

## COMPUTERISATION ACTIVITIES

### A Paper by the Department of Justice, Canada

#### DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW

1. The mission of the Department of Justice is to:
  - support the Minister of Justice in working to ensure that Canada is a just and law-abiding society with an accessible, efficient and fair system of justice;
  - provide high-quality legal services and counsel to the Government and to client departments and agencies; and
  - promote respect for rights and freedoms, the law and the Constitution.
2. Since 1990, the Department of Justice has faced significant increases in demand for legal services at the same time as resources are diminishing. In response, the Department has sought new ways to conduct business in order to fulfil its mission and operate within these constraints. A major enabler in this has been the use of information technology, both for communication with the Canadian public and for internal processes.

#### COMPUTERIZATION OF SERVICES TO THE CANADIAN PUBLIC

3. Increased use is being made of public access networks and CD-ROMs, both to convey information and to provide a forum for public input.

##### (a) *Public Access Networks*

4. The Department of Justice's Law Information section, which manages the Public Legal Education and Information (PLEI) program, along with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), provincial, federal and territorial government representatives studied ways to provide improved public legal education and information services in a more efficient and cost effective manner. A second aim of the study was to improve communication and access among various stakeholders involved in public legal education and information. The result of this study was a recommendation to develop a computer network to be known as the PLEI Network (PLEI-

Net). PLEI-Net then grew into an expanded network called the Access to Justice Network (ACJNet). This network allows users to send electronic mail and documents to each other, to participate in electronic conferences and to search bibliographic databases. From the beginning, two organizations, the University of Alberta's Faculty of Extension, Legal Studies Program, in Edmonton, and the NirvCentre in Toronto, have been active partners with the Department of Justice in the management and development of the ACJNet.

5. ACJNet has reduced the operating cost of the many PLEI organizations by reducing the need for travel, sharing research, and reducing printing costs. It is an electronic community where people come together to discuss current issues, share ideas, share documents and develop a repository of information, both published and unpublished.

6. Since the spring of 1995, ACJNet has had a site on the World Wide Web. The ACJNet home page, located at <http://129.128.19.117/acjnet/acjnet.html> serves as a door to public law and justice information, leading the visitor to the homepages of various PLEI organizations, other governments and university. It also provides links to homepages of special programs, partnerships and events, such as the National Crime Prevention Council, and soon a page for the International Crime Prevention Convention to be held at the end of March 1996 in Vancouver. From ACJNet, you can access electronic documents from PLEI organizations, Statutes, both federal and provincial, white pages and phone directories of individuals and organizations connected to law or justice. This innovative approach to providing PLEI has proven to be a resounding success, as is testified by the number of people who visit the ACJNet homepage. At last count there were 35,000 people who had visited the site from 42 countries. In a recent one-month period (August-September, 1995) ACJNet clients transmitted more than 13,000 files, consisting of almost 33 million bytes of information.

##### (b) *Justice Canada CD-ROM*

7. The loose-leaf updates of the Statutes of Canada are no longer published in printed format. They have been replaced with CDs containing consolidations of the Statutes and Regulations and the Gazette Index.

**COMPUTERIZATION WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

8. Within the department, the work of employees is being facilitated and enhanced by the introduction of several automated systems. These include research tools and facilities, the management of case information and administrative systems. They are being delivered in several ways, including CD-ROMs and Web Server technology. The entire department uses MicroSoft Office as the basic office productivity tool. Department of Justice offices across the country have electronic mail connectivity.

**(a) Research Tools**

- (i) *Justice Text Workbench* -- The Justice Text Workbench provides a single, easy-to-use reference source on CD-ROM for the legal professionals and support staff within the Department of Justice. It includes the Statutes and Regulations of Canada, Prosecution Guides, Financial Management Manuals and other frequently-used reference materials. A for-sale version of it is available to the public, containing the Statutes, Regulations and Gazette Index.
- (ii) *Library System* - The Library focuses on providing multimedia research facilities, electronic access to global information and enhanced access to the departmental legal corporate memory. The on-line library catalogue is being made available throughout the department.
- (iii) *Legal Opinions and Precedents Online Retrieval System (LOPORS)* is a legal research tool for all authorized employees of the Department of Justice, enabling full-text search access to a central database of material of approved precedential value, as well as the ability to create local data banks of relevant material. The purpose is to provide a research tool ensuring that there will be consistency in the interpretation and application of the Law. LOPORS will also reduce research time and help avoid duplication of opinions.
- (iv) *Press Clippings & Hansard On-line* will provide access to daily news services on-line, by downloading selected articles of interest to the Department from a commercial provider. Daily information from Hansard will also be available electronically on several local area networks. Cumulative Hansards will be stored

for access by employees from their computers.

**(b) Management of Cases and Information**

- (i) *Case Management* - An integrated case management information system has been developed to meet the operational and management information requirements of the Department's litigation and legal service activities. It provides a means by which case-related files, documents and activities can be managed and measured. It is currently in use in selected areas of the Department and will be expanded across the Department in the future.
- (ii) *Recorded Information Management System (RIMS)* is made up of several modules covering all aspects of file and document management from file and document creation, through control, to the ultimate disposition of the information. RIMS objectives include fast and easy access to files and document information and the preservation of valuable archival records. RIMS and Case Management are integrated applications.
- (iii) *Litigation Support* - In support of innovative approaches to major prosecutions, litigators are provided with appropriate, up-to-date off-the-shelf software, hardware and services to meet case-specific needs. System support is normally aimed at facilitating the handling and analysis of legal documents and reference manuals, and may include such elements as imaging, full-text retrieval and analysis of voluminous files.
- (c) **Administrative Systems**
  - (i) *Timekeeping System* - Will provide the means of tracking and capturing data on personnel activities, to identify and quantify work done for client departments. Currently, an off-the-shelf software package is being evaluated for this use.
  - (ii) *Crown Agents Reporting System (CARS)* - Crown Agents are private sector lawyers appointed to represent the Attorney-General of Canada on legal matters. The CARS system provides the Department with a repository of information on their appointment and about their cases. It also

assists in processing and auditing all accounts received from Crown Agents.

- (iii) *Bulletin Board System (BBS)* - To facilitate internal communications, a corporate Bulletin Board System is being implemented and made available to all employees. It will enable all staff to access daily information feeds and announcements of general interest.
- (iv) *"Out There" the Communications and Consultation Database* - This system is under development, and is intended to provide a centralized database of external contacts with whom the Department consults or liaises in the course of doing business. This will facilitate activities such as event planning, identification of client populations for specific projects, dissemination of publications and will provide a basis for assessing the results of consultations.

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