

Internet Newsletter for Lawyers

By Delia Venables

July/August 2004

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[www.venables.co.uk/
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Is Your Website Accessible? by David Gilroy

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 covers the accessibility of websites. The final parts of this Act are coming into force in October 2004 and although the sections relating to websites are already in force, there has been a renewed interest in the Act recently. The relevant section, s.21(4) SI 1999/1191 Reg 4, says:

"For people with visual/hearing impairments, the range of auxiliary aids or services which it might be reasonable to provide to ensure that services are accessible might include [here it lists a range of services one of which is] accessible websites."

Since the Act does not define the term or make any specific recommendations, we have to turn to the relevant trade bodies in the Internet area for a detailed treatment of the topic, in particular the Worldwide Web Consortium (W3C), www.w3.org.

The W3C says that when developing a website, you should consider that some users may:

- ! not be able to see or hear or move, or may not be able to process some types of information easily or at all.
- ! have difficulty reading or comprehending text.
- ! not have or be able to use a keyboard or mouse.
- ! have a text-only screen, a small screen, or a slow Internet connection.
- ! not speak or understand fluently the language in which the document is written.
- ! be in a situation where their eyes, ears, or hands are busy or interfered with (e.g. driving to work or working in a loud environment).
- ! have an early version of a browser, a different browser entirely, a voice browser, or a different operating system.

In 1999 the W3C defined the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 1.0 (WCAG 1.0). These are still the current standards (there is a "working draft" of a new version but no date when this draft is expected to be agreed and published).

The W3C defined a series of checkpoints that web developers should adhere to when building a website. There are three levels of checkpoints:

- ! Priority 1 - A Web content developer must satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it impossible to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint is a basic requirement for some groups to be able to use Web documents and every web designer should be meeting this basic level.
- ! Priority 2 - A Web content developer should satisfy this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will remove significant barriers to accessing Web documents.
- ! Priority 3 - A Web content developer may address this checkpoint. Otherwise, one or more groups will find it somewhat difficult to access information in the document. Satisfying this checkpoint will improve access to Web documents.

Each of the three levels places an increasing burden on the web developer to do things the "right way". The ability to meet these three levels is termed "conformance":

- ! Conformance Level "A": all Priority 1 checkpoints are satisfied;
- ! Conformance Level "AA": all Priority 1 and 2 checkpoints are satisfied;
- ! Conformance Level "AAA": all Priority 1, 2, and 3 checkpoints are satisfied.

There is as yet no tool that can perform a completely automatic assessment on the checkpoints in the guidelines, so fully automatic testing may remain difficult or impossible. For instance, some checkpoints rely on an interpretation of what "important" information is, or whether the text equivalent for a non-text element is accurate. The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) offer consultancy services to help determine if a site is compliant and if not what to do about it.

Full details as to what is included in each level can be found on the W3C website. As an example, let us suppose that you have a list of services that you provide as a law firm, and the list is in green text on the right hand side of the page. On the left hand side of the page you say "Please select an item from those listed on the right in green." Someone who is colour blind, or a user who is not using a graphical browser may not understand those instructions and the site would not therefore be fully "accessible".

These are only "recommendations" but let us say that you are a law firm who specialises in discrimination law. Can you imagine not having an accessible website?

Case Law

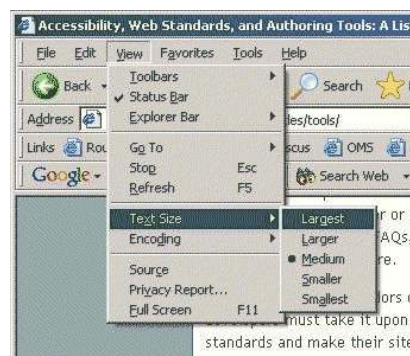
There is no UK case law on this matter yet but in Australia in June 1999 a case was brought by Bruce Maguire against the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (SOCOG). He claimed that he was discriminated against as their website was inaccessible to him. It took until August 2000 for the Australian Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) to announce their decision. They found in favour of the complainant and ordered SOCOG to make changes to the site before the start of the games on 15 September 2000. SOCOG failed to meet this deadline and were then fined AU\$20,000.

In April 2004 the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in the UK, published the findings of a survey of 1,000 randomly selected websites. The sites chosen were those from government, large and small business and education. Using a commercially available software tool, City University tested the home pages of these sites for technical compliance with the Guideline Checkpoints. Additionally, 100 of these sites were then tested in detail by disabled users carrying out specific tasks for each type of site.

The report is pretty damning in its findings with respect to the accessibility of these websites and it found that 81% of sites were not even compliant with the Priority 1 checkpoint, .2% achieved compliance with Priority 2 checkpoints and none at all achieved compliance with Priority 3 checkpoints.

"Accessibility" versus "Design"

The most recent versions of the main software tools used by professional web developers are, in the main, able to produce accessible code. These include Macromedia Dreamweaver, Macromedia Flash, Microsoft Frontpage 2003 and Adobe GoLive. However, this is a question of deliberate choice on behalf of the developer and many of the websites produced with these programs are not accessible. This is a matter which should be discussed in detail with the developers before final decisions are taken.



An example of the most basic test is checkpoint 3.4 which is a Priority 2 checkpoint. This says "Use relative rather than absolute units in markup language attribute values and style sheet property values." This means that in the language that is used to create a web page the font size is set to "Small" rather than to "10pt". This then allows the user of your website to change the text size using the browser.

In my experience more than 75% of all sites currently on the web will fail this most basic of tests. The reason for this high number is that many web designers have historically built websites from a "design" perspective, not from an "accessibility" perspective. So, a designer will not want a viewer to change the size of the text as it will "spoil" the design. It is a cultural shift to get them to realise that accessibility is not independent of design and that the most important challenge is to ensure that all users who want to use your site, should be able to do so. For someone with a visual impairment, being able to change the size of the text might be the difference between them staying on your site and checking out your firm, or going on to the next site that Google showed them in their search results!

Checking Conformance

There are a number of aspects to testing the conformance of your site. The first is to check that the HTML code (the language that is used to build websites) has been developed to one of the agreed standards. The most commonly adopted standard is what is called XHTML. The W3C provides an online validation tool that can be used by anyone to ensure that their website conforms to this.

Then comes the accessibility issue. There are a number of commercially available tools to help evaluate how your site conforms against the three sets of priority checkpoints discussed earlier. The best known of these is known as "Bobby" which can be found at bobby.watchfire.com/bobby.



These tools compare each line of the underlying HTML code against each of the checkpoints. A report is then produced that tells you which areas of your website do not conform to the checkpoints.

A number of these tools provide an online service where you can type in your website address and it will check the conformance of your home page.

Usability Bonus

An important finding from the April 2004 DRC report was something they called a "Usability Bonus". What they found was that on a site that was deemed to be a "low accessibility" site a particular task took 46% longer than on a similar site that was deemed to be "high accessibility". What this means is as follows. If you design your site to be "accessible" from the beginning, then ALL users benefit by being able to achieve faster task times i.e. do things quicker on your website.

Summary

The current legislation is not specific about what you must do to ensure compliance to the Disability Discrimination Act but the main trade organisation, the W3C has developed a series of checkpoints to help web developers ensure that they are building the most accessible websites they can.

If you have a website, I suggest you do not panic. Talk to the people who built it for you. Get it checked using one of the tools, then put a plan in place to make whatever changes are necessary.

For example, if you cannot change the text size using the browser, fix that now. If your tables are not coded correctly, change that when you redevelop your website next year. The law will look for reasonableness when, and it will happen, someone goes to court.

If you have just spent £10,000 on redeveloping your site and you have missed one checkpoint that is a marginal improvement, I would suggest that your defence could be quite strong. However, even if you've only just spent £1,000 on a new website, not being able to change the text size is indefensible.

David Gilroy is a sales, marketing and customer service professional with over 17 years working for companies such as Reuters and CompuServe. He has an MBA and an engineering degree. He is Managing Director of Conscious Solutions Limited, www.conscious.co.uk, a company which develops web solutions for law firms. They provide content as well as tools and techniques to ensure that a law firm's web strategy helps develop profitable client relationships. email dgilroy@conscious.co.uk.

A number of useful links relating to this article are given in the web version, see www.venables.co.uk/n0407sim.htm.

Accessibility Survey - note from Delia

David Gilroy and I have carried out our own survey of firms' and chambers' sites relating to perhaps the most important feature of accessibility as described above - the ability to resize text using normal browser controls.

David looked at the sites of 24 of the larger "Legal 500" sites (see www.legal500.com) and found that 9 were capable of resizing, and 15 were not - this gives only 38% in the "yes" category.

I looked at 50 firms from my own list of firms, which includes small and medium sized firms as well as large ones (see www.venables.co.uk/firms.htm), covering firms beginning with "N", "O" and the first few in "P"; I found that 32 were capable of resizing and 18 were not. This gives a "yes" score of 64% - much better than the Legal 500 sites.

This indicates one of the ironies of this particular topic; in the main, large firms have highly designed, relatively recent websites, which have generally gone for a "fixed font" approach so that the overall effect of the page is completely under the designer's control. Most of the design tools (like Dreamweaver) are capable of producing resizable text but they have not been used to do this, with designers preferring the "perfect page" approach. Many of the smaller firms, however, have simpler, cheaper and older sites where resizable text came with the territory (it is a basic html feature) rather than having to be considered as a requirement in its own right.

I also looked at 24 chambers' websites - all the ones beginning with "N" and "O" (www.venables.co.uk/bar.htm) and found that 14 achieved "yes" status, a score of 58%. Does this mean that barristers are concerned with accessibility issues? Well no, it just means that the majority of their sites were designed two or three years ago, often at minimal cost, where, again, resizable text comes without any effort. Almost without exception, the chambers with smart new sites were the ones with the "no" rating.

The moral of all this? As David says in the article, accessibility now has to be considered as part of good design, rather than being inimical to it.

The sites which fail this test are liable to challenge either in the courts (probably unlikely) or (at the very least) in the court of public opinion.

Education Law Resources by Iain Nisbet

Education law is a specialist area, particularly the area of law related to advice and representation for parents and pupils in disputes over the children's schooling. It seems that there are relatively few practitioners specialising in this area and relatively few sites on the internet providing legal information. This article, however, describes the key resources available.

Education Law Unit: www.edlaw.org.uk

The education law unit is a department of the Govan Law Centre and although the name suggests a local emphasis, the unit has a national remit. The news centre section of the site has the latest updates in education law in Scotland, with appropriate links interspersed to news reports, court cases, legislation, reports and Scottish Executive guidance. The information section includes a frequently asked questions section and also invites questions which are, by implication, less frequently asked. It also includes a series of eight leaflets on education law matters. The leaflets are aimed at pupils who have special educational needs, and come in various community languages (six plus English) and in audio and BSL video formats. There are a handful of more lengthy articles for grown-ups too. Finally, the court work section has a number of (unreported) court decisions from the sheriff court and Court of Session which are taken from the unit's own cases.

Coventry Law Centre: www.covlaw.org.uk

Coventry Law Centre hold a legal aid franchise for education law in the Coventry area. Their pages on the law centre website introduce the staff members, provide some useful links and give access to seven leaflets on education law for parents. These leaflets are impressively detailed, and are still relatively easy to understand and include "hot topics" such as bullying, discipline at school, special educational needs and school fees. The leaflets can be downloaded in either Word or PDF format.

Children's Legal Centre: www.childrenslegalcentre.com

The Children's Legal Centre is an independent charity based at the University of Essex which deals with all areas of child law and policy. It runs an Education Law and Advocacy Unit, which provides free legal advice on matters to do with education law for parents in dispute with their local education authorities (LEAs). The precise service available depends on which area of England or Wales you are in, but there is little in the way of online resources, at least to the non-subscriber.



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Contact Stephen Cowan at scowan@yuill-kyle.co.uk, or call 0141 572 4251 to find out how this product can add value to your clients. Yuill & Kyle debt recovery & credit control lawyers, 79 west regent street, glasgow g2 2ar, website www.debtsotland.com.

SEN Legal: www.senlegal.co.uk

SEN Legal is the practice name of Melinda Nettleton LLB in Bury St. Edmunds. As the name suggests, her practice is concerned with the provision of legal advice and representation for parents of children with special educational needs. It is a fairly rudimentary "brochure" site, but does include some information about the Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunals, the Statement of Needs etc. which would be useful for parents and beginners in education law.

Education Law Association:

www.educationlawassociation.org.uk

This is a group whose membership includes solicitors and other practising education law, as well as educationalists and other groups with an interest in the area. There is a section headed "advice page" which seems promising, but this in fact simply recommends that the viewer contact one of the members. However, the recent seminar publications page allows you to download a very interesting PowerPoint file on "recent disability discrimination and SEN cases". This is the only download at present, but the site is fairly recent and this looks likely to be joined by others in due course.

11 King's Bench Walk: www.11kbw.com

This is a barristers' chamber in Temple, London which deals with, among other things, education law matters. Go to the articles section and then to those relating to local government law. There are a number of education law articles and they are impressively up to date. They are also detailed and (one must assume) accurate, being extensively referenced with case law and so on. This site, of all those reviewed here, has the most education law, both in terms of detail and volume.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal:

www.sendist.gov.uk

This site used to offer case law from these tribunals for England and Wales, but this part of the site seems to have disappeared. There is nonetheless a great deal of useful information for people appearing before the tribunal or members of it in terms of procedure etc.

Enquire: www.childrenscotland.org.uk/enquire

Enquire is the National Advice Service for Special Educational Needs in Scotland. The website provides useful information on special educational needs (or "additional support needs" as they will shortly be known north of the border) which comes in a useful cocktail of law, policy and practical information for parents. There is also a site for children and young people with useful information on choices to be made at school (and beyond). That site is to be found at www.enquire.org.uk.

Education Law Reports from Jordans:

www.lawreportsonline.co.uk/ELR.htm

This is a subscription service. Whether or not you plan to subscribe, it is well worthwhile signing up for the free e-mail case alert service, entering your e-mail address and clicking the box marked "Education".

- You can also get many of these cases on free sites such as
- * BAILII at www.bailii.org
 - * House of Lords at www.parliament.uk
 - * Court Service at www.courtservice.gov.uk
 - * Scottish Court Service at www.scotscourts.gov.uk.

Iain Nisbet is Head of Education Law (www.edlaw.org.uk) at Govan Law Centre (www.govanlc.com) in Glasgow. He also runs the Scots law portal www.absolvitor.com. Email at the Education Law Unit advice@edlaw.org.uk.

Legal Research Products for the Irish Market:

A comparison of First Law, Justis.com, Lexis Nexis Professional, & Westlaw IE by Nuala Byrne

Read this at www.venables.co.uk/n0407sim.htm or www.venables.co.uk/n0407irishextra.pdf

co.uk or .com? (or .ie or .com?)
by Delia Venables

I have a large number of firms and chambers' websites on my site and I have used these web addresses to find out the percentage using the country code (co.uk or .ie) in their domain name as distinct from the international .com code.

It seems that around 76% of English and Welsh firms use the national co.uk code whereas slightly fewer in Scotland or Ireland do so (69% and 65% respectively). Northern Ireland has the lowest percentage (47%). Chambers have around 63% using the country code.

Here are the results in a little more detail, showing the size of the sample used in each case.

Category	Sample size	co.uk or .ie	.com	% with country code
English firms (starting with A & B)	296	225	71	76%
Welsh firms (all)	74	54	20	73%
Scottish (A to J)	127	88	39	69%
N. Ireland (all)	47	22	25	47%
Irish firms (all)	102	66	36	65%
Chambers (A to E)	65	41	24	63%

Although the country codes are still in the majority, there is a steady stream of firms and chambers changing from a co.uk address to .com. It seems to be a one way street - I do not know of anyone going in the opposite direction! Generally, firms maintain both addresses for a period (usually arranging for the co.uk address to transfer automatically to the .com for a period at least) but the "prime" address nevertheless becomes the .com one.

In addition, firms quite often seem to take advantage of any change in their name or status to change the url to a .com address at the same time.

Here are some of the firms which have made the change:

Collyer-Bristow, Cunningham John, Duncombe Commercial Solicitors, Elliot Duffy Garrett, Fox Williams, Gordons (previously Gordons Cranswick), Grant Saw (previously Grant Saw & Sons), Gray Muirhead, Latimer Lee, MacRoberts, Olivers, Olswang, Pinsents (previously Pinsent Curtis), Radia Partnership, Raeburn Christie, Starkie and Gregory, Steel and Shamash and Veitch Penny.

Chambers making the change include Field Court Chambers and 12 Old Square.

Meta Tags & "Adwords": Trade Marks by another name? *by Michael Coyle and Jason Lysandrides*

This article explains Meta Tags and Adwords and their effect upon trade mark rights owners within the Internet environment.

(For the url's see www.venables.co.uk/n0407sim.htm.)

Introduction

The digital market place is a growing and competitive forum in which many new and existing companies are vying for recognition. Initially, businesses had few opportunities to market themselves over the Internet but now the search engine Google is seen as the preferred choice for businesses laying out their wares and for consumers looking for particular products. However, even though search engines filter out most of the unwanted results by concentrating on the search terms entered, by virtue of the numbers of websites globally, there may still remain many thousands of results spread over many pages. Therefore businesses have had to learn how to improve their rankings so that they appear on the first few pages of results. Such strategies may involve legitimate or sometimes objectionable methods.

E-Commerce Strategies

Sponsored links are one of the legitimate strategies that are employed to promote a business prominently on a search engine's first page of results. Sponsored links that have now been branded by the various search engines, include Google's Adwords and Yahoo's Overture. These marketing tools are designed to allow a company to be guaranteed a place of their choice on the results page of a search engine. Such positioning may include appearing above the list of un-sponsored search results or in the margin of the search results page. There are various packages that may be purchased but essentially they appear by virtue of certain keywords that are used by the search traffic when they enter their search term criteria. These "trigger terms" then activate the sponsored link to appear as a result, in an effort to be distinguishable from the other search results and encourage search traffic to click onto the link allowing potential consumers to view the website.

Meta tagging is another method employed to promote e-Commerce. This is an optional hypertext format (an electronic language allowing publication and distribution of electronic information) that contains information about a particular website. Within the meta tag, various styles (or meta data) are incorporated in order to be caught by the different software programs used by search engines to collect their results. Examples include meta tag descriptions (which reflect sections of text published on the website that may contain terms used as search criteria) and meta tag keywords (which are used to highlight the primary terms employed on the website). Keywords may also comprise domain name addresses (URLs) so that when the keywords are used as a search term, they act as a trigger to encourage the search engine's program to locate the site.

However both meta tagging and sponsored links are subject to abuse, especially where the successful implementation of a search engine strategy boosts the site's ranking to the first few pages of results. After all who has the time and patience to look through hundreds of thousands of search results? With so many businesses and websites available, being able to leap frog into a search engine's "top ten" is a very attractive proposition.

Legal View

Notable cases in both the US and the UK have dealt with meta tag abuse in respect of trade mark infringement:

! Insituform Technologies Inc. v. National Envirotech Group, L.L.C.

! Playboy Enterprises, Inc. v. Calvin Designer Label

! Road Tech Computer Systems v. Mandata (Chancery Division, interlocutory hearing)

! Reed Executive plc v. Reed Business Information Ltd.

In the same vein, Google's Adwords have now been involved in several similar claims with the American Blind and Wallpaper Factory, Pets Warehouse (US companies) and Axa, Luteciel and Viaticum (French companies) as has Netscape who settled its dispute with Playboy Enterprises recently. As a result of these Adword complaints and claims, Google has now put in place a trade mark policy which addresses such abuse in an effort to remove itself from liability and emphasising that responsibility lies with the Adword advertisers directly.

Do you actually like photocopying case reports? Then why are you still doing it?

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Electronic Signatures in Law

A new book by Stephen Mason, Barrister, St Paul's Chambers, Leeds.

Everybody uses their electronic signature every time they type their name into an e-mail, just as many millions of people use an electronic signature when they click on the "I Accept" icon on a web site to enter a contract. Most people are not aware that they are using an electronic signature virtually every day they use a computer in this way. Electronic signatures are not restricted to scanned or biometric manuscript signatures, or more complex digital signatures. Users should be more aware of the legal effects of the more commonly used electronic signatures, such as a name typed into the end of an e-mail. Order your copy today by calling 020 8662 2000, or go to the LexisNexis site to order online.

The price is £110 but there is a special offer available until the end of July of just £88!

The reported abuses occur when the content of the meta tags or sponsored links infringes the registered trade mark rights of another. Simply put, in order to assist with the frequency and better ranking of a website resulting from a search, companies use the brand names of others, which are more likely to be more commonly used as search term criteria. The rights' owners will complain that this is an unauthorised use of their registered marks, which indirectly affects their business. However, it should be noted that under the Trade Marks Act 1994, there are contained fair use provisions. The main fair use provision is found in s.10 (6) of the Act which states:

"Nothing in the preceding provisions of this section shall be construed as preventing the use of a registered trade mark by any person for the purpose of identifying goods or services as those of the proprietor or a licensee. But any such use *otherwise than in accordance with honest practices in industrial or commercial matters* shall be treated as infringing the registered trade mark if the use without due cause takes unfair advantage of, or is detrimental to, the distinctive character or repute of the trade mark." (emphasis added).

However a UK High Court decision has now been recently overturned in the Court of Appeal, which has cast doubt on a trade mark owner's ability to claim infringement through meta tag (and presumably keywords used in sponsored links) abuse. The case of Reed Executive plc v. Reed Business Information Ltd [2004] EWCA (Civ) 159 was brought before the Court of Appeal and commented on the use of keywords either used in sponsored links, meta tags or "pop up" advertisements ("pop-ups").

The court was not convinced that the public would be confused or misled by such pop-ups and that it was generally accepted that search results were not treated as accurate or reliable. Therefore even where an individual clicked onto the link in pursuit of further information, they would instantly know upon seeing the website that it was not that which they had anticipated. Therefore no confusion would exist and no trade mark infringement would be present. However, exception to this would of course arise should the content of that website seek to mislead and confuse that individual into thinking that it did provide the product from the source that they desired. Therefore it is the website content not the pop-up or sponsored link that could potentially confuse.

The court also considered a party's (alleged) intentional dishonest practice in achieving a higher search engine result ranking by using meta data that incorporated another's trade mark. On the point of confusion the court remained consistent with its approach above. It said, '...causing a site to appear in a search result, without more, does not suggest any connection with anyone else.'

When examining the issue of identical trade mark infringement through sponsored links and pop-ups the court expressed the following concerns. Whilst the issue of confusion would not require assessment, it would be necessary to examine the issue of whether the mark was 'used in the course of trade'. The court in this case unhelpfully reserved its decision, although it did surmise as to the fact that such use could not be caught by the Act as the computer software does not read letters but assesses patterns of binary code, which does not convey any meaning and so no 'sign' exists.

In respect of meta data, the court again relied upon the fact that it was not people that "read" this data but computer software. As such data does not convey any message to

anyone, it cannot act as an indicator of origin and so fails as to trade mark use. This is compounded by the fact that meta data is not primarily viewed and only accessed via additional functions to assist with reading the source code of the website. It is unlikely that individuals will seek to view the source code in addition to the website that is apparent before them. Yet if the website in addition to using another's trade mark as its meta tag keyword and is a competitor who also supplies similar or identical products, does this not compound such meta tag use as abusive and emphasise the very purpose of trade mark protection under Section 10 (1) of the Act?

Conclusion

Another well used method of covertly promoting a website is to add to the website text whose font colour matches the website background. Such "chameleon advertising" will comprise famous trade marks that are often unconnected with the website's content. It would seem that the Reed decision as applied to chameleon advertising would also render this method as "non-use".

This new ruling has therefore left some doubt as to whether trade mark infringement can exist through its use as keywords in sponsored links and meta data. What seems more important is the website content itself and whether it can be argued any dishonest practice, misrepresentation and /or direct identical trade mark infringement. Whether website content can extend to chameleon trade mark use is also unclear. To be sure of infringement the Court of Appeal has again reiterated the importance of trade origin and source and where this is abused and misleading, is likely to assist in assessing the extent of infringement.

It is important that e-Businesses regularly monitor for possible meta tag abuse and unauthorised use of their trade mark(s) and ensure that commercial activity is not being unlawfully diverted from their websites. Traders should also ensure that their trade mark(s) are registered, to facilitate any action that they may wish to take against others infringing their rights via meta data and keyword abuse.

This area of intellectual property law remains to be settled and it is likely that further issues will arise in an attempt to create a more stable platform on which e-Commerce is able to fairly operate.

Michael Coyle & Jason Lysandrides are lawyers at Lawdit Solicitors, www.lawdit.co.uk.

Michael Coyle, Lawdit's Principal, is responsible for many "IP" portfolios that comprise both international and high street brands as well as the lone inventor and designer. With a Masters of Law in Intellectual Property Michael's publications range from the academic in 'E-Commerce & Law' to the commercial in the Lawyer. He has now brought together a cosmopolitan team in Lawdit to deliver IP legal services, both for private and commercial clients. email michael.coyle@lawdit.co.uk.

Jason Lysandrides is a trainee solicitor at Lawdit with extensive commercial background in the construction industry. Jason looks forward to graduating from his Masters of Law degree later this year, which included researching copyright and competition law within the EU. email jason.lysandrides@lawdit.co.uk.

Note: Lawdit News is a free monthly newsletter which highlights developments within this diverse legal area and includes case summaries from around the world.

Another in the series on publishers online

Practical Law Company *by Guy Baring*

Practical Law Company (PLC), was founded in 1990 when Robert Dow and Christopher Millerchip left Slaughter and May to launch PLC Magazine. As corporate lawyers they understood the needs of front-line fee-earners and the magazine rapidly established itself as the leading source of practical know-how for UK business lawyers.

PLC, www.practicallaw.com, is still privately owned and now has around 140 employees. It provides a range of specialist web services in addition to the original paper publications. Indeed, revenue from web subscriptions now significantly exceeds that from paper products and successful web services have been established in Cross-border, Property, Competition and IP/IT, in addition to Corporate. PLC also enjoys strong allegiance among in-house lawyers through its Law Department service.

As well as new web services on the way (Financial Services is currently in pilot phase and Employment is launching in January) PLC is also developing a new range of products in the area of document automation.

Professional Support

Professional support has now moved to the centre stage of many firms' strategy. Senior lawyers are being appointed to oversee know-how development, more is spent on technology to support it and increasing numbers of non fee-earning lawyers are being employed. There is growing pressure to manage this aspect of practice cost-effectively.

PLC is the only independent provider of professional support for business lawyers. It employs a team of over 30 lawyers with significant transactional experience. They focus on the continuously maintained practice notes, standard documents and drafting notes, practical articles and filtered updates that form the core of the web services.

Firms intent on providing the highest quality, cost-effective advice to clients face a number of challenges:

! **Information overload.** The ease of publishing over the web, together with ever more new legislation and case law, have resulted in an avalanche of raw legal information.

! **Hiring professional support lawyers.** The demand for high calibre PSLs currently exceeds the supply. Good technical lawyers with communication skills and prospects of partnership do not often want to switch to a support role. If they do, they command high salaries.

! **Managing professional support lawyers.** Keeping PSLs working effectively and profitably for the firm can be difficult. For example, PSLs at many firms prepare similar legal updates. Costed properly this is expensive.

! **Infrastructure.** Establishing a system to manage information is a major challenge involving choosing the right technology, funding its purchase, creating a taxonomy or "know-how index" and coding the resources. All this requires expertise and time.

! **Knowledge sharing.** Fostering a culture in which fee-earners are prepared to share knowledge, building this into their career development and rewarding it has huge benefits for a firm. But often it requires the attention of a time-pressed PSL to nurture this culture by extracting useful know-how from transactional lawyers and disseminating it.

! **Developing document automation.** The pressure to maintain competitive advantage through automated document assembly and other initiatives combining know-how and technology is growing. Many large firms have invested significantly in these areas and ultimately the clients themselves are imposing capped fees and demanding greater efficiency.

Firms that cannot justify the expense of a PSL avoid the associated recruitment and management problems but they still face the challenge of maintaining their competitive position without a PSL, and using fee-earner and partner time to do so. In the long run, this is often more expensive.

How PLC contributes

! **Continuously Maintained Know-How.** In addition to invaluable archive material, we provide maintained know-how in the form of practice notes and checklists. These are concise, practical explanations covering core transactions and the background law. For experienced lawyers they are reliable statements of practice, and for more junior lawyers, they give an understanding not yet acquired through practice.

! **Standard Documents and Drafting Notes.** We provide a library of first-rate precedents that are kept up-to-date as law and practice develop, together with comprehensive drafting notes highlighting potential legal and negotiating issues. Our new Firm Style service allows firms to download PLC documents in their own house style.

! **Current Awareness.** PLC does not simply pass on new information; we also aim to filter out unnecessary content. We provide useable know-how explaining concisely the practical implications of important developments. Updates are integrated with the underlying know-how providing fuller background for those that want it.

PLC has recently collaborated with Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer to provide a current awareness service for its corporate group. This followed a review of the role of professional support lawyers and allowed the firm to increase efficiency, eliminate duplication and concentrate internal resources on proprietary know-how.

New Tools

! **Complete integration of standard documents.** PLC FirmStyle allows lawyers to download PLC precedents from any of our services in their firm's house style:

! The converted document includes firm margins, fonts, spacing, heading, numbering and definition styles

! Automatic table of contents and cross-references can be activated or disabled according to preference

! The precedent cover sheet includes the firm's format, displaying logo and firm details.

! **Document automation.** PLC Transaction Toolkits are automated documents combined with know-how for common transactions. They are being developed with partner firms and in-house legal departments in major companies. They will provide an efficient means of authoring and maintaining documents for all firms.

! **Streamlining Due Diligence.** PLC Diligence is a workflow application designed to match the way lawyers review, summarise and report on legal documents. It improves the efficiency and focus of the due diligence process, and provides better risk management.

Guy Baring is Director of Sales & Marketing, Practical Law Company, www.practicallaw.com, Email guy.baring@practicallaw.com.

Money Claim Online by Ken Fraser

Money Claim Online (MCOL) was launched in 2002 and is one of the Court Service's major successes. You can see the site at www.courtservice.gov.uk/mcol. Volumes have increased by 84% over the last 12 months.

So why do the latest figures show that solicitors account for only 12% of the claims issued for April 2004?

MCOL enables you to issue a Part 7 specified amount claim without leaving your office. You do not need to write a cheque then either post your instructions or queue at the counter, wait for your claim number, then wait for your date of service. Instead, once you have registered as a user you can issue a claim, check the progress of any previously issued MCOL claims, request admission and default judgments and issue warrants of execution. You can also correspond with us by email if you wish.

Assuming you are working normal office hours, your claim will be issued the next working day and is deemed served four days later. Your judgment and warrant requests will be processed the following day and, where you have requested a warrant, the warrant data is sent electronically to the appropriate local court the same day. MCOL is able to achieve this level of service every working day of the year.

Where the claim arises out of a contract, you do not need to append a copy contract (which is just as well because you cannot do this!). The statement of truth is "signed" by you entering your name and position to the electronic claim form. These differences to the standard Civil Procedure Rules are covered by Practice Directions 7C and 7E.

Where a claim is defended, and where the defendant is an individual, the claim is transferred to the defendant's local court, otherwise it is sent to your local court (which would be the same position as if you had issued it locally).

MCOL does have some restrictions: for example, both the claimant and defendant must have an address for service within England and Wales; there can be no more than 2 defendants per claim; there is a maximum of 1024 characters for details of the claim; and service must be by the court.

The defendant does not lose out with online facilities. The defendant to a claim commenced either through MCOL or the County Court Bulk Centre (CCBC), has the option to reply to the court through MCOL. Just to clarify, this applies to any response which must go via the court, such as an acknowledgment of service, a defence (with or without a counterclaim), or a part admission. Full admissions, as with claims commenced through local courts, continue to be between the parties and the defendant will complete the admission form provided with the claim.

The CCBC has been successfully operating a streamlined service for regular money claim issuers (banks and finance houses, utilities and debt collection solicitors) for a number of years. Although MCOL does not offer the discounted fee available to CCBC users, it provides a way to extend the electronic service to both individuals and regular court users who do not have the facility to produce data files to interact with the CCBC system. Around half of all money claims are now issued through Northampton.

Development of MCOL was undertaken by Court Service staff in partnership with our IT Provider EDS (under the PFI contract) and EzGov, a firm specialising in web products for

government offices. Using latest technology, the project went from defining the user requirement to live running in 17 weeks, no mean achievement especially considering the link to all local court systems, and of course a payment engine which provides for 24:7 access.

The project went remarkably smoothly, deadlines were met and the system was then launched in early 2002. Work continues to grow almost every month and March 2004 was our most successful month to date with just under 4,000 claims entered, making a total for the financial year 2003/04 of 39,589. This means that MCOL is now issuing more claims than any of the local county courts.

So, returning to my original question: why are solicitors not using MCOL?

Is it the payment method, i.e. paying by credit/debit card? Most businesses now have these; the MCOL site is secure.

Is there a belief that it would show disloyalty to your local court? Using MCOL frees up your local court's staff time to deal with hearings and orders.

Is there another reason? I would be very happy to receive any responses to these questions or other comments at: ken.fraser@courtservice.gsi.gov.uk.

Ken Fraser has been involved with the Court Service's Bulk Centre since it began with the then Summons Production Centre which started in 1990.

New Software Tool - PIQuantum

PIQuantum (see www.quantumsoftware.co.uk) is new online software that automates the production of schedules of damages that Claimant Personal Injury lawyers are required to serve on their opponents. The schedule shows the level of damages sought by the Claimant and covers items such as loss of earnings, care and assistance and aids and equipment.

This software has been created by forensic accountant Robert Weston who has prepared hundreds of such schedules in the past; after 15 years spent assessing damages, he saw the need for the automation of a process that otherwise can involve some fairly onerous and tedious calculations.

Automation can save substantial amounts of time spent calculating damages, particularly on the larger cases. It also enables people to do the calculations who otherwise would not have the expertise.

PIQuantum also introduces an element of standardization into a process that is often otherwise done on an ad hoc basis. It is therefore useful on the smaller cases as well.

The software is charged on a usage basis, starting from £39 for a schedule.

By being on-line it can be constantly updated and will therefore always be up to date. This is difficult to achieve with packaged software run "in-house" and indeed there is often a danger of the software missing an important update and consequently being out of date without the person preparing the schedule realising this.

Robert Weston describes the software in more detail in the web version; see www.venables.co.uk/n0407sim.htm. email robert.weston@quantumsoftware.co.uk.

Domain News: .pro progress and .eu to come by Tim Brown

The Internet is a vital part of the global business infrastructure, with businesses now reliant on web and email. Consequently the domain name system is of critical importance – without a domain name, companies simply cannot communicate via the Internet.

It is important to note that the domain name system is by no means fixed; new top level domains are always being proposed while others, such as .su - the old country code top level domain for the Soviet Union - are being threatened with removal.

At the moment, there are two new top level domains that are relevant to lawyers in the UK and Ireland - .pro and .eu (say them dot pro and dot eu). See also the earlier articles in [September/October 2002](#) and [May/June 2003](#).

.pro progress

.pro was one of seven new top level domains introduced in 2001. Bundled with a secure digital certificate – allowing for encrypted communications via email – the domain space was designed exclusively for use by professionals.

.pro domains were finally made available at the start of June 2004, but are, at this stage, somewhat restrictive in terms of the registration criteria. The US-based administrator of the domain, RegistryPro, (see www.registrypro.pro) is currently only making domain registrations available to three kinds of US-based professionals – attorneys, doctors and accountants. So, for the present, UK lawyers are not eligible for a .pro domain.

In the meantime, all UK businesses – not just lawyers - can register a ".ProBlock Intellectual Property Defensive Registration" for themselves. This is designed to prevent other entities from registering a domain that might infringe their IP rights and effectively allows them to reserve a name until RegistryPro extends the eligibility requirements. However, in the meantime, RegistryPro's rules prescribe that it cannot be used for services such as email or for web pages.

Some industry commentators have questioned the value of .pro noting that given its limited availability it is hardly expected to eclipse other domains, such as .com, in popularity either with professionals or clients. In addition, the defensive registrations have been criticised, being seen by some as a cynical ploy to generate revenue through registrations that cannot be used for a practical purpose, to defend against a non-existent threat, given RegistryPro's registration restrictions.

So should British and Irish solicitors and barristers be rushing to buy a .pro or advising their clients to register blocking domains?

Well, frankly, no. Given that it has taken three years to merely launch the domain in the USA, it is unlikely to reach this side of the Atlantic any time soon. So UK and Irish lawyers might be best advised to ignore the hype and carry on with .com. Furthermore given the restrictiveness and expense of domain registrations, speculators and cyber-squatters are unlikely to target brands in this space, so defensive registrations are probably not necessary except for the most widely known global brands.

.eu moves forward

The newest top level domain .eu is slowly moving forward towards introduction sometime in late 2004. .eu is designed for use by residents and businesses in EU member states. It will be the first domain space that is not purely generic, like .com, and not specific to a single country, like .uk, although to allow its introduction the international standards body has effectively had to designate it as a country – Euro-sceptics take note!

The introduction of .eu has taken some time, with the domain originally being announced some years ago. In May 2003, Brussels-based EURid (www.eurid.org), an entity made up of a consortium of the Swedish, Italian and Belgium country code naming authorities, was appointed by the European Commission to run the new domain with responsibility for appointing registration service providers and other technical issues.

EURid are currently in the final stages of contractual negotiations with the Commission and are thrashing out the details of the Public Policy Rules (PPR) for .eu which are being drafted in consultation with the Member States.

Once that is finalised they must then go about getting the technical aspects of the domain arranged by negotiating another agreement with the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) - the authority that oversees the introduction of new domains into the domain name system's "root".

After the legal and technical stages have been completed, the domain will be launched with a "sunrise period" possibly in September 2004. During this period, holders of valid trade marks will be able to register domains before they become available on a first-come-first-served basis a few months later. This system was utilised when other TLD's, including .biz or .info, were introduced and was moderately successful in ensuring trade mark holders got first bite of the cherry before the domain speculators moved in.

.eu will, however, differ in that there will be requirements for registrants to have their sunrise applications verified by a EURid-appointed "Validation Agent" to avoid fraudulent submissions. Once past this stage, trade mark holders will still not be guaranteed their domain. If there are competing applications that pass the validation regulations, the domain will be issued to the first trade mark holder who applies. Therefore the timing of domain applications during the sunrise period will clearly be critical.

Other questions, such as whether Member States' trade marks will carry the same weight as Community trade marks during the sunrise period have not yet been settled, but given the thoroughness of the Commission's preparations so far, it is likely that trade mark holders will be suitably catered for.

As with all new top level domains, it is uncertain how popular .eu will be – that will depend on how the domain is marketed and how it captures the public's imagination - but trade mark holders and their advisers should keep a close eye on developments to ensure their intellectual property rights are properly protected in the new space.

*Tim Brown is senior domain name consultant with Edinburgh-based Demys Limited (www.demys.com), who as well as working on Internet brand matters for their international clients, also produce a free domain news service for business (www.demys.net).
email t.brown@demys.com.*

Profile of Lawyers Online by Delia Venables

Lawyers Online (www.lawyersonline.co.uk) have been one of the well known "names" in the UK legal Internet since (it seems) the very beginning, but they have rarely been much in the public eye. I took advantage of a recent visit to Hereford, where they have their headquarters, to visit the company and to meet Managing Director Alan Tomlinson.

Lawyers Online started in 1998 as a byproduct of a solicitor, Rosie Houghton, carrying out group litigation involving around 130 firms and realising that the internet - and email in particular - offered a simpler and cheaper alternative to the massive amount of photocopying and managing of documents sent and faxed between them which was necessary to run cases of this kind. At that time, however, only 3 of the firms had an email address and a major effort was required to get the firms into the position where the emailing of documents - and the understanding of the security implications involved - was a realistic proposition.

Whilst it would have been possible to use a normal business-oriented Internet Service provider for this, it was considered at the time that the security which could be provided by an in-house and lawyers-only operation would be preferable to reliance on an outside body which might have less experience of the absolute confidentiality required in a legal environment and possibly less inclination to provide advice and support in the use of associated technologies within the legal office.

Whilst a high level of security is still a selling point of Lawyers Online, the real advantage has subtly shifted to the level of personal service which can be provided to small firms without IT departments or massive IT experience by a lawyers-only team.

Rosie Houghton herself is now not involved in the day to day running of the company but it still feels more like an in-house legal department than a large technical company. Apart from Alan Tomlinson, the team consists of a small systems support team who design, build and manage their own web mail and secure application servers and support the users. The servers are hosted at a number of commercial hosting facilities in the Midlands and South East but the flexibility is retained by Lawyers Online to expand or move to additional providers if the need arises. Perhaps most revolutionary of all, the Lawyers Online support lines are answered by real people to whom the user has probably spoken before, and these real people have constant access to the servers and can make any changes needed whilst the user is actually on the phone.

Whilst a number of ISP's for Lawyers were started at various times (including Connecting Legal from Waterlow, Access2Law from Go Interactive and LegalISP from Statplus) I think that Lawyers Online is the only one left seriously providing ISP services to lawyers. They have around 1,500 subscribers using either broadband, email or hosting services, or often all three. Most of these are solicitors firms although a few are local law societies, barristers chambers and legal bodies of other kinds.

They are particularly strong with the smaller firms, without IT departments; larger firms may feel able to work with the normal business providers but the smaller ones need a greater level of help and support. The firms either contact Lawyers Online directly to arrange the email and web hosting facilities required or use their own local IT company (the responsibility for IT in the firm is often outsourced) to

manage the process for them. Apparently, the average annual invoice value for email and hosting services is around £150, which sounds very modest to me.

Although they will provide web design services and consultancy, if asked, they feel that designing websites has now become a different specialism and they do not get involved in this a great deal, whereas they are heavily involved in back-end programming of web based services. Incidentally, their own website offers one unusual feature - a series of training pages on email, web hosting and security products which can be studied by lawyers for training purposes and for which CPD can be gained.

New services now being made available include virus and spam filtering of email, provided in a way particularly appropriate to legal firms who cannot afford to lose important emails and who equally cannot afford any loss in confidentiality. Interest in their security audit and penetration testing has risen sharply and the technical team are also working on the ability to provide "Voice over IP" (VOIP) solutions, as the "convergence" between data and voice continues unabated.

email alan@lawyersonline.co.uk.

What's New on the Legal Internet

News from the Publishers

Copy Free Zone, www.copyfreezone.com, is a new facility from independent publisher Context. Subscribers to a number of full-text titles on Justis.com, www.Justis.com, can now view the original printed version of case reports, in PDF format. The series for which the new feature is available are the ones produced in conjunction with The Incorporated Council of Law Reporting for England and Wales: The Weekly Law Reports, The Law Reports and Industrial Cases Reports. Original versions are also available for cases in Electronic Session Cases, published by The Scottish Council of Law Reporting. While printouts of case reports from Justis have been generally accepted in court for some time, some lawyers and judges have retained a preference for the original versions. With this feature, which is available to Justis subscribers at no extra charge, they can view exact electronic reproductions of the original paper documents, including side letters.

Civil Court Service, www.civilcourtservice.co.uk, is a new online service launched by Jordans. This offers online access to the full text of the Brown Book, including the Civil Procedure Rules, with expert annotation, Practice Directions, Pre-Action Protocols, Court Guides, Fees Orders, Courts Directory, Court Forms and the Civil Court Service Newsletter. All Rules have a full amendment history and there are updates every two weeks. There is also a case archive back to 1999 and continuously updated consolidated legislation. There is a special introductory subscription available at the moment and there is also a free 28 day trial available; the service is also available on 28-day no-obligation approval.

Electronic Signatures in Law is a new book by barrister and security expert Stephen Mason. The book covers the technical and legal issues relating to electronic signatures and also covers areas where we are often not aware that we are using them - such as when we type our name into an email or click the "I accept" button of a contract or disclaimer page. The book is published by LexisNexis, www.lexisnexis.co.uk. You can order the book online or call 020 8662 2000. The price is £110 although there is a special offer price of £88 available until the end of July.

General Interest

Tesco Legal Store, www.tescolegalstore.com, looks rather good. It majors on low cost DIY publications (from independent legal publisher Lawpack Publishing Ltd) including guides and DIY kits of various sorts, typically costing around £10 each. These can be purchased online and are then sent in the post - whilst not appearing quite so "modern" as online delivery, it could be that this is a sensible way to proceed for most people. There are separate sections, with Q and A for each and lists of appropriate books and DIY kits, as follows: Accidents & Injury, Benefits & Claims, Business, Divorce & Separation, General Law & Advice, Landlord & Tenant, Living Together, Pensions, Personal Finance, Power of Attorney, Property Law, Scottish Law, Small Claims, Tax, Wills & Probate and Work & Careers.

There is no attempt to provide legal advice online or to link directly to lawyers and there are plenty of disclaimers saying that the viewer should consult a solicitor for legal advice. There are links to the relevant Law Society's Directory of solicitors - a good idea, actually, since any "buy your space on this directory" approach from Tesco would have undermined the impartiality of the approach. Apparently, there were around 1,000 people "clicking through" to the Law Societies' lists in the first week so it could be that this site will turn out to be a source of work for solicitors rather than "just" competition.

Deaf Lawyers UK, www.deaflawyers.org.uk, is a new site covering issues relating to Deaf lawyers, as well as Deaf issues within the legal system. It was set up by a group of Deaf solicitors, barristers, law students and people trying to qualify as lawyers and aims to respond to access issues, publicise specialised information and raise awareness of issues Deaf people face within the legal system. The site also aims to bring Deaf lawyers together, and to reach out to others who may not be aware of their rights. The site includes a Deaf Blawg (a "blawg" is a "blog" on legal topics). Prime topics appearing so far are immigration, citizenship and asylum, and special problems for deaf people in these contexts, covered from a legal point of view.

Minitrial, www.minitrial.org.uk is a Scottish initiative to help secondary school children find out more about the Scottish legal system. Students take part in a reconstruction of a criminal jury trial. The site shows an interactive court scene and describes the participants, then shows some of the "papers" for the assault trial. There are various materials for further work which can be downloaded. The site does not try to be too clever but is straightforward and informative.

Emplaw, www.emplaw.co.uk, is not a new site - it has been on the web since 1997, created by employment lawyer Henry Scrope and is the most popular employment law website in the UK - it receives 25,000 visitors a month. The site provides free access to more than 4500 "fact cards" spelling out the basics of employment law. The user can also search for an employment lawyer by postcode or by region. It now has a new "front end" and a new style of presentation and as you enter the site, you choose whether you are an employee, an employer or a professional user. Professionals have to register for the free part of the site and can also subscribe to a subscription service with additional features. There are free trials available.

Ofcom, www.ofcom.org.uk, is the new regulator for the UK communications industries, with responsibilities across television, radio, telecommunications and wireless communications services. Ofcom inherits the duties of the five previous regulators: the Broadcasting Standards

Commission, the Independent Television Commission, Ofcom, the Radio Authority and the Radiocommunications Agency. There are already reports on the site covering the broadband framework, the wholesale local access market, statement of policy on the persistent misuse of an electronic communications network or electronic communications service and the process for the future licensing of FM commercial radio. **Ofcomwatch**, www.ofcomwatch.co.uk, is an informal group blog commenting on Ofcom and related media and communications regulation issues.

Firms' and Chambers' Sites

Here are two examples of small firms which manage to look like large ones, because of all the interesting information they provide on their site:

Tyrrell Solicitors, www.lawyer.ie, in Dublin (and note the attractive url!) provides features on living and working in Ireland, wills, defamation, property, taxation and a "ten steps" series, and a "Case of the Month" provided by Irish legal publisher First Law. There is also a regular online newsletter. The Summer newsletter has just arrived on the site and covers the State's first conviction for fraudulent trading, the Civil Liability and Courts Bill, additional penalty points offences and the repeal of outdated legislation.

Lawdit, www.lawdit.co.uk, Solicitors, of Southampton, provides a whole series of lively features on IP, trade marks and e-commerce topics generally. There is also an online newsletter which comes out each month in pdf form with a detailed and comprehensive round up of news items on these topics. You can view the newsletter online and also register for an email notification when the new one is ready.

Is this a new trend - lawyers' websites actually trying (and succeeding) in making their solicitors or barristers look friendly and approachable? Have a look at these:

Freeman Johnson, www.freemanjohnson.co.uk, of County Durham. If you look at any work type, you will find little pictures with the email addresses and you will also find, under "About us" slightly larger versions of the pictures together with some simple descriptions. They are smiling!

Plowden Buildings, www.plowdenbuildings.co.uk, is a civil set of 30 barristers based in Newcastle and London specialising in personal injury and employment work. Their home page has a nice friendly picture on and the individual profiles have nice cheerful little pictures too.

jmw-clinical-negligence.co.uk is a new specialist site from JMW Solicitors of Manchester and Altrincham. The site contains information on the law and process of clinical negligence claims and also detailed information on such topics as A&E negligence, orthopaedic errors, erbs palsy, cerebral palsy, neonatal conditions, cancer misdiagnosis, surgical errors, obstetrics, gynaecology and psychiatric negligence.

There are lots of recruitment agencies for solicitors but only one that specialises in positions in barristers chambers:

Chambers People, www.chamberspeople.co.uk, is a consultancy and staff recruitment service for barristers chambers. It places clerks at all levels, fees staff, admin staff, receptionists and accounts staff and also provides consultants providing Bar Mark and Qualitymark accreditation services, Business Development work, Market Research, and Freelance Clerking including fee collection. The company is run by an experienced barristers' clerk, Martin Poulter.

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