

Internet Newsletter for Lawyers

By Delia Venables

September/October 2003

On other pages....

Updates on past stories: Money Laundering Digital Rights Management LCD website	2
E-conveyancing: Promise and Reality by Raymond Perry	3
Blogging for Lawyers by Jeremy Phillips and Ilanah Simon also Seán Mac Cann online	4
Personal Injury on the Web by Rebecca Lambert	5
The Lawyer Group by Rachel Lesiter	7
Semple Piggot Rochez by John Pitman	8
Approaches to Spam Control by Delia Venables	9
Specialised Websites by Lorraine Chapman	11
Four Firms Relaunch	online
Email and Metadata - Disclosure Issues in an Electronic Age	online

Read the Newsletter
on the web at
[www.venables.co.uk/
n0309joa.htm](http://www.venables.co.uk/n0309joa.htm)
ISSN 1467-3835

Delia Venables
10 Southway, Lewes
East Sussex BN7 1LU
phone and fax
01273 472424
delia@venables.co.uk
www.venables.co.uk

Spam Wars - Next Big Threat for Law Firms by Delia Venables

Stop Press: With the current rapid spread of the "SoBig" virus, the demarcation between spam and viruses has become less clear cut. Although most firms and chambers remained virus-free in the sense that dangerous attachments were stripped out, and/or their users were educated not to execute them, many were still overwhelmed by the sheer volume of such messages. Most spam control programs would also have identified these.

A recent study by email filtering company MessageLabs found that, of the 137 million emails they handled in June on behalf of their customers, 55% were unsolicited junk mail, or "spam". A year ago, the proportion was just 2.3%. Worse still, the number of spam emails flying around the internet continues to rise at an alarming rate.

So far, it is individual email users who are receiving the most spam. They are the ones who have been freely surfing the web, buying software and other goods, taking part in online "discussion" groups and putting their email address on their own web sites. In my own case, I get at least 80 spam emails a day as well as perhaps 20 "real" ones.

Most firms and chambers have been more careful with their email addresses and the problem is not yet so extreme - but it will probably become so since, once an email address is on even one spammer's list, it is likely to be sold on to a myriad of others. Legislation (so far) is having no effect whatsoever, since the spammers operate from many different countries and are also adept at changing the "sending" address so it is very difficult to find out where the emails have come from.

The main categories of spam seem to be for Viagra and lurid "enhancement" offers, cheap prescription drugs generally, pornography of many different types, financial advice and offers (generally "scams") and slimming and beauty products. I thought about producing a picture of the titles of a representative sample but they are not suitable for a respectable newsletter! Most people reading this will know the sort of things I mean.

I generally know when I should cover a topic here when I get a large number of enquiries from readers asking for information. Suddenly, over the last few months, enquiries about spam have multiplied almost as fast as the spam itself! I set out to find out what firms and chambers are doing about spam, right now. My first stage was to email the 150 Intranet/Multiple Use subscribers of this newsletter, thinking that they are the users most likely to have investigated this topic so far. I asked whether they have a problem with spam and if so, what they are doing about it. I had replies from around 50 firms and I am very grateful to them for the information they gave.

Quite a few firms told me that they do not have a particular problem yet although they could see that the problem was getting worse. Others who are part of government departments or public bodies generally indicated that the problem was coped with at a "higher level" - they are probably the lucky ones! Others already have a major problem. I was told by one firm that a member of staff received over 1,200 spam emails in a single month. Eventually, the firm concerned changed this particular email address but even now, a year later, 800 emails a month arrive for the old address.

Many firms are already using various services and software tools to try and reduce spam, partly because of the time wasted by individual staff members deleting these but partly also because the content of many of these would be genuinely upsetting for some people.

I provide a summary of the information given to me in "Approaches to Spam Control" on page 9. I am planning a second article on spam in the next issue where I hope to give feedback from the many readers who have not yet had a chance to respond and, in particular, their experience of the products mentioned, or others they have come across.

Updates on past stories....

Money Laundering

In the July/August issue, Michael Kaye raised the very difficult question of how on-line providers of legal services could continue having regard to the due diligence requirements of the new anti-money laundering regime. In particular, he pointed out that the obligation to know your client is personal and non-delegable. This is clear from the fact that criminal liability rests on the individual. It is the individual alone who has duties to discharge.

He has continued to look into the position and he reports that there are many ways in which the duty can be discharged. For example, there is nothing wrong with verifying identity by use of a credit checking organisation. This does not amount to a delegation of responsibility for discharging the obligation; rather, a mechanism by which the duty is discharged. The Skipton Building Society with Dunn & Bradstreet, have just established a joint venture to check identities and there are others, such as Experian, in the market as well. Their checking identity service is a very valuable tool but it by no means relieves the obligation resting on the person to make enquiries not only about identity but also about the nature of the client's business so that the regulated person knows the rationale for the instruction or transaction.

The degree of due diligence work will vary from case to case. It boils down, at the end of the day, to an exercise in risk assessment/management; in some cases verification of identity by credit check may be sufficient but other cases may require much more. It follows therefore that preparing a simple Will or the affidavit leading to a Grant of Probate may in many cases still be a practical proposition to undertake via an interactive web site but the preparation of a power of attorney or deed poll change of name deed may need greater enquiry.

Digital Rights Management

Laurence Kaye wrote on this topic in the July/August 2003 issue. He reports further: So the copyright wheel comes full circle. Napster, the online song swapping service, will be re-launched as a legal service by its new owners Roxio in time for Xmas (The Times, July 03). But does this mean that the music industry is turning into Father Christmas and giving up its efforts to stop the illegal 'peer to peer' distribution of copyright materials?

Judging by the spate of lawsuits launched recently by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) the answer seems to be no. In recent months, the RIAA launched a series of actions against ADSL providers in the US, including Pacific Bell Internet Services ("PBIS") and Verizon Communications. The RIAA has filed hundreds of subpoenas to compel these ISP's to disclose subscribers' names so that actions for copyright infringement can be pursued against the file swappers.

However, the ISP's are now fighting back. PBIS recently launched a suit to challenge the RIAA's subpoenas. The lawsuit charges that the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA), which the RIAA says supports its current antipiracy actions, may violate the right to privacy enshrined in the U.S. Constitution. The legal battle is set to continue in the US with copyright infringement actions doing battle with counter-attacks by the proponents of privacy rights, fair use and freedom of speech. Meanwhile, the development of paid-for services, that give consumers of digital music what they want at a price they're willing to pay, can only be good news for the music industry.

Later note from the Guardian, 15th August:

Microsoft, together with digital music company OD2 (On Demand Distribution), has launched an internet download service in Europe to sell individual tracks. The software used will be Microsoft's Media Player allowing users to download songs from five major labels - over 200,000 songs - before they are available in the shops.

LCD Website! (or DCA)

Note from Mike Wicksteed: In the May/June newsletter, I described the new site for the Lord Chancellor's Department, due to be launched during the summer.

No sooner was the issue on peoples' desks than the Government announced the demise of the LCD and the creation of the new Department for Constitutional Affairs. Also out of the blue came a requirement to assist the Hutton Inquiry. DCA web staff have been busy building, and twice daily maintaining, the Inquiry's website (www.the-hutton-inquiry.org.uk) which during the first week of Inquiry hearings attracted 48,126 unique visitors who accessed 975,152 pages.

This obviously effected work on the new DCA site, but we still hope to launch in September.

Practical Lease Precedents Online from Sweet & Maxwell *by Trevor Aldridge QC*

Practical Lease Precedents provides over one hundred complete and ready-to-use documents for the letting of virtually every type of property, plus hundreds of additional clauses with commentary.

Everything you need to draft documents for Landlord & Tenant agreements ONLINE:

1. Intuitive interface, with full searching and browsing options, cuts down the time taken to find the right precedent
2. Easy to use on-screen automatic document drafting makes precedent completion effortless and fast
3. Download completed documents as MS Word files for easy storage, retrieval and printing
4. Ability to save uncompleted work in a personal online folder for easy re-access and completion
5. Efficient updating service incorporates changes in the law as well as adding new material

Prices start from £400 and special discounts are available for current PLP looseleaf and Lawtel subscribers.

Visit precedents.sweetandmaxwell.co.uk or call +44 (0) 207 449 1111 for further information.

E-conveyancing: Promise and Reality by Raymond Perry

According to the Land Registry, the aim of e-conveyancing is to "utilise advances in technology by creating a system that reduces the delay and anxiety which can be experienced in the house buying process". Certainly people seem to think that e-conveyancing will radically improve the conveyancing experience. An example of how pervasive this belief has become can be seen on the PSA Property Forum (www.psa.co.uk) website where the impending introduction of e-conveyancing is advanced in debate as a reason why another proposed reform, the Home Information Pack (HIP), should be abandoned.

"HIPs are totally unnecessary due to the advent of e-conveyancing and the National Land Information Service. E-conveyancing is being rapidly introduced and all communications and exchanges of documentation between practitioners, lenders, the Land Registry etc, will be undertaken electronically."

Is this widespread belief that the results of e-conveyancing will be wonderful actually correct? A sceptic might point out that the advantages of new technology are often exaggerated by technophiles. However non-experts are often reluctant to challenge technological boosterism for fear of appearing foolish and it difficult to avoid the conclusion that there has often been a lack of critical thinking about e-conveyancing.

The plan was to introduce a working e-conveyancing system based in England and Wales by 2006 although recently this has changed to "2006 to 2008". However the Government has a poor record when it comes to large-scale IT deployments. It should not be automatically assumed that the e-conveyancing project will be taken through to a successful conclusion on time or at all. Nevertheless the Land Registry can point to the successful introduction of forms of e-conveyancing in New Zealand and Ontario (albeit rather less complicated that is being envisaged here) as evidence that it should be possible to introduce a working form of e-conveyancing - even though the technological obstacles involved are formidable.

Unfortunately it is not possible at present to estimate with any accuracy what e-conveyancing will cost. The Land Registry is not able to give an estimate for the capital cost of developing the system. The costs to the users are also uncertain but the expense involved in supporting a very complex IT system which also requires banking-like levels of security is likely to be substantial. Whether here or abroad, e-conveyancing systems are expected to pay their own way. When the idea was first mooted, the suggestion was that e-conveyancing would be cheaper than the existing system. Such claims are now rarely heard and it seems unlikely that the new system will be cheaper for the ordinary consumer. Quite possibly it will be more expensive.

So what does e-conveyancing involve? There is no agreed definition but there are five elements suggested by the Land Registry which offer as good a framework as any. Let us examine each of these in turn.

Electronic conveyancing documents

This is the heart of e-conveyancing. Instead of the paper Transfers and Charges there will be documents that exist only in digital form. The reasoning behind this is important. For technophiles paper is seen as old-fashioned, inefficient and an impediment to the introduction of new technology. In fact this idea has been comprehensively discredited. The increased use of IT does not result in a corresponding decrease in the use of paper. Often, the reverse is true. Even worse, as paper is not a significant cause of the problems involved in buying and selling houses, replacing paper documents with their digital equivalents is not a solution to those problems.

Digital documents also create new problems. The entire system is dependant on the core technology of digital signatures. Whilst they have many advantages, most notably that they cannot be forged, an absolute necessity for e-conveyancing, they also have a number of drawbacks. Hitherto they have been a commercial failure. Their complexity means that they are costly to use and for conveyancers there are problems of risk and liability allocation. In e-conveyancing, digital signature systems are used within the framework of contractual agreements between conveyancers and the land registration authority. The system relies on the security of the private key used to generate the signature. Thus the entire risk shifts to the user (conveyancer) who has to protect the private key. Critics of digital signature systems have long argued that in reality this is not practical unless enormous resources are devoted to security. Even worse, as digital signatures will only belong to conveyancers, homeowners will have to sign a paper authorisation allowing their conveyancer to sign on their behalf. This is what has happened in New Zealand and Ontario where e-conveyancing has already been introduced. There may perhaps be a way to avoid this by using stylus and special pads but this means even more expense and complexity.

Most conveyancing processes and communication between parties to be on-line

Almost all conveyancing searches can now be done over the Internet, even if in some cases the result still has to come back in paper form. It is here that most progress has been made towards e-conveyancing and where the benefits of IT are particularly strong. Computers are far better suited than humans to searching through databases and producing results. The digitisation of data by search providers whether local authorities, the Land Registry or other statutory bodies provides an obvious benefit to the conveyancer. In practice the three channel providers, Searchflow, (www.searchflow.co.uk), Transaction Online (www.transaction-online.co.uk) and TM NLIS (www.tmproperty.co.uk) offer well-designed and easy to use web interfaces with a simple pay as you use pricing structure. Conveyancers can also contract out the search process to one-stop specialist search agencies with an on-line presence such as OneSearch Direct (www.onesearchdirect.co.uk) or The Property Search Group (www.propertysearchgroup.co.uk). In short electronic searches are an undoubted success.

ActiveLawyer have been nominated for an E-loties 2003 Award for Best website / Online legal services developer.

Please vote for us at www.inbrief.co.uk.

And explore this revolutionary solution for yourself!

ActiveLawyer
Mastered in minutes. Updates in seconds.

Visit www.activelawyer.com, contact Rick Brar on 020 7841 5180 or email rick.brar@activelawyer.com.

Simultaneous completion and registration, thus removing the "registration gap"

It has always been difficult to understand why the registration gap features quite so prominently as one of the benefits of e-conveyancing. For the individual homeowner, speeding up the post-completion registration process when most people only move house every few years is, in practical terms, irrelevant.

However e-conveyancing does remove the registration gap and allow real-time updating of the register without the need for manual re-keying of data. Indeed the New Zealand and Ontario examples suggest that this is the most obvious result of e-conveyancing. For the Land Registry this is a significant advantage. This serves as a reminder of the obvious, but often ignored, fact that the different bodies and individuals involved in the conveyancing system have different priorities.

Electronic Funds Transfer to co-ordinate payment of fees and balance transfers

There is no doubt that the present system is wasteful and inefficient. It also causes enormous stress at completion. To deploy an electronic settlement system that allowed, for example, all the payments in a chain to be made simultaneously would genuinely be an enormous benefit. However to introduce such a system from scratch is a substantial undertaking when the Government already has to deploy a full-scale electronic lodgment system based on digital signatures. The worry here must be that it is too ambitious but until the Land Registry publish the full report into system capability later this year it is at present impossible to comment further.

Increased availability and transparency of chain information

It is also proposed that there should be a graphical representation, the Chain Matrix, available via the Internet so that those involved in the chain can see what stage everyone else has reached. There are differing views about whether this is appropriate but on balance it would seem to be a useful idea and, more importantly, one that should be technologically straightforward. However there are some obvious limits to the benefits of this type of arrangement. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to convey the more complex reasons for delay, so although you may know that someone does not have a mortgage offer, you will not know why. Not everyone in a chain transaction necessarily wants to move ahead at full speed or even to be frank about their true situation. As Onora O'Neill argued in the 2002 Reith Lectures; "transparency may destroy secrecy, but there is little reason to think that it destroys....deception".

Conclusions

The existing conveyancing system in England and Wales is complicated and in a number of ways, unsatisfactory for the user. Can the introduction of new technology improve matters? The use of IT has already led to some improvements particularly in the area of searches. However the likely benefits in other areas are far less obvious and might easily be offset by new problems caused by the use of digital signature technology. In truth the problems of conveyancing cannot be solved by technical measures alone and to pretend otherwise is misleading. And we still don't know what it is going to cost.

Raymond Perry is a Partner at Davies and Partners, Gloucester and a writer on issues involving the law and IT. Email mail@raymondperry.co.uk. A collection of his papers and articles is available at www.raymondperry.co.uk.

Blogging for Lawyers *by Jeremy Phillips and Ilanah Simon*

Lawyers in the USA have been using weblogs (usually shortened to "blogs") for the past two years or so as a convenient way of posting instant information and current comments on the internet without the need for any great level of expertise in the use of internet software. The weblog may not be more than a reverse chronological list of articles, although more sophisticated versions feature artwork, internal search facilities and the opportunity for blog visitors to post comments of their own.

Blogging software is not only easy enough for lawyers to use, it is also cheap and simple to download. The software allows for instant posting without the need to go through any formal editorial procedures. Proprietary blogging software packages include Radio Userland (radio.userland.com) and Blogger (www.blogger.com). Once the software is up and running a good blogger need expend only a few minutes in posting fresh information or comments on a daily basis, though seeking fresh material for the blog may be time-consuming. We would advise any potential blogger to make inquiries before opting for a blogging package, since the level of customer support is variable (though assistance can often be obtained from other bloggers using the same software).

Although blogging is only in its infancy, some law blogs (sometimes rather unattractively called "blawgs") have been highly successful. For example Ernie the Attorney, the blog of attorney Ernest Svenson (radio.weblogs.com/0104634) has attracted in excess of 186,000 hits in the past two years, a far higher figure than many law firms are likely to achieve with formal websites.

In comparison with the United States, legal blogging in Europe has been very slow to develop. Indeed, our own informal discussions with British lawyers, both in practice and in academe, have revealed that the vast majority of practitioners in the UK are unfamiliar with the concept of the blog. This unfamiliarity is found even among many of those lawyers who practise within the fields of information technology law and intellectual property law.

From the user's point of view, a number of issues must be addressed. By far the most important of these is the reliability of the information posted on the blog, although this can be as much of a problem with conventional sources of legal information. Fortunately the availability of hyperlinks serves not only to connect the user to other materials but also to let him evaluate for himself the quality of the sources used in each blogged article. Thus one can easily verify information linked directly to the European Court of Justice website or to the text of a domestic case or statute. Other sources are less reliable, for example items drawn from newspapers. The reliability of bloggers' personal comments cannot so easily be put to the test, but repeated visits to a blog will enable the visitor to form an opinion as to the extent to which the blogger is well-informed or merely self-opinionated.

From the blogger's point of view there are also issues to be addressed. A blog may need a disclaimer if it purports to give legal advice rather than merely provide news or comment. Hypertexting usually removes the necessity to copy and paste copyright-protected text and illustrations and also minimises risks of trade mark infringement (any use of a trade mark on a blog, being of an editorial nature, is unlikely to cause consumer confusion or dilute a cited trade mark's reputation). The risk of inadvertent defamation however remains a constant worry.

Properly used, a law blog may provide a golden opportunity for lawyers, particularly those with small practices and little scope for promotion, to reach out to potential clients, as well as a convenient medium whereby practitioners may publicise their opinions and contrast them with those of their colleagues. If however blogs are perceived as being unreliable, poorly-written and self-seeking, their current popularity may be no more than a false dawn, shedding more hope than light and simply clogging up the internet with a large volume of unnecessary and unattractive publicly accessible data.

Partly as an experiment and partly to establish a useful service for IP lawyers in the UK and Europe, we set up a blog towards the end of June 2003. This blog, the Ipkat Intellectual Property Weblog (www.ipkat.com), is designed to convey news and comments on recent intellectual property law developments in a clear, informed and (where appropriate) humorous manner. Our experiences to date have been positive: at the time of writing, Ipkat is receiving around 13 to 14 hits a day and, around a fortnight after it first appeared on the internet, Ipkat is now being picked up by search engines (Google, Yahoo! and Web Crawler have performed well; Alta Vista less so). Users' comments have been warmly encouraging, although it remains to be seen whether the good intentions of Ipkat's founders can be converted into a blog of consistently good standard.

To the best of our knowledge, Ipkat is the first intellectual property law blog anywhere in Europe. We would very much like to hear from any other IP bloggers, both to learn from their experiences and to share ours with them.

Jeremy Phillips is a visiting academic at various institutions and intellectual property consultant with Slaughter and May. Ilanah Simon is a Doctoral Associate at the Queen Mary Intellectual Property Research Institute. The authors, respectively editor and deputy editor of the European Trade Mark Reports, are case law database consultants to MARQUES, the organisation of European trade mark owners. Email jjp@btinternet.com, i.r.simon@qmul.ac.uk.

*And for a more sceptical point of view, there is a recent posting from Irish lawyer and blogger, **Seán Mac Cann** (www.maccann.com and seanmaccann@hotmail.com) in the web version of this article, called "**Real Lawyers Don't Blog**". See www.venables.co.uk/n0309joa.htm.*

Personal Injury Resources by Rebecca Lambert

The last few months have seen many challenges presented to those working in the PI field whether this be through the litigation surrounding CFAs, the stricter JSB guidelines, the litigation surrounding the TAG cases or the imminent introduction of fixed fees. So many changes have happened that it can often be difficult to keep ahead of what is going on. Daily reading of your update from a subscription service can sometimes seem like more of a hindrance than a help.

At some point, most of us turn to the internet to find a quick answer or to clarify something. I hear that some people still think it's a jungle out there and the only thing that can be done quickly and without too much stress is to book plane tickets or check the cricket scores. Help, then, may be at hand in my attempt to provide a short list of some of the various websites that are out there and which may provide some assistance. I shall begin by looking at those that cost nothing and then move onto the subscription services that have a heavy PI content.

First Step: the Freebies

Here are several websites which can be of use to those in the PI field and which will not cost anything more than the time you are on the internet. In alphabetical order:

Association of Personal Injury Lawyers www.apil.com

APIL was set up to improve the service provided to victims of accident and clinical negligence and this site should be the first stop for anyone who wants to keep abreast of developments. Major issues, like costs, are covered in their many press releases. Given that they manage to distil and reduce pages of judgments and arguments into a two page press release that you can actually read and understand, the site is definitely worth a look. It also keeps all of the draft proposals such as the pre-action protocol for Disease and Illness claims.

There is a members only area with even more useful information like the ABI Search list and a searchable database of APIL members and experts. The discussion forums are also helpful and in relation to the dreaded costs world there is a very useful Procedure, Damages, Costs and Funding group. Members can ask questions of others and it is helpful to read the various replies to identify different approaches.

Association of Child Abuse Lawyers www.childabuselawyers.com

The site is largely free with full details of recent news, relevant legal material, experts and links to other sites. It provides information for those affected by child abuse and the links provided to other sites would be as helpful to victims as to practitioners.

Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority www.cica.gov.uk

The website provides online guides to the scheme and the application forms which can be downloaded. It links to www.cicap.gov.uk which has details of the appeals procedure, relevant forms and hearing date information.

Expert Search www.expertsearch.co.uk

There are plenty of sites that allow you to search for an expert in various fields but I find this one is good at finding that particularly elusive expert and of course it's free. It has over 4,500 profiles of experts so I would hope that it would be rare not to find what you are looking for.

UK Register of Expert Witnesses www.jspubs.com

On the other hand this one has the advantage of all experts being recommended by previous Instructing Solicitors. The unfortunate thing is that you have to pay for this added security, although only just under £10 a month.

Forum of Insurance Lawyers www.foil.org.uk

It is only fair to mention the antithesis to APIL. FOIL aims to provide a forum for the exchange of information between insurers and those acting on their behalf. As with APIL there is a members only section which has articles and comments on similar areas to APIL but from quite a different perspective.

GP Info www.gpinfo.com

An invaluable site for those times when your client mysteriously only manages to complete their GP's name having forgotten the rest on the authority form you have been waiting weeks for. The site enables you to search for a GP or their practice by town, postcode or name.

Brain Injury Association www.headway.org.uk

This is a very user friendly site, of use to both solicitors and clients. It has information on various types of injuries, solicitors acting in a certain area and a searchable database that may offer some assistance if dealing with one of these claims.

Health & Safety Executive www.hse.gov.uk

This has information on the HSE's current campaigns, research that has already been carried out, text of recent Inquiries and plenty of invaluable information on health and safety topics. It is also possible to view details of all prosecution cases taken by the HSE which have resulted in a conviction since April 1999 and similar details of all enforcement notices issued since April 2001, excluding those being appealed or withdrawn.

Motor Accident Solicitors Society www.mass.org.uk

This site mainly offers assistance to prospective new clients on finding a MASS Solicitor in their area. However in a similar vein to APIL it has a members only area that has information on current topical items such as predictive fees.

Medicine Net www.medicine.net

There comes a point at which some clever medical expert is going to use a word even the most knowledgeable amongst us does not understand. This site will translate it into something everyone can comprehend.

Motor Industry Research Association www.mira.co.uk

For the more technical motor claim, this site may be helpful. There is information on facilities including a crash laboratory and research that has been done on crash testing and similar areas of expertise.

Pan-European Organisation of Personal Injury Lawyers www.peopil.com

PEOPIL was set up to improve communication between European jurisdictions in the field of personal injury law. I think it is interesting to see how other jurisdictions deal with the same problems we encounter. There are exchange groups which make very interesting reading: who would have thought whiplash merited its own exchange group? Although reading it you might just change your mind.

Second step: The Ones to Pay For

Lawtel www.lawtel.com

My firm, along with most others, subscribes to Lawtel. I find that the daily updates which I get for personal injury and civil procedure are a great way to keep up to date with what is going on. Lawtel Personal Injury is Sweet and Maxwell's focused Personal Injury service and has everything that I would think you would ever need. It has a very good focused search for quantum, the inflation calculations, JSB guidelines, and a wealth of tools to help calculate specials including Inland Revenue Tax information, AA Motoring Costs and Retail Prices Index. It also has the forms for the MIB and CICA. Westlaw also offers some PI material but I think you could find all that you need or want on Lawtel.

Butterworths www.butterworths.com

We also subscribe to Butterworths PI Online which offers a similar package to Lawtel with information for calculation of both general and specials, details of experts and case law. The PI Journal also has interesting articles on topical issues. Whether you prefer site or Lawtel really will depend

upon the individual as they seem to offer an equivalent package.

Justcite/Justis www.justis.com

I am new to these but I have to admit that they have won me over with their simplicity and ease of use. Granted in relation to general information for personal injury they don't fare so well but I am informed they will look into, and I suspect develop, areas that are not currently covered. The site offers a comprehensive, fully cross-referenced index to a collection of UK and European legal information. The case searching is so good that I would urge people to have a look to see whether or not you can manage without it. For anyone who has spent hours doing research, this site appears to offer as much help as is possible to make it easier and more efficient.

Casetrack www.casetrack.com

This site acts as a source of full text judgments on the internet which I should imagine is liked best for its speed. Handed down approved judgments are available within hours, the record apparently is 26 minutes. It also offers a wide coverage from all divisions of the High Court from July 1998 to others such as EAT's, the Privy Council and the VAT Tribunal. How useful this will be for a PI Practitioner is questionable and I would have imagined that people are more likely to opt for Butterworths or Lawtel to search for the cases relevant to them.

Third Step: More Newsletters

If you are not happy with just the one daily or weekly update then there are plenty of people out there who will send you another one to mull over. Most, if not all, chambers now do some type of newsletter so I have just included two which I think are particularly good.

Hardwicke Civil www.hardwickecivil.co.uk

Home of the informative Espresso news, a great update of the more important recent cases and articles on all areas that effect PI practitioners. The quarterly newsletter can be downloaded as a PDF or if you really need to feel the paper between your fingers join their mailing list.

9 Gough Square www.9goughsquare.co.uk

This set puts together an instructive newsletter, The News at Nine, that manages to keep people's attention with a healthy dose of wit where appropriate. At the moment the outlines are only available on their site however I am advised that it may be that the full articles will appear soon. In the meantime you could of course join their mailing list.

I have tried to look at some of the sites that I find to be most useful in the course of a normal day. Undoubtedly I have missed some out that others will think are more useful than those I have suggested. I have of course also missed out the really obvious ones like the Court Service, HMSO, the Lord Chancellors Department. I have also managed to write a whole article without mentioning the trusted Kemp and Kemp and Current Legal Information which I assume all firms still subscribe to.

Rebecca Lambert is Senior Paralegal at DMH, a modern law firm providing a range of legal, planning and business services to organisations and individuals. There are over 270 staff at offices in Brighton, Crawley, London and Worthing and over 40 in the personal injury department with teams specialising in road traffic accidents, accidents at work, industrial diseases, holiday claims and serious head injury cases. Email rebecca.lambert@dmh.co.uk.

Two more in the series on publishers, movers and shakers online

The Lawyer Group *by Rachel Lesiter*

The Lawyer Group is the legal publishing division of Centaur Communications (www.centaur.co.uk). Centaur is one of the UK's largest independent business publishing and information companies. It employs over 600 people and is privately owned with the shares largely held by management and by City and US financial institutions. Centaur's headquarters are in Central London (Poland Street, London W1), with other offices close by.

Centaur operates six key divisions that serve the following business sectors: legal, financial, marketing, creative, new media and engineering. Each division is typically built around a weekly periodical that becomes a trusted brand through accurately publishing much needed business information each week. It then drills down in order to provide that sector, industry or profession with the specialist information that each sector demands. This takes the form of on-line information services, quarterly or monthly journals, newsletters, conferences, exhibitions, industry awards and archival material.

In Centaur's legal division, the strength of The Lawyer, as a widely recognised brand within the legal profession has enabled The Lawyer Group to establish an extended portfolio of products and services within a short period of time. The Lawyer Group's primary aim is to provide timely and authoritative products and services that improve the performance of lawyers, law firms and those involved in the business of law. Today The Lawyer Group includes: The Lawyer, The Lawyer.com (www.thelawyer.com), Lawyer2B - published 5 times a year and circulated to over 30,000 students and trainees, The Lawyer Conferences and Events, and The Lawyer 100.

Lawtel was also part of the group until its sale to Thomson in August of last year. The sale has opened up the opportunity for The Lawyer Group to work with other legal publishers - operating for the first time from a position of independence. Crucially, The Lawyer.com is no longer tied to a single source and is therefore free to develop innovative online products working with a range of legal publishers as well as with the new generation of publishers emerging from law firms and chambers.

The Lawyer.com

The new version of The Lawyer.com is made up of six services: Lawyer News, Lawyer Diary, Lawyer Jobs, Lawyer Directories, LawZone and Business Watch.

Each service has been developed as a stand-alone solution in response to specific market demands. Lawyer Diary (www.thelawyer.com/lawyerdiary) provides a good example of this - by collating the vast and disparate volumes of direct mail related to conferences and courses users can compare and contrast what is available from a wide variety of training providers. They can take advantage of discounts and special offers available exclusively through Lawyer Diary and book online using our simple and secure email booking form (bookings are sent directly to the organiser).

Each one of the six services benefits from intelligent links between services enabling the user to seamlessly link to related and relevant content. For example, links from vacancies in Lawyer Jobs to relevant news articles in Lawyer News gives job applicants an easy way to research their next career move.

The success of The Lawyer.com's services to date should probably be attributed to the rapid growth in the number of users registered for the various email services. Lawyer News Weekly (www.thelawyer.com/lawyernews) is a great success story as it has managed to build a following of over 24,000 registered users in a very short space of time. This provides an email round up of the latest news and commentary from The Lawyer and features the popular 'Grapevine', an irreverent look at the latest weeks news.

The Lawyer Group recently appointed Sift, provider of online community solutions, to redevelop The Lawyer.com so that it is well positioned to respond quickly and effectively to customer feedback through flexible and scalable technical developments that result in a simple and intuitive experience for the end user. The new version of The Lawyer.com will be given a fresh design, which includes better navigation and a simple online registration process offering the first level of personalisation.

In addition, LawZone will be fully incorporated into The Lawyer.com site and repositioned as the sixth service. The new LawZone will offer a collection of specialist zones delivering specialist information to the non-specialist.

An Information Gateway

The Lawyer Group believes there is a gap in the market for an information gateway that draws together the many different articles interpreting the latest legal developments. These articles will be provided by law firms and chambers, keen to demonstrate their knowledge and expertise to potential and existing clients using The Lawyer.com.

Legal articles and commentary will be classified by practice area, and then further broken down into subjects within each practice area. Cases and legislation cited within articles will be linked to a new neutral multiple-source linking service from Context that allows users to select a reference within any document and be offered a variety of services to link to. For example, highlighting a case reference or case name will permit users to view the full text on Justis.com, All England Direct or BAILII, or be taken to related information on an internal know-how system.

By drawing together the phenomenal specialist knowledge contained within law firms and chambers as well as providing links to a variety of free and paid for information sources, LawZone aims to offer the user optimum choice. This approach allows The Lawyer Group to maintain a position of independence, but offers users easy access to free information sites such as BAILII and HMSO as well as the added-value subscription services.

The Lawyer Group will continue to develop high quality and innovative publishing solutions, demonstrating an ongoing commitment to listening to customer needs and developing products and services that respond to those needs.

Rachel Lesiter is Managing Director of The Lawyer Group, www.thelawyer.com. email rachel.lesiter@centaur.co.uk.

Two Special Offers for Newsletter Subscribers...

* Reduction of £95 off the early-bird price of £595 for the **LegalTech Europe 2003** Annual Legal Technology Conference - 4th and 5th November, if booked by Sep 30th (see printed "flyer" insert or this newsletter online).

* 20% discount off the £95 price of a new book "**Electronic Signatures in Law**" by Stephen Mason, to be published by Butterworths in November, if ordered online before Oct 30th (email Stephen on scwm@stpaulschambers.com).

Semple Piggot Rochez by John Pitman

Semple Piggot Rochez (Legal Education) Ltd was founded in 1996/97 by Michael Semple Piggot, Nicholas Rochez and Toby Davey. Mike Semple Piggot has been involved in legal education for over 25 years, founding the BPP law school with BPP Holdings in 1991, Nicholas Rochez is a Partner in the London law firm LeBoeuf, Lamb, Green & MacRae and Toby Davey is a Barrister at 4-5 Gray's Inn Square.

This is the parent company in what has now become the SPR Group. The other companies in the group are Rollingball Web Design Ltd, Rollingball Digital Television Ltd, Percitus LMS Ltd and Consilio Ltd. The companies work together to produce some of the most advanced multimedia legal education solutions available today.

The SPR Law School www.spr-law.com

SPR are the developers of the world's first online law degree programmes for students reading for the University of London's LLB and LLM (External) degrees.

SPR takes a multi-media approach to legal education and their academic programmes offer both extensive resources and interaction. All SPR students are provided with online text-based course and revision materials, audio and video files of lectures and interviews with leading members of the judiciary and practitioners, virtual tutorials and discussion forums, interactive testing and personal assessment, and last but by no means least, access to an online Law Library which rivals in its quality and extent the libraries of most leading law firms.

Consilio www.spr-consilio.com

Linked closely with the law school, Consilio is an online magazine for law students. At present Consilio has upwards of 4,500 regular members and experiences between 800,000 to a million page impressions per month.

Much of the content on Consilio is free, including articles, law reports, netradio and television interviews and selected SPR course materials. The site also features a members area (which is also free, but requires registration) offering further course materials and a weekly newswire.

In addition, and in return for an annual payment of £75, the site offers membership of The Consilio Club which includes access to SPR course manuals and case books, a full series of netradio lectures in the eight core subjects, and extensive revision notes and updaters.

The Legal Practitioner www.legalpractitioner.co.uk

In 2000, SPR took the decision to expand their operations into the field of continuing professional development and, as part of a joint venture with leading legal publishers Butterworths Tolley, launched CPD Direct. In February 2003 CPD Direct became part of The Legal Practitioner suite of multimedia professional training products and has recently been adopted by the Law Society's Young Solicitors Group as their official online training service (www.ysg.biz).

The Legal Practitioner umbrella service also offers a complete portfolio of innovative training products including an ambitious programme of video based CD ROM courses.

In addition, the site is a valuable legal resource in its own right offering legal news and current awareness information to supplement and enhance the training programmes offered. Like its sister site, Consilio, much of the content on

here is free, including articles, law reports, a daily news and current awareness service, netradio and television interviews and selected CPD course materials. The site also features a members area (which again is free, but does require registration) offering access to selected online CPD courses, a weekly newswire and special offers.

The site also offers The Legal Practitioner Premier CPD Club which is designed to reduce CPD training costs for individuals or groups of practitioners at competitive rates.

Percitus

SPR have also become aware that many firms prefer to develop their own training programmes. To this end not only are the SPR team in a position to utilise their multi-media production capability in the provision of bespoke electronic training services to firms on a consultancy basis (both online and on CD-ROM), but are also able, through Percitus LMS Ltd, to offer a powerful out-of-the-box learning management system.

The system handles e-sales, administration, accounting and delivery of online courses over the internet or through a training intranet. The backbone of the SPR online law school, Percitus is capable of supporting many thousands of simultaneous users and seamlessly integrating video, sound, interactive text, online TV and radio broadcasting, bulletin boards, e-books, examination and testing systems and online tracking. It provides an extensive range of tools for the user, including a personal calendar, word processor, email client, messaging system, personal web page and an email address directory. Users can be provided with their own private online chatrooms and may even incorporate Microsoft Net Meeting for use with a web cam for online video conferencing.

The SPR Mission

SPR have long believed that web and computer based training methods are fast emerging as some of the most useful and important tools available to today's training professionals and we are determined to open the eyes of the UK legal profession to the benefits of this exciting new medium. Over the last five years the SPR Group has been able to secure the significant investment needed to create a world class suite of products and has recently begun to see its first real returns on that investment.

Lawyers are still a cautious breed however, and many early attempts at providing e-learning to the legal profession have failed to live up to their potential – often with the providers falling by the wayside. It is possible that these early failures have caused training partners to view this type of product with some degree of scepticism. However, SPR are sure that their latest offerings will go a long way towards convincing the sceptics of the true value of the medium.

All in all, the SPR Group is currently looking forward to an interesting and successful future.

John Pitman is Publishing Director of Semple Piggott Rochez, email johnp@spr-law.com.

*Next time, in the Publishers, Movers and Shakers Online series, I hope to have articles from **Jordans** and **ICLR**.*

*And in the **Irish Extra**, there will be a review of **Justis** from Context, with particular emphasis on the **Irish Reports and Digests**. The review will be by Nuala Byrne, Law Librarian of the Director of Public Prosecutions in Dublin.*

Approaches to Spam Control by Delia Venables

This article follows on from the front page. For the web addresses of the various products mentioned, see the web version of the article at www.venables.co.uk/n0309joa.htm.

Care with your email address

You can set up procedures to prevent the firm's email addresses getting "out" into the wild, i.e. educate your staff not to use their email addresses in a way which enables them to be put onto spam email lists. Several firms have included instructions of this sort in their staff manual. Advice of this sort could include the following:

- i) Do not use the firm's email address for any private purpose; if people want to respond to discussion groups or make purchases online, they should use a private email address from hotmail or yahoo (and then of course they will have the same problems but at least it will not be the firm's problem). Preferably, staff should not access non work oriented sites from the firm's system at all although this will depend on the existing acceptable email and internet access policy. It is worth bearing in mind that the majority of staff and partners probably now have access to a computer at home so the "need" to surf the web for private purposes at work has reduced somewhat over the last year or two.
- ii) Never respond to spam and never use the "unsubscribe" option often included with such emails since this just serves to prove that it is a real email address.
- iii) Do not send copies to people unnecessarily and do not send private pictures, jokes or other attachments within the firm. Whilst these are not "spam" in the normally accepted sense, they also clog up the firm's system and require significant disk resources since all firms' emails are regularly backed up (often in multiple copies).

Email addresses on your web site

You can limit or change the way that email addresses are displayed on your web site, so that they cannot be picked up by "robots" roaming the web (also known as automatic email harvesters or "bots"). Options include these:

- i) Instead of "email delia@venables.co.uk" you could use "email [Delia Venables](mailto:Delia.Venables)" (where the real email address is still present as the link). This enables a human being to access the email address without difficulty but does not indicate to a robot harvester, which is looking for the "@" sign, that there is an email address lurking!
- ii) You could remove email addresses entirely but use instead a reply form which requires the user to put information into a pre-set form. This prevents even a Human Being from knowing what your email address is (and is very annoying to the Human Being).
- iii) You could decide to have no email address or contact form on the site at all so that no-one can contact you. (*You think I am making this up?*)

For a small site, the first or second options might be effective but for a larger site, with multiple email addresses, this kind of avoidance method is probably inadequate and other methods, below, will be needed.

Facilities available within Outlook and Exchange

You can use the facilities available within Outlook, Exchange and other email programs to identify spam and

either delete it directly or dump it into a junk email folder. This type of approach still uses your own computer resources in terms of telephone time and disk storage and it also requires you to look at the junk folder from time to time to check that no "good" emails have been put here by mistake (false positives). The process is however not very effective when the junk email is coming from a myriad of different addresses or indeed from invalid addresses since your system will not know that these are junk.

An additional problem is that the filter on particular words is also not as easy as it sounds since the email spammers are learning to find their way round these controls, e.g. viagra comes out as (say) v i a g r a or vi@gra.

To be effective, and not to require you to spend hours every week becoming an expert on the latest types of spam, it is really necessary for the program to have access to large databases of spam sources and spam words, kept up to date by someone else. This takes us to the next section.

Software for individual email users

There is a special type of spam control program which is suitable for individual email users who generally use a type of email program called POP3 (Post Office Protocol) i.e. not organisations with Exchange or similar networked email servers. With a POP3 system, the user is not online all the time but "logs in" to their ISP intermittently and collects their email. Although originally designed for a dial up line, this solution can also be used with an ADSL line but not with a networked email system. It is possible for the client (i.e. your personal email program, whether Outlook, Eudora, Pegasus or others) to examine the headers of the email on the ISP's server without downloading the whole email and to delete it directly on the ISP's server if desired.

The software applies all sorts of tests to the email based on sender, sender's domain, country of sender, and key words of various types found in the header or the text. These tests are carried out by linking up with databases on the web of known spammers (blacklists) and, equally importantly, by learning from the emails which you said were spam on a previous occasion. These systems do take a few days to become effective but are, after that process, very good at getting rid of most spam.

Having carried out this process with the spam control program, the user then "gets" their email in the usual way, but will find only the ones not deleted left, to come down into the normal email box.

An extra bonus of some of these systems is that they can generate a "bounced" email back to the sender, thus indicating to the sender that this email address does not exist although I am a little dubious about this process - it seems as if one is then also contributing to the spam emails clogging up the internet.

I personally use a program called Mailwasher for my email (recommended by James Prior, of Opsis Ltd) and it is rapidly becoming indispensable. Another program in this category is iHateSpam. This can be integrated into Outlook, Outlook Express or Exchange, thereby providing a seamless process of filtering and obtaining mail.

Using a spam removal service

You can enquire of your ISP whether they have a spam-removal service available - and most commercially oriented ISP's, do have such services available now, often combined with a virus removal program. The advantage of using a service of this kind is that the email can be removed before

it ever reaches your own system. Generally, there are some parameters which you can set to determine blacklists or whitelists (senders whose emails you want to receive even though they fail other tests) so that the user does retain some element of control.

From the responses to my enquiries, the big winner in this part of the market is MessageLabs, particularly as provided by the ISP Star Internet. A whole series of firms said how effective they find this service, often combined with virus protection, pornography control and other inappropriate content control.

MessageLabs was originally set up as a corporate virus protection service but now, spam seems to be equally important in its portfolio of services. In fact, it is very sensible for a user to have virus control, spam control and any type of content control (e.g. for pornography) from the same source, thus minimising complication and also cost. It uses a combination of publicly available blacklists, heuristics (complex rules) and mathematical (Bayesian) probability to identify spam. The user can also set up blacklists or whitelists which can be combined with the main service thus providing a reasonable element of control. Generally, legal firms accept all email (but to a defined junk folder) so that it can be checked from time to time but the ordinary user is protected from it.

You can also use a spam-removal service such as MessageLabs directly (i.e. not as a service from your ISP), whereby incoming email is diverted to the service and the spam removed before being sent on to the firm's system.

Spam control as part of a firewall

There are a number of products which combine hardware and software in a ready made firewall appliance, sometimes referred to as "Internet in a Box" solutions.

These include MXtreme from Borderware, sold by Peapod Solutions (PSL), which offers content filtering, secure web mail, encryption, virus scanning and mail box hosting. This type of system is delivered more or less "ready to go", and also provides regular updating of virus and spam criteria without user intervention. It comes in a variety of sizes to suit particular sizes of firm.

Another such product is Firebox from WatchGuard. This also comes in a number of versions.

Software for networked spam control

You can purchase and run software on the firm's own system - generally in association with the Exchange server - to identify spam and either delete it or put it in a junk area of the system for regular checking. This is generally very complex software with a large price tag, and requiring a considerable expertise to manage the process but it does leave the user in complete control of the process.

The two big names in this area of the market are Clearswift, with its MAILsweeper product, and SurfControl.

Both of these companies started with control of surfing (i.e. to prevent employees from accessing unsuitable sites) as their prime task but have now broadened their services to include also the removal of viruses and spam.

The products carry out the same processes as described in previous sections but do it totally "in house" so that the firm or chambers is not dependent on any external body. These products are described in more detail in some of the additional articles described below.

Spam control, virus protection and surfing control

Note that these are all separate concepts! Whilst a spam control program may well find and mark a virus for deletion, this is not their main purpose in life and they will not be as up to date in this respect at programs designed specifically for virus protection like Norton, Symantec, Network Associates or Sophos.

However, if you already use virus protection service or product, or a surfing control product, it is well worth enquiring as to whether they also have a spam control module which you can add, since, if they do, this is likely to be a cheaper and less complicated solution than having each of these separately.

Legal remedies

Most countries, including the EU, are trying to set up methods of preventing spamming by law. I hope to cover this further in a future article but in the meantime, there is a good site called Spam Laws at www.spamlaws.com, set up by US Law Professor David E. Sorkin. The site groups laws by USA (Federal and State), Europe (EU and by country) and other Countries, and provides links to legislation or proposed legislation in these countries.

More Information

Several readers of the newsletter have very kindly provided articles on this topic. These are available in Microsoft Word format and can be downloaded from the web version of this article - see www.venables.co.uk/n0309joa.htm.

Dean Hill-Jowett, IT Manager of Edwards Geldard, in "Prevention before Cure", believes that there are problems with all the software and services available for spam reduction because of their complexity, their cost or the firm's loss of control over how email is handled. He thinks that the best approach is to prevent email addresses from being found by spammers.

Simon Bennett, IT Director of Tarlo Lyons, describes how spammers operate, how they get your email address and what spam is costing you, as well as some of the things individual firms can do to prevent their email addresses being "found" by spammers. He also covers several of the software products available including MAILsweeper, BRIGHTmail, iHateSpam and MessageLabs.

Charles Black, founder and MD of ISP Nasstar and also a barrister, describes the way that spam has grown, the costs to the user, and some of the remedies. He looks at filtering services from Blackspider Technologies, MessageLabs and Nasstar and describes the processes which are used including Bayesian probability techniques, lexical analysis, "honeypots" and public blacklists.

Peter Sweeney, of Systems Integrator jmc.it, describes how the problem of spam has developed and methods which the firm can use to stop it. In particular, he looks at SurfControl, which is the software jmc.it recommends for stopping spam and which keeps the process of spam filtering within the firm. He describes how it works and how the facilities available to the administrator to manage the process. He also gives advice on how to keep out of the spammers' lists all together.

Feedback Please

I intend to continue to develop this topic in the next issue, so please give me your comments and views. Email me at delia@venables.co.uk!

The Role of Specialised Websites

by Lorraine Chapman,
Field Fisher Waterhouse

FFW is a full service commercial law firm based in the City of London. The firm has 80 partners, 180 other lawyers and 280 support staff and is rated in over 40 areas of expertise in the leading legal directories. We have chosen to operate several discrete niche website services through separate brands for both strategic and practical reasons.

Strategy

Our strategy is to appeal to certain niche markets by offering a tailored approach. The thinking behind this is that if you want to buy some jewellery, for example, you wouldn't go to a supermarket, you would go to a jewellers. The perception is that by going to a shop that specialises in the product you are looking for, you will encounter better quality merchandise and staff who will understand your needs more fully. We use a similar approach for the marketing of certain areas of our firm's commercial practices. By offering specialist branded websites for certain practices, such as travel and sports, there is a better chance of appealing to existing and potential clients in these specialist sectors.

Practicality

There are also a number of practical reasons for this approach. For certain practice areas we have an abundance of material which we would like to make available online for clients and potential clients as a value-added service. Placing huge amounts of information on our main website could result in the site appearing noticeably unbalanced. In addition, the information can end up being hidden away as there are so many areas on the site. Displaying this material on a separate website gives it greater prominence and makes it more readily accessible.

All our specialist sites contain free legal briefing papers and newsletters for users to download, in addition to information on FFW's work, experience and key lawyer contacts:

- * ffwlaw.com - our main site
- * brandslaw.com - brand protection and brand enforcement in Europe
- * ecomlex.com - Europe's first association for technology lawyers
- * equityincentives.co.uk - information on FFW's employee share plans practice
- * e-employmentlaw.com - practical legal advice on employment issues
- * europeanfranchising.com - an information resource for franchisors in Europe
- * ffwpublicsector.com - dedicated to the public sector
- * ffwtravellaw.com - information for the travel and aviation industry
- * isoscelespatents.com - a single source for patent services
- * sportsbusinesslaw.com - legal & commercial information for the sports sector

We have used a number of styles to appeal to the different needs and expectations of various markets. For example, our public sector specialist site has a simple understated design with a dash of blue and an image of Big Ben. The main concerns for visitors to the site are that it looks professional and contains lots of information which is quick and easy to locate. By contrast, our site dedicated to the sports industry is much more colourful with animated images and sports news on its home page. The site provides useful sector news to sports clients in a format which is appealing to the sports business sector.

Marketing and Additional Services

From a marketing point of view it is easier to market a mini-brand in a specialised sector. We can also promote specialist sites individually on printed material and on internet search engines. Providing information online is also a fast, convenient and extremely cost-effective way of promoting our firm to individual sectors.

We are looking into developing password protected areas of these specialist sites for privileged client users and also paying subscribers. For example, our travel sector website not only offers free downloadable briefing papers but also the opportunity to subscribe to an online service, whereby users pay a set yearly fee for online access to legal information on a range of topics which is updated as and when any changes in the law occur.

Practical Considerations

Keeping a number of specialist websites up-to-date, in addition to the firm's main website, can be a burden on the Marketing and IT Departments of a firm if they are not set up in a way that ensures maximum efficiency. The amount of administration involved in this could potentially lead to a number of marketing and IT staff undertaking this role.

That is why we have implemented a user-friendly content management system which allows non-technical staff, such as secretaries, to update information on the specialist websites as and when necessary. These changes go into a holding area in the system and are then checked by a member of the marketing department to ensure consistency and quality before being loaded onto the live web site. The advantage of this approach is that updates can be made easily and quickly and the work involved in updating the sites is not duplicated by having to be passed through several departments and stages before it can be completed. We have developed much of the site in-house, using the content management system, with additional assistance from our web site developer Crossbow Media (www.crossbowmedia.com).

Measuring success

When it comes to measuring the success of these specialist sites it is not just a matter of counting the number of hits or page impressions. In a specialised sector, a relatively small number of page impressions can be regarded as successful if they come from clients and potential clients within the target market, whereas the same number of page impressions for a more general site would be considered poor.

It is useful to look at the information which is downloaded most and this data can then be fed back to partners to take into consideration when looking at how to market and develop their own practices.

Lorraine Chapman is E-Marketing Manager at Field Fisher Waterhouse www.ffwlaw.com. email lmc@ffwlaw.com.

Four Firms Relaunch their Websites

See www.venables.co.uk/n0309joa.htm for short reports of major relaunches of websites for

- * Hammonds
- * Leigh Day & Co.
- * Faegre Benson Hobson Audley
- * Winward Fearon

Would you like your site to be included in a future report?

EGi's Legal Service - fully briefed on property law

EGi's Legal Service at www.egi.co.uk is the UK's leading online news, research and information service for property law professionals. Offering fast and easy access, their extensive databases provide:

- * Case Summaries
- * Estates Gazette Law Reports & Planning law Reports
- * Property Law News
- * Property Legislation
- * Estates Gazette Legal Articles
- * Claims
- * Lands Tribunal
- * Practice Points - Expert commentary on recent property issues

EGi also offers a range of additional researched services that concentrate on specific areas and sectors of the property market including Shopping Centre Research, London Office Database and Distribution Database.

For more information or to request a free trial please call us free on 0500 557788 quoting ref:003.

JustCite from Context - your window on to a world of legal information!

JustCite, the legal citator from Context, is the only tool that gives you fast and easy access to full-text documents on a variety of leading services, including Butterworths, Justis and many more. With JustCite, you can...

- ✓ identify a specific case and view its subject matter and parallel citations;
 - ✓ link directly to other cases and legislation judicially considered on the service of your choice;
 - ✓ find a UK Statutory Instrument and link to its enabling Act, amended and amending legislation;
 - ✓ identify UK Acts of Parliament, view their profiles and link to related case law and legislation; ..and much more!
- Contact us quoting VEN5 and receive a free no-obligation trial.

For further information, visit JustCite www.justcite.com, call 020 7284 8080 or email sales@context.co.uk.

The Legal Practitioner - MULTIMEDIA CPD - AT INTELLIGENT PRICES

The Legal Practitioner is a complete portfolio of innovative computer based legal training products and services operated by Semple Piggot Rochez (Legal Education) Ltd, the leading provider of web supported law training programmes.

From cutting edge online courses to rich media CD ROM packages, The Legal Practitioner offers the best in legal education in a convenient and affordable form. Our prices are among the most competitive in the market and no-one need waste time out of the office - our users may study whenever and wherever they wish.

But don't take our word for it - see for yourself on *The Legal Practitioner* at www.legalpractitioner.co.uk!

Solicitors - Your Practice on the Web for only £99 plus VAT, by Lawsites.net

Lawsites.net is a new service from Hallmark International Marketing Ltd, specialists in internet service provision and website design for the professions. The user can select a "style" of site from 21 templates, each providing over 50 pages of information about the firm, and options for various interactive tools, including on-line enquiry forms, instant conveyancing quotations, daily new headlines feed, jargon buster, legal dictionary, latest world news, a location map, clock and calendar. There are "working examples" on the site to try out.

A site costs £99 for the set-up fee and then £70 a month for hosting, admin and support.

Visit Lawsites.net at www.lawsites.net or call us on 0870 246 7608.

LegalTech Europe 2003, 2nd Annual Legal Technology Conference

4th and 5th November 2003, The Royal College of Surgeons, London WC2

This unique forum designed by American Lawyer Media's LegalTech division will enable legal decision-makers to come together to discuss how technology is developing in their firms. Keynote Speaker is Ross Dawson, CEO of Advanced Human Technologies, an international consultancy that works with professional service firms to develop strategy and client relationships in the connected economy. Topics to be covered in the 2 day conference include compliance training, how to measure return on investment in technology, records management and litigation support, document authoring, management and collaboration systems, E-Discovery and electronic evidence, and case management.

SPECIAL RATE FOR SUBSCRIBERS TO THE INTERNET NEWSLETTER FOR LAWYERS!

Email Rene Bross on rbross@btconnect.com or phone 01926-889144 before Sep. 30th.

IT Law Today

The most comprehensive newsletter for the IT Lawyer on the world of IT and Telecoms Law and Practice

The editor is Susan Singleton, Solicitor and Principal, and she is backed by a first class editorial board. Since the early 1990's, this legal field has gone from strength to strength and developments in the law have escalated beyond most IT lawyers' expectations. Regulations on data protection, electronic commerce, esignatures and eprivacy continue to emerge from the European Commission and the UK Government. IT Law Today aims to provide a quick point of reference for all major case law and statutory developments in the IT/e-commerce/internet and telecoms field of practice.

The cost is £385 a year. To subscribe or obtain further information, visit www.iplawportal.com, email amber.bates@informa.com or call 0207 017 5150.