

CHARLES CHRISTIAN'S

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY iNSIDER

THE SOURCE FOR INDEPENDENT LEGAL TECHNOLOGY NEWS, COMMENT AND ANALYSIS

LOVELLS IN 3 MONTH DICTATION TRIAL

Lovells, one of Europe's largest law firms, has commenced a major three month pilot study into the use of digital dictation and speech recognition systems.

The system selected by Lovells for the pilot, which will run until mid-June, is the BigHand (020 7793 8200) TotalSpeech system. This incorporates Dragon Naturally Speaking speech recognition and Philips digital dictation technology, with BigHand's own integration software linking the two elements together. BigHand have long argued this is a more realistic approach than pure speech recognition as it gives the fee earner flexibility to either create text using digital dictation for a secretary to process or by speech recognition depending on the type of task. For example speech recognition can be useful for unformatted text, such as email messages.

Lovells' two main objectives for the pilot are, firstly, to check the benefits, in terms of additional efficiency and flexibility for fee earners within the firm when dictating documents and emails and, secondly, to check the investment required in terms of user training, refinement of systems and procedures when rolling the technology out firm wide across 2,500 people in 26 offices worldwide.

The Lovells' pilot involves 30 fee earners and their secretaries, spread across several legal practice areas. The majority will be based in London although eight users will come from Germany and run the German version of the speech recognition software. One small but complete group in London will adopt the system in order to ease testing of prospective rollout benefits.

INSIDER IN WEB TV VENTURE

Legal News Media, the publishers of Legal Technology Insider and Rollingball Digital Television, the multimedia arm of the Semple Piggot Rochez group that developed the world's first internet law school, have formed a new joint venture - Legal Web.tv - to produce regular webcasts on developments in legal technology and new media law.

There is no charge for accessing the webcasts, which are in streaming video format and require RealPlayer 8. All content is available for syndication - in addition to the Insider web site, four other sites have already signed up to carry Legal Web.tv programmes. Future plans include making short QuickTime movies of presentations given at major legal conferences and seminars.

www.legalweb.tv

SUPPLIER MELTDOWN - SKELETONS AHOY !

Since the last issue, we have spoken to five legal systems vendors who are considering the acquisition of one or more of their competitors who are hoping to leave the legal IT market. Sadly, all tell the same tale. Along with unrealistic valuations and a reluctance by their existing owner/managers to commit to any form of buy-out period, when they began due diligence research all five companies rapidly uncovered unpleasant skeletons lurking within the corporate cupboards of their takeover targets.

Simon Meehan of MSS Management Support Systems (one of the legal IT vendors the Insider can confirm is not up for sale) said he thought the problem dogging many suppliers was that they had to rely on venture capital funding from external controlling parties who were only interested in a relatively short term financial return on their investment and had no longer term commitment to the legal market.

Meehan is, incidentally, the son of MSS co-founder John Meehan, making the company one of the few UK legal market pioneers - MSS have been selling legal systems since the late 1970s - to have addressed the issue of succession management and who will take over running the business when its founders eventually retire.

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www.legaltechnology.org

Keep up with the latest developments in legal technology and new media law by visiting the Legal Technology Insider web site. • Regularly updated news • Diary of legal IT events • Virus reports • An archive of Insider back issues • Extensive search facilities • The Legal Technology Solution Finder service • The Legal IT jobs board.

SURVEY REVEALS GAPS IN TOP 100 IT PLANS

A new survey, undertaken by *The Lawyer* magazine, into the use of IT by the UK's top 100 law firms has revealed some surprising gaps in their legal systems' portfolios with many firms still lacking any form of case, document, knowledge or client relationship management software.

In terms of the sample, a total of 58 firms actually responded to the survey, ranging in size from Freshfields (top 100 ranking: 3, with 275 partners) to Bircham & Co (ranking: 99, with 22 partners) although the majority of the responses (nearly 60 percent) were from the smaller firms at the bottom half of the top 100.

It was no surprise to learn that all firms ran some form of practice management system but it was unexpected to see the wide number of products in use. A total of 14 firms were running Axxia systems, Elite was in at 13, CMS 6, Norwel 6, ResSoft 5 and Keystone 3 but there were also eight others suppliers, including AIM, Miles 33, Pilgrim, Sanderson, Timeslice and Videss, with users in this market.

There was a similar broad spread among firms running case management software. Both Axxia and Laserform are in use at 7 firms, Hatton Blue can be found in 5 and Solicitec in 4. However there are also at least 12 other case management products in use and 22 firms with no case management systems whatsoever.

Although the picture is rather more clear cut when it comes to document management systems - with 21 firms running PC Docs and 12 iManage - there were still 13 firms who thought it unnecessary to invest in any form of DMS. And, when it came knowledge management (KMS) and client relationship management (CRM) products, despite the fact these are currently two of the most hyped products, 22 firms have no KMS system and 25 have no CRM system in place. Of the latter two categories, the Docs/Fulcrum is the most widely used KMS product (also runs include Verity, Autonomy and iManage) while InterAction, in use in 18 firms, dominates the CRM market.

AIM USERS HAVE RECORD CONFERENCE

The Aim Computer Users Association (ACUA), the UK's largest independent legal systems user group, has just held its most successful annual conference in recent years with nearly 150 delegates - a 20 percent increase on last year - attending the two day event at the Marriott Forest of Arden Country Club. Among the delegates we spoke to, the hot topics were automated billing, client extranets and web enabled case management systems.

The ACUA's new chairman is Stephen Williams, a partner at AMS Law, one of the largest solicitors' practices in Sheffield, and a strong advocate of the use of case management systems.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ RESIDUARY INCOME IN 2001

Excelsior LawDesk (01273 494978) has released a year 2000/2001 version of its FormDesk residuary income pack. The software, which runs on an Excel 95, 97 or 2000 spreadsheet, can be used by probate practitioners to prepare Form 922 and Form R185 (Estate Income) calculations. The forms generated are Inland Revenue approved substitutes and the software costs from £135 + VAT for a single user licence.

■ TWO MAKE IT INTO FAST 50

Two West Yorkshire-based legal systems suppliers - Videss and Solicitec - made it into the finals of the Deloitte & Touche Fast 50 awards for the fastest growing technology companies in the north of England. Videss was ranked 14th, with a turnover increase in excess of 200 percent for the years 1997 to 1999, while Solicitec came in 21st with a 117 percent increase. Among companies specialising in software, Videss came 5th while Solicitec was placed 7th.

■ DOCS NOW MOBILE

Hummingbird and Matrix Logic, a document management system utilities developer, have launched what we believe to be the world's first mobile document management system. Using Matrix Logic's Wireless DMS, users can access material stored in Hummingbird DMS products (including DOCSOpen, PowerDOCS, DOCSFusion and CyberDOCS) from anywhere via mobile phones, personal digital assistants (PDAs) and handheld computers.

■ VERITY TO POWER ELAW.COM

eLaw.com, the US legal portal that recently announced a content deal with Eversheds, is to use the Verity GB (01372 747076) K2 search engine to power its editorial workflow and data repository. eLaw says it chose Verity because it wanted a system that allowed subscribers to cut legal research times yet was still "extremely easy for non-technical people to use". Here on the Insider we hear reports that Verity is now being seen as the cheaper alternative to Autonomy.

www.verity.com

NEW MARKETING APP CHOSEN BY TROWERS

Trowers & Hamblins has become the latest London law firm to opt for the LegalKEY marketing system. Implementation work, which is expected to last a couple of months, is being carried out by Kramer Lee & Associates, who are also the distributors for LegalKEY Technologies' product range in the UK.

Features of the SQL Server-based system, which is now in use with over 60 law firms around the world, include contact, mailing list and event management facilities. The software is also compatible with Outlook 2000 and can be accessed by users from their PDA/Palm computers. Trowers & Hamblins head of information services John Cooper said another attraction of the marketing software was it could be integrated with other LegalKEY applications including systems specifically designed to handle conflicts of interest searches and new matter intake requirements.

www.legalkey.com

ILL HEALTH ? I'M NO SICKY !

Long time legal systems sales specialist Gillian Sanderson has reacted angrily to suggestions by a former colleague that ill health had forced her to sever her connections with Paragon Legal Software and Legato Computer Services.

Although refusing to go into details, Sanderson told the Insider that "Contrary to certain opinions, I continue to enjoy splendid health. My reasons for leaving the Paragon project were definitely not due to any health issues."

Sanderson has now quit the legal market following her appointment as the UK sales manager of a software house specialising in manufacturing resource planning systems.

J M CELEBRATES 20 YEARS WITH REBRANDING EXERCISE

One of the north of England's longest established legal IT specialists - J M Computing - has celebrated its 20th anniversary in the market with the launch of a new systems integration division and fresh corporate identity.

Although the company, which has an £8 million turnover, will continue to distribute the Mountain range of legal software applications, the new division will focus on networking, comms, CRM and e-business integration and implementation projects for larger firms. Sales director Andrew Burgess said J M saw a gap in the market for a Northern-based supplier of these services - and in fact the company's only real competitors probably are Ramesys in the Midlands/East of England and Tikit in London/SE.

The company will now be known as JMC.IT - the new corporate identity to reflect the fact its activities now encompass the internet and other new technologies.

www.jmc.it

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ GETTING BACK TO SMALL FIRMS

Axxia Systems looks like it could be on target for winning back business at the small firms end of the legal market following its recent win at Stafford-based Nowell Meller. The three partner firm will be rolling out Axxia's Eiion accounts software, along with 30 fee earner desktop systems for the front office as part of a project that includes replacing its current Sanderson accounts package. Eiion was specifically designed by Axxia to occupy the slot in its product portfolio originally occupied by its old Kisol system.

■ KNOWHOW IN iMANAGE LINK

KnowHow Systems (01483 757457) has announced a strategic partnership with iManage that will see iManage's content and web collaboration management software integrated with KnowHow's new KcentriX system. Incidentally, don't let the name confuse you - KnowHow are not another indeterminate knowledge management consultancy, their KcentriX product is actually a Java and XML based document assembly system that can be used in virtual dealroom scenarios.

www.knowhowsystems.com

■ METICULIST NOW ON WIN 2000

The server version of the Meticulist document management system from Meticulus Solutions (01249 700050) is now available for Windows 2000 Server as well as NT server platforms.

■ CHANGING PLACES

Stevens & Bolton in Guildford has appointed Anne Brown-Robins as head of IT. Brown-Robins was previously at Penningtons in Godalming, where she has been succeeded by Marcus Shepherd.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY JOBS BOARD

If you are a legal systems supplier or a law firm looking for IT staff, including positions in management, development, sales, support and training, you can post your vacancies free of charge on the Legal Technology Insider web site. Email job details to: info@legaltechnology.org

TALES OF BRAVE ULYSSES - ALLY SOUGHT

Titan Software (00 3534 2932 9992) an Irish software house with offices in both the Republic and Northern Ireland jurisdictions, has completed the development of a new software system designed for the legal market.

Called Ulysses, it is a web-enabled application offering both law firms and their clients with 24/7 access to their files from any location worldwide. Other features of the system include: accounts and practice management functionality, a web browser interface, an integral workflow and document management system, support for case management work, full integration with email and a comprehensive diary and reminders system.

Gary Matthews, one of the co-founders of Titan, told the Insider that after over five years of development work he was confident that Ulysses as a product was at the forefront of the legal software market. However he also said he recognised the need to seek a strategic alliance or joint venture deal with another company "with the resources, experience, distribution network and motivation" to sell, deploy and support the Ulysses software in the legal IT marketplace.

"Currently," said Matthews, "one of the directors of Titan is running two major legal practices and the second is a leading software engineer. In respect of these issues we feel that Titan is best placed to act as the nucleus of the operation, supporting, updating and guiding development rather than actively working on the ground selling, distributing and maintaining the product."

Interested parties can contact Gary Matthews at:

gary.matthews@virgin.net

ANOTHER LEGAL PUBLISHER ADOPTS HOTDOCS

Following a review of all available options, Butterworths Tolley has adopted HotDocs software as its document assembly platform. As part of a four year licence agreement with HotDocs distributor Capsoft UK, Butterworths will convert all its 10,000 legal forms and precedents to HotDocs format. The deal complements Butterworths' recent acquisition of Capsoft's former subsidiary Everyform, the free internet forms web site that also uses HotDocs to automate its forms.

In addition to the publishing licence, Capsoft UK will supply Butterworths with training and development services. Developers at Butterworths' IT centre have already started the conversion process and the first HotDocs forms will be introduced into Butterworths' online services this summer. Capsoft UK say the deal confirms the software as the de facto standard for legal publishing in the UK - HotDocs has already been used in the digital products of Croner CCH and Sweet & Maxwell for several years.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ TAYLOR VINTERS REFIT COMMS

Cambridge-based Taylor Vinters has completed a major refit of its networking and communications infrastructure. The project, which cost a reported £100,000, involved removing the firm's old 10 megabyte network cabling and replacing it with gigabit connectivity for servers, layer 2 switching and installing 900 access points. The cabling will support the firm's 200 user PC network as well as its planned new telephone system. The 14 week-long contract to install the cabling was won by Ramesys, who carried out all the work out of hours to minimise disruption to the firm.

■ TITE & LEWIS CHOSE DOCS

Tite & Lewis, the rapidly expanding law firm backed by Ernst & Young, has purchased a firm wide licence for Hummingbird's DOCSFusion based document management system. The deal was signed after an in-depth evaluation of competitive DMS products.

■ NEW HOTDOCS TRAINING SERVICE

Janet Abernethy, previously with Capsoft UK, has set up her own training service called Understand-IT (01506 202341). The company will be providing Capsoft certified HotDocs training courses but in addition to document assembly-related work, Abernethy also plans to offer basic IT literacy courses for both lawyers and other businesses. The courses can be run inhouse at a customer's offices. Dates for upcoming training courses can be found on the company's web site.

www.understand-it.net

■ DOC ASSEMBLY - THINK DOCS

As if there were not already enough suppliers fighting for a share of the legal document assembly market, we now have another new contender on the horizon. The company is US-based DataTech Software and its system - called THINKdocs, which includes a 'live data' update facility - is already in use at a number of US law firms and insurance companies. We will have a full report in a subsequent issue however more details are available on the company's web site.

www.thinkdocs.com

IT CONSULTANTS... WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In 1997 the Insider conducted a survey looking at the most highly rated IT consultants in the UK legal market. Four years ago the big names were Neil Cameron, John Irving at BDO Stoy Hayward, Delia Venables, Michael McDonald, Andrew Levison at David Andrews/Grant Thornton and Richard Blasdale at Robson Rhodes. This year we repeated the exercise and found that along with some still familiar faces, there were also a lot of changes.

The most notable departure is Cameron, who has gone to work at Keystone but Robson Rhodes has also pulled out of the market, as has John Irving, who was last heard of living and working in San Francisco. Stoy Hayward is however still involved in IT consultancy work - the contact there is Steve Hillier (020 7486 5888) as is Richard Blasdale although he has now joined Andrew Levison who, in turn, last year moved his entire team from Grant Thornton to create a new UK and European division for the US legal consultancy Baker Robbins (020 224 2030).

Delia Venables (01273 472424) is still in practice - her speciality is High Street firms with typically between 10 and 50 fee earners. And, Michael McDonald continues to win praise for his work although he now tends to focus his activities through the Practical Solutions (0161 929 8355) consultancy. Practical Solutions has, incidentally, recently relaunched its InPractice web site to provide clients with more resources on IT, marketing and management issues.

As to the new kids on the block, Julian Boardman Weston's reputation is going from strength to strength, both in connection with his original business Computer Counsel (01530 416333) which he still runs in association with IT consultant Sue Barker, and the Sherwood PSF Consultancy, where his co-directors include some of his fellow lecturers from Nottingham Law School. Computer Counsel only handle IT work, typically for firms with four plus partners, whereas Sherwood undertakes broader management consultancy projects for larger firms.

The second new face is Tikit (020 7400 3737). Tikit is already well known in the legal world for implementation work and FM services, and last year it created a new consultancy division whose team includes a number of former law firm IT directors, such as Tim Hyman. But the move was not without some controversy because Tikit is also a vendor of various software products.

www.inpractice.co.uk

MORE EVENT DATE CHANGES

The Ark Group has brought forward the date of its Legal Solutions Europe Exhibition & Conference by one day so that the three day event at The Hague will now run from Tuesday 11th to Thursday 13th September. As reported in the last issue, the revised dates for LegalTech London are 31st October and 1st November 2001.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EVENTS DIARY

A full list of events can be found on the Insider web site: www.legaltechnology.org

■ APRIL 24, LEEDS. Information Technology Law Exhibition. One day conference and workshops organised by the Society for Computers & Law, at the Royal Armouries, 11:00am to 6:00pm. For details call the SCL on 01179 237393.

■ APRIL 26 & 27, NEWPORT, WALES. Association of Personal Injury Lawyers spring conference at the Celtic Manor Resort. Along with formal conference sessions there is also an exhibition of legal products and related services. For more details call APIL on 0115 958 0585.

■ MAY 15, EDINBURGH. Knowledge Management with LawSoft and iManage. First of a series of seminars organised by Pilgrim Systems looking at how case and knowledge management systems can assist fee earners. At the Sheraton, followed by seminars in London (22 May - The Law Society), Manchester (5 June - Malmaison) and Birmingham (19 June - Post House). For more details visit:

www.pilgrimsystems.com

■ MAY 16, LONDON. IT Strategies & Internet Strategies for Law Firms. One day conference, topics include: are people more important than technology and the prospects for virtual legal practice and outsourcing. Chaired by Insider editor Charles Christian. Speakers include Neil Cameron of Keystone. The event qualifies for 6 CPD points and costs £295 + VAT for CLT members (non-members £410 + VAT). For details call 0121 355 0900.

■ MAY 22-to-24, LONDON. E-commerce Strategies for the Legal Profession. Two day conference at the Kensington Hilton Hotel (with optional workshop) looking at key issues involved in establishing an e-commerce strategy. Speakers include Insider editor Charles Christian, Janet Day of Berwin Leighton Paisner and Mark Abell of Field Fisher Waterhouse. Rates start from £1050 + VAT. For more information email hlewis@ark-group.com or phone 020 8785 2700.

CLAIMS DIRECT - FIRMS MUST SHARE BLAME

As the fallout from Claims Direct continues - disputes with insurers, adverse media coverage, profit warnings - we are encountering a growing number of firms who are not renewing their Claims Direct panel membership. But, according to Adrian Miles, who runs the UK's largest online claims referral service AccidentCompensation.com, "the legal profession should take some of the blame for not acting more decisively against Claims Direct. If a campaign had been launched sooner, solicitors might not have been tarred with the image of being expensive. The public should have been told as soon as legal aid changed last year that all solicitors have to act on a No Win No Fee basis and that initial free consultations were available."

Unlike claims handlers, such as Claims Direct, law firms belonging to an online referral service merely pay a one-off annual fee to be listed on the web - regardless of the volume of work. The client deals directly with the firm and lawyers retain full control of the conduct of claims.

www.accidentcompensation.com

DIGITAL SIGNATURE ? - THAT WILL DO NICELY SIR

From time to time politicians perkily pop up to tell us how the introduction of legally acceptable digital signatures will transform many aspects of our lives, from e-commerce through to conveyancing. However, if the experiences of one legal publisher are anything to go by, when he recently tried to apply for a corporate digital signature for his business, there is still a big gap between theory and reality.

While happy enough to produce various documents as evidence of identity, what concerned him was the agency handling the application - a local chamber of commerce operating the Post Office/Verisign digital signature scheme - wanted to make and keep photocopies of the company's correspondence and bank statements. Asked why this was necessary, the agency said it had no idea why the copies were needed or what they might be used for - and went on to admit it was not even sure if these activities had been registered for data protection purposes. It was at this point the publisher decided he would prefer to keep his corporate privacy and live without a digital signature.

LATEST LEGAL WEB SITE TRAFFIC SURVEY UNDERWAY

Legal Technology Insider is currently compiling the results of its latest survey of the UK's busiest legal web sites. The results will be published in a forthcoming issue of the Insider. If you think your site could make the chart, email the Insider for an entry form: info@legaltechnology.org

ONLINE NEWS

■ BLACKBERRY COMING TO UK

Forget Palms and PDAs, for the last couple of years one of the hottest devices for US lawyers has been the Blackberry portable email device. Now Research in Motion, the Canadian company that developed the Blackberry, has signed a deal with BT Cellnet to launch a UK version of the device later this summer. Although the US version uses slow 8 kbps pager technology, the UK version will run across newer - and faster - 2.5 generation GPRS mobile phone networks.

■ LAWTEL IN PI SPONSORSHIP DEAL

Centaur's interactive-lawyer.com and LAWTEL services have just signed an exclusive sponsorship deal for their online personal injury service - PI interactive - with Berrymans Lace Mawer, which has one of the largest personal injury practices in the UK. As part of the deal BLM will provide regular news reports, as well as a monthly newsletter including a round-up of industry news, cases and legislation.

www.interactive-lawyer.com

■ COMMERCIAL FORMS ONLINE

Legal publisher Information for Lawyers has added a further 170 documents to its online forms and precedents service. The new material covers commercial transactions and is from the docta.com library maintained by Tom Mackay, a lawyer with Amhurst Brown Colombotti. Forms are available on a 30 day free trial offer, followed by an annual subscription of £50 + VAT. All forms can be accessed via IFL's infolaw portal, which by our reckoning is the UK's longest established legal portal. Infolaw now also features a new Formfinder search engine.

www.infolaw.co.uk

■ NETCHAMBERS GOES LIVE

This week saw NetChambers, a new web site for barristers, go live. Backed by both barristers and legal web entrepreneur Mike Semple Piggot, the site is intended to provide individual barristers with an opportunity to showcase their expertise. Future plans include the introduction of virtual clerking facilities.

www.netchambers.com

DEALROOM IN A BOX WITH NEW OFFICE XP ?

All those law firms that last year boasted about how many hundreds of thousands of pounds they had spent on the development of virtual dealroom systems could be feeling a little sick from the end of next month when Microsoft's new Office XP system becomes widely available.

Although primarily the latest upgrade to the Microsoft Office suite, the Developer and Pro Special Editions also include a new application called SharePoint Team Services. SPTS allows teams of people to access and collaborate on the creation of documents within a web browser based virtual environment. In effect this delivers in a box most of the functionality of a dealroom but for a fraction of the price. Existing Office users can upgrade to Pro Special for £319 but you need to move quickly as SharePoint Team Services will initially only be available for a limited period of time as part of an introductory offer.

Office XP is scheduled to launch in the UK on 31st May. The basic Office XP suite, which includes new versions of Word, Excel, Outlook and Powerpoint, costs £429 (or £199 for an upgrade). You can also order a free 30 day trial copy of the software (there is a nominal p&p charge) via the web.

www.microsoft.com/uk/office/

Microsoft has also begun beta testing the new Version 6 edition of its Internet Explorer browser software.

www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/

FIRST HIGH TECH COURT TO OPEN FOR BUSINESS

At the end of last month David Lock MP and Lord Bach, both junior ministers at the Lord Chancellor's Department, formally opened the UK's first hi-tech courtroom at the Kingston upon Thames Crown Court complex.

The £500,000 courtroom is intended to lead the way for the modernisation of all 78 Crown Courts throughout England & Wales by 2005. Kingston will be used to test a range of new courtroom technologies before it is installed in other courts although over the next year a further 20 court centres - including the Central Criminal Court (The Old Bailey) - will also be involved in pilot projects.

These pilots are being co-ordinated by the Court Service in conjunction with EDS, which holds a seven year Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract to provide IT based business services to the courts, as part of a £94 million programme to speed-up justice, improve efficiency and provide better treatment for victims, witnesses and jurors.

As part of the pilot, court clerks will be able to email information, such as the outcome of a case, from the court to other criminal justice agencies and set the date for the next hearing via a new electronic listings package. In addition, Kingston will also pilot the first electronic link between a court and a prison - in this case Wandsworth.

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BAGNALL CASE STAYED

Following a hearing at Blackfriars Crown Court in London, Judge Brian Pryor QC has placed a stay on the proceedings to prosecute Kenneth Bagnall QC for 14 counts of theft relating to the disappearance of £560,000 from his former company New Law Publishing. The alleged thefts took place during the period 1997 to 1998, during and in the immediate aftermath of New Law's takeover by the Dutch publishing group.

Bagnall, who founded New Law, admitted taking the money but always denied any dishonesty, arguing that it was repayment of capital he had put into the company and salary arrears. The proceedings also heard allegations that Bagnall, himself an ex-judge and now in his 70s, had spent nearly half the money on gifts for a woman "half his age in the hope of starting a relationship with her".

IN BRIEF CHANGES HANDS

P S Publications' monthly legal magazine *In Brief* has been acquired by the Longbridge group, best known in the legal market for its recruitment services. Both the editor James Piesse and publisher Michael Fabian are no longer with the magazine. The new publisher is Karen Jones, previously with Legalease, who says her priorities are to relaunch the magazine and re-establish the LOTIES legal technology awards that *In Brief* used to run.

LITIGATION SUPPORT NEWS

■ VALID BUY TOP TECH FROM ADMINISTRATORS

Valid Information Systems has acquired Coventry-based imaging systems supplier Top Tech UK from the company's administrators for £500,000. Although Top Tech, which previously traded as Simdell EDS, had a number of large local authority customers, the company ran into problems last month when its South African parent company Top Info Technologies folded.

■ LEGAL TECHNOLOGIES REBRAND

Litigation support specialists Legal Technologies, which is now part of the Oyez Straker group, has rebranded itself as Oyez Legal Technologies (020 7549 9600). We understand Elliott Slone, now part of the Williams Lea group, is also involved in a similar rebranding exercise.

www.oyezlegaltech.com

HELLO TO THE INSIDE SKINNY

Finally, our thanks to one of our US subscribers for copying us in on an email that describes the Insider in the following terms "It's quite the thing with the big firm IT set and it treats vendor news as real news - it's really the inside skinny." We are not quite sure what it means but we are treating it as a compliment anyway.

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ PORTNER & JASKEL IN CASE DEAL

Portner & Jaskel are spending £500,000 on the creation of new IT infrastructure to support their claimant personal injury and clinical negligence practice. Core elements include Solicitec's SolCase case management software and the SOS practice management system. All three Portner & Jaskel offices (two in London and the other in Wales) are connected via kilostream links. Solicitec has also supplied its SolCase Online extranet system and Electronic Post Room scanning facility, which supports the creation of electronic case files. Managing partner Harvey Jaskel said technology would help provide a competitive advantage in the personal injury sector after the "roller coaster" ride caused by the Woolf reforms, the withdrawal of legal aid and the emergence of claims management companies.

■ MIL TO SELL ECLIPSE PROCLAIM

Eclipse Legal Systems in Bradford has appointed Management Interface Ltd (MIL) as southern area reseller for its ProCLAIM personal injury case management system. MIL (01992 788288) will also provide ProCLAIM users with training, support and installation services. Eclipse say that over the past 18 months ProCLAIM software has been installed at over 70 sites, ranging in size from three to 100 users.

LEGAL TECHNOLOGY INSIDER

www.legaltechnology.org

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■ **The next issue** of Legal Technology Insider - No.117 - will be published on Wednesday 2 May 2001.