD MONCKTON in Kent moving from WordPerfect to Microsoft Word.

■ Norwich-based MILLS & REEVE is to install RESOLUTION SOFTWARE's FirmWare practice management system. Phase one will see the implementation of the financial and marketing elements. These will be followed by a fee earner workflow system and the final element will be the introduction of ResSoft's InControl case management software. In the early 1990s Mills & Reeve was one of the first firms to install the FirmControl product from FOUNDATION SYSTEMS, the direct antecedent of FirmWare.

■ VIDESS COMPUTER SYSTEMS has won orders worth, in total, £650,000 from LEO ABSE & COHEN in South Wales and WARNER GOODMAN & STREAT in Southampton. FRUITION TECHNOLOGY will be handling Warner Goodman's migration from a Novell network to Windows NT. Both firms are ordering a combination of case and practice management software. In the case of Leo Abse, this will include tailoring the case management software to handle the firm's substantial personal injury practice for trade unions.

LEGAL WEEKLIES IN JOBS MARKET FIGHT

Along with the spring, the first half of the autumn is one of the traditional boom times in the legal recruitment calendar, as lawyers return from spending the summer vacation brooding about their careers and decide to change jobs.

It is also one of the boom times for recruitment advertising, which is why earlier this month *The Times* launched *Law*, a new legal section published on Tuesdays in a tabloid format. Undaunted by this *Legal Week*, the newest arrival on the publishing scene, has announced plans to launch two new legal titles over the next six months.

But, where do all these developments leave legal recruitment advertisers?

Until recently the weekly advertising market was dominated by *The Times*, *The Lawyer* and the *Law Society Gazette* with, respectively, 29 percent, 46 percent and 25 percent market shares. (Figures for the first seven months of 1998 based on volumes of advertising measured in single column centimetres.)

The first seven months of 1999 were however unusual for two factors. There was a 12 percent increase in the total volume of legal recruitment advertising and, secondly, a new publication - *Legal Week* - entered the fray.

As a consequence, the figures for 1999 show *The Times*' market share to have fallen to 22 percent and *The Lawyer*'s is down to 29 percent. Meanwhile the *Gazette* has increased its share to 26 percent and *Legal Week* has made its debut by grabbing a 23 percent share.

TRY LTi-NET FREE

Try LTi-Net, the digital version of Legal Technology Insider. Available in an HTML file format, it can be accessed via a subscriber-only web site or delivered as an e-mail attachment. It comes complete with all hyperlinks and is designed for firms wanting to access the newsletter across corporate portals, intranets and Lotus Notes databases or people who just want to be able to read and print it from the desktop. Subscription rates start at £135. For a free trial copy e-mail:

info@legaltechnology.co.uk

LEXIS AND EPOCH IN NEW WEB ALLIANCES

While the consumers of online legal services wait with bated breath (or not as the case may be) for the arrival of Sweet & Maxwell's new Internet super-site, the competition are not wasting any time in strengthening their positions.

Butterworths has announced that it plans to integrate its Butterworths Direct database with the legal information service Lexis. Although Lexis and Butterworths, which are already part of the same Reed Elsevier group, expect the move to yield advantages in terms of administration, support and customer services, they see the main benefit being to users who will now have access to an integrated database of UK, Commonwealth and US legal material through a single web-based subscription.

Meanwhile BT, which earlier this year was involved in a joint venture with Butterworths, has now signed a deal with Epoch Software to make Epoch's Desktop Lawyer online legal documents service available to users of the BT Connect to Business web portal. This is the latest in a series of Desktop Lawyer deals with major Internet portals, including Freeserve, LineOne, Sage and Totalise. Epoch expects to announce more deals over the next six months.

http://www.btconnect.bt.com
http://www.desktoplawyer.net

SWEDISH PUBLISHER LOOKING FOR UK PARTNER

Hall & Swedenborg, a Swedish-based publishing business, is looking for a partner to help develop a subscription based Internet/intranet portal for commercial law firms and inhouse lawyers in the UK. The company's NetLex portals are already used by inhouse lawyers in companies such as ABB and Skandia in Sweden. For more details contact John Hall (0131 667 7204) in Edinburgh.

http://www.netlex.net

INSIDER'S NEW COMPANION

Legal Technology Insider this week launches a new digital newsletter - *New Media Lawyer* - designed for law firms, inhouse lawyers and business managers involved in the new media sector, including all aspects online publishing and electronic commerce. The newsletter, which incorporates the *E-Business + Law* e-zine, will cover both legal developments and industry news, including who is acting for who in the latest deals and litigation.

The newsletter, which will be published 20 times a year in plain text e-mail format, is funded by sponsorship and available free of charge to all subscribers. To subscribe send an e-mail containing the phrase "New Media Lawyer" in the heading to: **info@legaltechnology.co.uk**

http://www.newmedialawyer.co.uk

UNIX POISED TO MAKE A COMEBACK ?

Despite the fact some IT suppliers have been rehearsing their funeral orations for Unix for the past three years, the operating system is far from dead and certainly refuses to lie down. Leading the revival is the Santa Cruz Operation, best known in the UK for its SCO UnixWare operating system which, by volume of server licence sales, is now the market-leading version of Unix.

According to UK sales manager Craig Skelton, who has responsibility not just for existing sales channels but also weaning former Unix sellers off Microsoft Windows NT and back into the fold, SCO's Unix products have three major benefits over NT.

The first is what he describes as the "ilities". Skelton reckons that compared with NT, UnixWare has greater reliability, scalability, configurability and availability. Not least because NT involves a constant "churn" - from 3.5 to 4.0 to 2000 - and the addition of endless patches and fixes.

Secondly, thanks to a more flexible approach to "licence breaks" (buying user licences in blocks of 5, 25, 50 etc) Unix can be considerably cheaper than the same number of users running on NT. Depending upon the configuration of the system, a 100 user UnixWare network could cost as much as 45 percent less than a comparable NT network.

Finally, Skelton believes the future belongs to Unix and SCO. In particular, with the drift away from proprietary versions of Unix running on RISC processors, SCO is already working on a joint initiative, involving IBM, Intel and Compaq, to develop a new industry standard version of Unix. Codenamed Project Monterey, this will run on Intel's forthcoming 64-bit next generation "Merced" chip and offer a combination of UnixWare and IBM's AIX version of Unix.

Not content with Monterey, SCO also has Tarantella up its corporate sleeve. This is an ASP (application service provider) product that allows organisations to web-enable and deliver any application - whether based on NT, Unix or even a mainframe - to an end-user who accesses it via a browser-type interface called a "webtop".

■ Ironically, one of SCO's financial backers is Microsoft, which sold SCO all IP rights to the old Microsoft Xenix version of Unix in return for shares in the company.

MICROSOFT BUYS DOCS

Microsoft may be working on its own Project Tahoe and Platinum document management applications for forthcoming versions of the Windows NT and Outlook products but in the meantime this has not stopped the company from placing major orders for PowerDOCS and CyberDOCS software from PC Docs. Both are offshoots of the DOCS Open document management system and will initially be used by Microsoft's main marketing department in Seattle to handle all the documentation being prepared to support the pending launch of Windows 2000.

DMS AND LITIGATION SUPPORT NEWS

■ KRAMER LEE & ASSOCIATES (01268 584666), developers of the Knowledge Base 32 precedent management system which is based on DOCS Open architecture, has won three new UK customers: D J FREEMAN, CLYDE & CO and WRAGGE & CO. In addition BAKER & McKENZIE in Chicago has also ordered the system. KLA will launch a litigation support package before the end of the year. And, in a related development KLA, which currently provides telephone support services to 70 percent of all DOCS Open installations in the UK, plans to open a web-based support facility for DOCS users later this year. The site is due to go live in November.
http://www.vector.kramerlee.com

■ In the United States SYSGEN has launched an "evidentiary documentation" system which, the company claims, can help organisations minimise Y2K litigation risks and "thwart sharp attorneys... seeking to destroy the credibility of evidence". Called Y2K evidoc, the system provides a methodology to design, create and package "rock solid" documentary evidence of Y2K due diligence preparations. UK litigation support vendors might like to note that SysGen is looking for international distributors. E-mail: **evidoc@aol.com**
http://www.evidoc.net

■ According to the latest AM-LAW TECH survey, the three most widely used litigation support systems in the USA are SUMMATION (43 percent of firms - an increase in market share of nearly 10 percent on 1998), CONCORDANCE (38 percent - marginally up on last year) and LITIGATOR'S NOTEBOOK (20 percent - down marginally on 1998). Some firms in the survey used more than one product.

■ EXCALIBUR TECHNOLOGIES (01344 893444) has launched a new Lotus Notes "power search plug-in" for its RetrievalWare system. The software will give Lotus Notes Domino users more advanced indexing, knowledge retrieval and natural-language search facilities.

WEB NEWS IN BRIEF

■ The LEGAL AID BOARD now has its own web site containing copies of consultation papers, research reports and guidance material for both practitioners and the general public.

http://www.legal-aid.gov.uk

■ Windows 2000 may be on its way soon but in the meantime MICROSOFT has released Windows NT Server 4.0 Service Pack 5 to fix some of the bugs still to be found in the current version of its operating system.

http://support.microsoft.com/ servicedesks/directaccess/

■ At the beginning of September a new version of the English LAW SOCIETY's Practice Rule 15 came into force. This strengthens the solicitor's obligations to provide clients with clear information about professional fees and the handling of complaints. A full copy of the new Practice Rule 15 plus guidance notes and sample client letters can be found on the Society's web site.

http://www.clientcare.lawsociety.org.uk

■ According to DURLACHER RESEARCH, part of the same group that recently helped provide corporate finance for Epoch Software, the total number of Internet users in the UK (including academic and business users) has now (as of June) reached 10.5 million. This represents a 50 percent increase on June 1998, when there were approximately seven million users. Durlacher predicts the figure will reach 12.8 million users by June 2000. Further information, including summaries of the company's research reports, are on the web.

http://www.durlacher.com

■ CMS CAMERON McKENNA has launched an e-mail based business and legal information service called LawNow. Registration details are on the web.

http://www.cmck.com

■ The UK ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION has given its web site a face-lift to include private members-only discussion areas.

http://www.greenchanel.com/ukela

LEGAL WEEK ON WEB

Tomorrow (23rd September) sees the launch of *Legal Week* magazine's new web site.

The Insider has had an exclusive preview of the site and can report it is a cleanly laid out and intuitively constructed site that is refreshingly free of graphics multimedia gimmicks, tickers and cartoons. The site is split into a number of sections, such as news, jobs and law firm announcements, that are each colour coded to aid navigation, while the internal links are designed in such a way that you should never be more than two "clicks" away from any item of information you are looking for.

Publisher Mark Wyatt said the objective was not to provide an alternative to the paper edition of *Legal Week* but to take advantage of the Internet to supplement its content with value added features, such as search engines.

One potentially very useful facility is to allow large law firms and recruitment agencies direct access to the site so, for example, they can input and update job advertising on a 24-hours a day basis rather than the usual weekly cycle.

http://www.lwk.co.uk

BAR TO HAVE PRO BONO SITE

The Bar Pro Bono Unit, which is a charity reliant upon donations, is to have its own web site courtesy of legal publishers Context Ltd. The new site is in the final stages of construction and will be launched at this year's Bar Conference in London in October. The site will contain information about the unit and its work, advice for those seeking help and an exclusive members' area giving advice to barristers working on pro bono cases.

http://www.BarProBono.org.uk

■ The Solicitors Pro Bono Group also has its own web site, which went live last year. This is maintained and sponsored by the Society for Computers & Law and web site developers Go Interactive.

http://www.scl.org/spbg/

LAWYERS ONLINE BRIEFCASE

Legal Internet service provider Lawyers OnLine has launched a new virtual "personal organiser" service. Called My-Lawyers-OnLine-Briefcase, this free service offers users access to a range of utility programs, including an address book, diary, to-do list and calculator on their own secure, personalised web space. Information, which can be backed-up onto a local hard disk, is entered in the normal fashion and then accessed whenever the user is online to the Internet. Lawyers OnLine suggest this will be useful for lawyers on the move, as they can have access to data wherever they are, without having to take a complete copy of all their files with them. Although the concept is already in use in the commercial sector, this is the first time it has been customised for the UK legal market.

http://www.lawyersonline.co.uk

SWELTERING IN THE MACHINE ROOM

Earlier this year Irwin Mitchell installed Microsoft NT Cluster Server at its Sheffield offices to support a 500-user network and by July the system had already earned its keep.

During a hot spell over one July weekend, the air conditioning in the office failed, letting the temperature in the machine room rise to an unacceptable 120 degrees Fahrenheit. This caused a drive controller card on the primary server to overheat and fail, at which point the cluster technology kicked in and automatically switched services to the other server in the cluster.

In all the primary server was out of action for nearly four days yet because no services were lost, none of the firm's users were even aware there had been a problem.

Commenting on the experience, IT director Richard Hodkinson said clustering, which offers both failover resilience and 24/7 availability, has moved from being a nice-to-have to must-have technology.

"It is no longer a 9-til-5 existence for lawyers. IT systems are now a deal-breaker. There are companies and institutions that do not want to work with a law firm that does not have a strong IT strategy and investment. Lawyers have to be able to use the systems any time of the day or night to support what is now a 24-hour corporate world."

Hodkinson reckons that on a "conservative estimate" the cluster's ability to switch services saved Irwin Mitchell £200,000 during the week it took to repair the air conditioning.

■ In broad terms "clustering" involves a group of independent systems working together as a single system. When a system in the cluster fails, the cluster software responds by dispersing the work from the failed system to the remaining systems in the cluster.

Irwin Mitchell runs its main file/print and Exchange servers at its Sheffield offices as a clustered pair on Compaq ProLiant 5000 hardware. The firm is now upgrading to cluster technology across all eight of its offices. Hodkinson and network manager Craig Thomas used Nottingham systems house The Data Base (0115 971 2000) to supply the cluster technology.

http://www.microsoft.com/ntserver/ntserverenterprise/exec/overview/clustering/default.asp

CUTTING CALL COSTS WITH LCR

Birmingham-based solicitors Anthony Collins estimates it has cut its phone bills by nearly 20 percent since moving to a least cost routing service, provided by LCR Telecom (020 736 6000), which takes advantage of the competitive rates now available in the telecoms industry. Finance manager David Myers said another benefit of the move had been gaining access to LCR's billing system. Because this provides a detailed analysis of call patterns, it has enabled the firm to identify ways of making further savings.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY DIARY DATES

■ SEPTEMBER 23, NOTTINGHAM Laserform Product Open Days. A series of product demonstration seminars around England running until late November. Other venues include London, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol and Birmingham. Admission free. For details call Sara Walker on 01925 750000.

■ SEPTEMBER 23 & 24, STRATFORD Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) Autumn Conference, the Moat House Hotel, Stratford-upon-Avon. Includes seminar session on "Making the most of your PC" and one-day exhibition. There are a variety of conference packages available for delegates. Call Marlene Lord of APIL on 0115 958 0585.

■ SEPTEMBER 29, LONDON - CPR in Practice, Forum Hotel SW7. One day conference on the new Civil Procedure Rules, litigation, case management and the role of IT. Fees from £499 (+VAT). Call QDOS on 020 7440 8920.

■ OCTOBER 9, LONDON - Bar Council 1999 Conference & Exhibition, the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre. Call Blair Communications on 020 7483 8411.

■ OCTOBER 13-to-15, GLENEAGLES, SCOTLAND - The Legal IT Forum 1999. New invitation-only event being staged by *Legal Week* to provide law firm IT directors and systems suppliers with a mixture of formal conference sessions and informal networking opportunities. Call on 020 7566 5612 for brochure.

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COMPUTER LORE

■ **Y2K - WE NAME THE GUILTY MEN**
Greenfield Online, a US market research company, has just completed a public opinion survey of 10,000 regular Internet users. The sample, described as having "higher incomes and education than the US population at large," were asked if they thought "a person and/or company is hiding the solution to the Y2K bug". Fifteen percent said they believed there was a Y2K conspiracy, with two-thirds of the sample naming Microsoft as the guilty party. The next most popular suspects were IBM, the White House and independent computer consultants.

■ **IF ITS WEDNESDAY, IT MUST BE SHEFFIELD**
Tim Rodemark, a partner with the Brighton based law firm Burstows, has won a signed Sheffield Wednesday Football Club shirt and football after taking part in a competition organised by Sanderson Systems at a recent legal IT exhibition. Sheffield Wednesday are sponsored by Sanderson, which has its group head office in Sheffield. Meanwhile Shakespeares Solicitors in Birmingham has just one day of free Internet consultancy from web site design company Icomm Technologies after taking part in a competition organised by Icomm's parent the County Group at another exhibition earlier this year.

■ **FACTS WE WISH WE HAD NOT HEARD**
A survey conducted by the NPD Group in New York reports growing acceptance for web site "cookies", with 61 percent of the sample saying they had no objection to receiving cookies while surfing the Internet and only 12 percent saying they would normally refuse them. But there again two percent of the sample still thought cookies were "something good to eat" and, presumably, would only accept them if they were not on a diet. And, in his new book *Faster: the acceleration of just about everything*, science writer James Gleik cites research which suggests the average American now spends nine minutes a day waiting for web pages to download onto a PC screen and just four minutes a day having sex.

■ **RUMOURS CORNER**
Reports suggest one of the UK's leading litigation support companies is in the final stages of takeover talks with a major office services company. The business logic seems to be similar to that of last year's Oyez/Legal Technologies deal. And, the unsolicited arrival at the Insider of a senior manager's CV confirms rumours that one of the smaller practice management system suppliers is considering doing an ACE and pulling out of the solicitors' marketplace.

NEXT ISSUE

The next issue of Legal Technology Insider - No. 88 - will be published on Wednesday 6th October 1999.