

# Law Practice Management



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## FOCUS: PERSONNEL

### Staffing Issues and the Delivery of Legal Services in the Future: The Changing Role of "Legal Secretaries"

*A "White Paper" by the Association of Legal Administrators drawn from a composite of a number of presentation papers and reports.*

Editor's Intro:

*This article has no specific authors. It is a "White Paper" by the Association of Legal Administrators. This material was collected by participating ALA chapters and then individual report papers were consolidated into this combined report. This report addresses a significant change in the role of the legal secretary in today's law office. It is the hope of ALA that this discussion and analysis will provide a helpful framework for law firms in their management and administration.*

As the legal profession approaches the end of the 20th century, it faces a changing landscape in the overall delivery of legal services, driven by internal and external competition, client service needs and demands, increased use of constantly evolving technology, and personnel issues ranging from disaffection among lawyers to a limited pool of qualified support staff.

This ALA White Paper examines one of the staffing issues which will heavily impact the delivery of legal services to clients in the future: the existing and inevitably growing shortage of legal secretaries. Significant shifts in long-held perceptions of legal secretaries; their duties, their relationships to lawyers, and their role in the practice of law are impacting this traditional career path today. The thrust and conclusion of the White Paper is a recommendation for reconfigurations of the basic in-firm

systems for the delivery of legal services in order to enhance and solidify a new structure, and to create the next generation of the most critical lawyer support staff personnel.

The new staffing complement or reconfiguration for law firms proposed here, the Client Service Team, will anticipate client needs. The concept continues  
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## Editor's Notes

by Steve Hutchinson

Our lead article in this edition, the ALA White Paper on the changing role of legal secretaries in the delivery of legal services, gives us notice again of the ever changing requirements of the practice of law. Technology has continually changed the way we practice, sometimes for the good and sometimes for the bad. The law firms capacity for producing documents at an ever accelerating pace and duplicating, collating, scanning, faxing and e-mailing them all over the globe in seconds has come about in just a few short years. The need for the lawyer to analyze, cogitate and take the time required to explore the possibilities and the potential of various courses of action, has not changed that much.

I expect continued computerization and the added enhancements that it provides for access to resources, access to information, speed of access and reduction in the cost of getting that access will produce substantial changes in how law is practiced over the next decade and beyond. Small and mid-sized firms will find their ability to work globally, to access the same technology as larger firms and to increase the scope of value added services to their clients will increase substantially. Its an exciting time to be practicing law.



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“Those who agree with us may  
not be right, but we admire  
their astuteness”  
— Cullen Hightower

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the evolution of the “legal secretary” and creates a pivotal successor position: the Client Service Coordinator. Within the parameters of the position, the Client Service Coordinator would guide the Client Service Team in meeting client and firm objectives.

This White Paper is based upon many sources, most importantly including the work of four ALA Chapters which conducted surveys, interviews and made recommendations on the subject in the summer and fall of 1998. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of the four chapters were remarkably similar. This White Paper incorporated much of the work of these Chapters together with other sources in reaching conclusions which are truly products of the entire project.

## **History and the Evolution of Law Office Technology**

An understanding of the changing nature of the way in which legal services are delivered, and how the traditional roles and duties of legal secretaries have changed, can be aided by a brief look at the history of office technology.

The typewriter was invented in 1874 and became the backbone for producing a written work product in law firms, thus creating a new career, the legal secretary. The invention of the telephone came on the heels of the typewriter in 1877; though it was almost 25 years before the telephone first appeared in law firms. The typewriter and the telephone, as well as the adding machine, were the primary tools available to law firms for almost 100 years. Law office “technologies” remained basically unchanged until the first attempt at tying typewriters to automation was introduced by IBM and Xerox in the early 1970’s. The early electronic work processors were expensive, hard to operate and required special skill sets that precluded “just anyone” from using them, thus assuring a somewhat altered but essentially static role for legal secretaries.

A real breakthrough for law firms came in the mid 1980’s with the first desktop computer. It offered more advanced word processing product that could be universally used by others in the law firm, not just secretaries. By the beginning of the 1990’s, many attorneys were using PC’s to prepare documents and traditional roles began to blur. Today, the traditional or paternalistic model in which the lawyer delegates specific tasks to the secretary con-

tinues to diminish. Conventional methods of dictation and transcription are becoming obsolete. Even users who are not trained keyboarders can use graphical word processors with tools such as grammar check, spell check, and auto-correct features to prepare a polished work product. Freedom from the repetitive typing and retyping of work product, which had been a large part of the essence of the lawyer/secretarial relationship for almost 100 years, has contributed tremendously to a not always recognized redefinition of the legal secretary’s role.

The fulfillment of technology’s long-awaited promise to “change the way law firms do business” is materializing. The payback on law firms investments in expensive tools is finally emerging and, consequently, the role of legal secretaries is changing. As we enter the 21st Century, that role will continue to be redirected from a career centered around document production towards a career in which time and project management, together with increased knowledge of technology, are more critical. This will inevitably come about as the following existing or “just around the corner” changes take hold and become increasingly commonplace:

- The use of voice recognition software to send dictation directly to computer systems.
- The direct distribution of documents by attorneys themselves to clients, using fax and/or e-mail.
- Increasing use of cellular phones, the Internet, wireless modems and fax machines to allow attorneys and support staff members to do their “own work” at any time, from any location.
- The use of laptops enabling lawyers to essentially take the law office to the client’s office, making the client more of a partner in the preparation of legal work.
- The application of “hoteling” concepts increasingly allows lawyers and paralegal to work from their client’s offices or from remote sites.
- Ever growing integrated databases that will contain client information, billing information as to fee arrangements and professional development information.
- The increasing capability to manage and access information “at the touch of a finger” through digital scanning of documents, imaging, document management and document assembly systems, electronic litigation support systems, electronic scheduling and timekeep-

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ing systems, and case and matter management systems.

- The continued outsourcing of law firm support including copying, faxing, mailroom management, housekeeping and supplies.

As law firms spend thousands and millions of dollars on technology that allows lawyers and support staff to work more efficiently, the legal industry will be forced to re-evaluate attorney-staff ratios and the traditional workday in an effort to reduce expenses. As a result, individual secretaries are likely to support a larger group of lawyers. Inevitably, regardless of the growth in the sheer numbers of lawyers, fewer secretaries will be required. The traditional time-consuming tasks for secretaries such as transcribing, typing, revising documents, and filing, will require much less time. A legal secretary's most valuable asset will be his or her organizational and technological skills.

## **A Changing Labor Market**

There are fewer people entering the secretarial workforce – not just the legal secretarial workforce – today. Part of this is attributable to the fact that the U.S. and Canada are experiencing a gradual slowdown in labor force expansion due to the decline in birth rates. Demographic studies show that while there will be growth in the number of middle age workers as the baby boom generation moves into its 40's and 50's, there will be a decline in the number of available workers in the 25 to 44 year age range.

For law firms, one consequence of demographics, low unemployment rates and other factors is that the pool of potential staff employees has shrunk significantly. Recruiters must be more aggressive in their recruiting efforts. In a market where legal secretaries and paralegal are in high demand, firms and legal departments are compelled to pay increasingly high prices to attract and retain quality employees. Law firm administrators recognize that while increasing salaries and providing additional benefits and incentives will help, they do not provide a long-term solution to the staffing problem.

A tighter and tightening employment market has been accompanied by changes in job and career expectations that parallel the post-typewriter technological advances described above. Most high school students expect to get a college degree. While many graduate from college without specific career training and may have a liberal arts education that

does not prepare them for an occupation, they have expectations of employment which do not fit with the traditional model and perceptions of a "legal secretary" position. This is not on their "radar screen", nor is it on the radar screen of those who go to vocational or specialized education schools after high school – those people are far more likely to be interested in more exciting, higher-paying and career-mobile positions in technology and similar fields.

In an ALA survey of law firms in one eastern city, responding lawyers expressed the view that college educated individuals would only be drawn to the legal profession if there was career advancement potential in a creative work environment with greater control over the work product. Today, it is becoming more difficult to find qualified applicants because bright, ambitious candidates have many more options available to them than they did a generation ago. Although a college degree is not a prerequisite, a number of lawyers in this survey were proud to note that many of their current secretarial staff members had additional degrees of some kind (business school or junior college) and that more than a few had paralegal certificates.

## **The Continuing Critical Nature of Lawyer Support Staff**

Technology, workforce supply and demand issues, and other considerations notwithstanding, direct staff support continues to be critical to the effective functioning of law firms and the practice of law. The perceptions of lawyers and legal secretaries are also important to an understanding of the process and of future needs. Some interesting, and probably typical, results emerged from the survey study referred to in the previous section, above.

The survey Task Force interviewed attorneys, secretaries, paralegal, law firm administrators, and other support staff with regard to many of the changes that are taking place in the legal community and how these changes will affect their jobs in the future. The interviews were conducted in pre-selected categories based on age and length of experience. The results and conclusions of this survey as to the legal secretaries are important in terms of their relationship to the evolving future of this career track.

"Overall, our current secretaries want to become more of an integral part of the practice. They talked about being part of the team, requesting additional duties and responsibilities."

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Legal secretaries want to be.... Respected for their knowledge and skills. They crave additional responsibilities and welcome additional training, both on the computer and in their specific practice areas. They embrace technology for it has made it possible for them to work more quickly, efficiently and independently and has given them the ability to share information. With technology allowing secretaries to accomplish more, they can get their work done faster and without excessive stress. The confidence level is higher. Legal secretaries feel fulfilled when they handle a matter from beginning to end, when they are asked for their input, or when they are asked to help solve a problem. They take pride in what they are doing, want to establish trust between themselves and their attorneys, and are team players who realize the benefits of a good secretary/attorney working relationship. They understand the importance of servicing the client and admit that technological advances mean no hiding!... Most secretaries don't mind if their attorneys do some of their own typing on the computer; they regard it as help, allowing them the flexibility to handle other administrative tasks. A few commented, however, that sometimes it creates more problems such as typographical errors, incorrect use of grammar or in keeping follow-up files. Some of the secretaries are a little nervous about the future, feeling that perhaps they won't be needed as much due to technology advances especially voice recognition.

Recognition of secretaries as a viable part of the inner workings of law firms is critical. The feeling from the outside world that secretaries are secretaries because they aren't capable of doing more is far from true.

We asked attorneys what they look for in a secretary. The majority want someone with intelligence and initiative, someone who is professional, reliable, exercises good judgement, is trustworthy, possesses advanced computer skills, has organizational skills, and can recognize what needs attention and when. They want a secretary who can provide an excellent presentation (on the telephone, in person and in the work product). The secretary should be able to prioritize, be efficient and accurate, and be able to handle follow-up. They want someone they can work with, who is capable, can anticipate their needs, and who is willing to assume responsibility. They expect

their secretaries to utilize the computer for word processing and scheduling, to handle client calls, and to prepare basic drafts. They would also like their secretaries to do as much paralegal work as possible. They regard their secretary as their assistant, their teammate, and their aide-de-camp, someone who can complement their strengths and fill in their weaknesses. They value their independent thought and their ability to give an opinion on a matter... Attorneys stated that an attorney who wants to succeed needs an assistant who also wants to succeed and that that assistant's own professional development is the key to his/her self worth. One attorney went so far as to say that the secretary-attorney relationship is the most critical relationship in the office. If the secretary knows the cases and clients, attorneys then have the freedom to delegate administrative tasks, which in turn allows them to be creative and even feel comfortable when out of the office, knowing the client will still receive immediate

assistance and service through the secretary/assistant.

These survey results are not unique, they find support in similar surveys conducted by other ALA chapters.

**"Attorneys stated that an attorney who wants to succeed needs an assistant who also wants to succeed"**

### **Attracting Qualified Individuals and Retooling the "Legal Secretary" Position**

Given the continuing need for effective, technologically skilled people to assist lawyers in delivering legal services, how do law firms and the legal profession attract qualified candidates and also find ways to keep them? The demand is high, and the supply of good people is low.

For starters, there seems to be a consensus that a title change is in order. The term "legal secretary" has, rightly or wrongly, acquired a negative connotation and, more importantly, is no longer accurate as a description of a position/person who fits the demands of emerging needs. The title of this position should be changed to reflect more accurately the current and future job responsibilities of the individual. Many attorneys are opting to refer to their secretaries as their "assistants", a word that carries the clear, positive message that the person is assisting the firm and serving the client.

Denominating the "legal secretary" of the future as "Legal Assistant" is a logical approach, which more

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realistically encompasses the full scope of the responsibilities of the individual performing those duties. That person clearly will have more responsibility and will type less; they may evolve into people who perform basic research and draft simple documents; they will have more client contact; they will be fully trained and computer literate, using multiple software applications; and they will be a logical extension of the lawyers they work with as a part of the delivery of legal services team. The title "Legal Assistant," however, brings with it some problems, including confusion in some firms where paralegals carry that title.

Whether a "Legal Assistant" or perhaps a "Client Service Coordinator," the person providing the primary support for a lawyer and operating as an extension of that lawyer in the delivery of legal services in the future will need to be a part of a cohesive team. And therein lies the possibility of a new structure and an enhanced position that will take advantage of technology and create a competitive and desirable career track.

### **A Possible New Support Structure — The "Client Service Team"**

Entering the 21st Century, the current role of the legal secretary will be enhanced due to the necessity of developing new skills as a result of broadened responsibilities. Lawyer support restructuring may come in the form of a Client Service Team. The tasks which must be performed to bring about full client service will be expanded and segregated into multiple positions. This concept will require vision, strategic direction and a commitment from firms. Strong leadership and top-level support from key members of the partnership [and the firm's administration will be necessary to establish an effective support team structure.

The Client Service Team concept involves a group of skilled staff members assigned to support a group of attorneys and paralegal. Within such a team one person might focus on technical product skills, one on communication skills and one on administrative skills such as reviewing projects, setting priorities and establishing time frames. Job descriptions would need to be developed for these support staff team members based on today's secretarial duties and the unbundling of tomorrow's added responsibilities. These sorts of teams might "look" different in different firms and in different context based on areas of practice and support requirements.

In the Client Service Team concept, new titles would better reflect the expertise and area of responsibility of team members by levels. For examples, in a three-tiered system the titles for these levels might be:

Level I ...Client Service Coordinator

Level II ..Production Coordinator

Level III .Production Assistant

In many firms the functions of Level III Production Assistants might be outsource or shared across teams. In other firms, those functions might be absorbed in a simpler, two-tier system.

The specific knowledge, skills and experience required of a person at each level in a three-tiered system might include the following:

## **Level I**

### **Client Service Coordinator**

- Coordinate daily workflow with Levels II and III.
- Supervise Level II and III personnel.
- Interface with lawyer/paralegal team members to determine workflow priorities.
- Possess in-depth knowledge of key client contacts.
- Possess in-depth knowledge of and manage the team's project activities.
- Develop meeting agendas. Attend meetings and follow-up on action items.
- Develop presentations and coordinate preparation of visual and hardcopy presentation materials.
- Perform client billable projects/research.
- Prepare client billings, respond to billing inquiries and coordinate with clients on billing preferences.
- Assist in client conflict checking/opening new client matters.
- Communicate with clients regarding shared resources (software and documents)

## **Level II**

### **Production Coordinator**

- Possess knowledge of key clients and contacts.
- Maintain awareness of team's project activities.
- Evaluate teams' internal procedures and recommend improvements.

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- Possess high level of technical competency on various software packages.
- Prioritize tasks based on level of service agreed upon.
- Coordinate with support departments on the best use of services and technology.
- Provide telephone and word processing support as necessary.

### **Level III**

#### **Production Assistant**

- Provide primary document production and word processing support.
- Maintain online and hard copy files.
- Arrange meetings/catering services
- Maintain mailing lists
- Prepare time reports
- Provide telephone backup to Levels I and II.

This model would take the ratio of support staff to attorneys and paralegal into account by grouping coworkers with complementary skills to provide maximum efficiency for clients.

As more administrative tasks are leveraged to members of the team, the complexity and responsibility associated with these job functions would continue to increase. The evolutionary process of today's legal secretarial position is inevitably going to require them to manage the administrative processes within the department or group they support.

Effective utilization of the team concept requires a change in how the partners and associates have traditionally used their administrative support. The needed change is from individual relationships to a team culture while, however, still retaining those aspects of the traditional one-on-one relationship that lead to loyalty and support. By definition, a "team" is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, to a set of performance goals, and to an approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable.

Training programs would be needed to assist all team members (from partner to support staff) with this shift in thinking and approach to their work. New processes will require on-going technical and systems training. It will also be imperative that performance evaluations be developed for each newly

created position description within the team. Performance evaluations should not be generic, but specific to each skill grouping, with pay for performance built into the measurement tool.

Finally, a critical ongoing monitoring program or continuous improvement checkpoint process would have to be followed to gain valuable feedback. The team concept is a work-in-progress and appropriate changes will strengthen the team effort.

### **Staffing the Client Service Team Model**

Rather than relying on the recycling of experienced secretaries between firms, the applicant pool for Client Service Coordinators would need to be expanded to specifically target recent college graduates without prior law firm experience. This would include some of the same people that firms now currently look to as entry-level paralegal candidates.

The Client Service Coordinator position would provide a career path for current top level legal secretaries with good communications and organizational skills. Client Service Coordinators under this model would need to understand the structure and operation of a law firm in order to develop a wide strategic view of the organization.

They would also need to learn client development and leadership skills. Client Service Coordinators should learn about business trends affecting particular industries within their practice groups in order to become an integral part of the Client Service Team.

As to Production Coordinators, there would be a host of training issues such as career development, legal terminology, communications and computer skills. Production coordinators would need a sound knowledge of the practice area they are supporting. Current legal secretaries with strong technical skills as well as high-end data entry clerks or entry level technical support people could staff this position,

The applicant pool for Production Assistants would include high school graduates or perhaps clerical workers who have taken early retirement from large corporations. This position could be used to provide growth opportunities for current clerical employees. As noted above, in some firms this third support level might involve personnel who are shared across teams, while in other firms, it might be an appropriate function for outsourcing, and in still other firms, the functions might be totally absorbed in Levels I and II.

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The three-tiered Client Service Team structure provides a career path with options, which are often lacking in traditional law firm support staff structures. It opened the door for law firms to tap into a broader pool of productive, qualified and career-oriented people. There are many college graduates who are not on a specific career track and, with changes in job responsibilities and job titles, those people may well be attracted to these types of positions.

## Summary

The new staffing complement for law firms, described herein as a Client Service Team, will anticipate client needs. The concept creates a pivotal new position; the Client Service Coordinator. Within the parameters of the position, the Client Service Coordinator would guide the Team to meet client and firm objectives and would be an integral part of the implementation and follow through of these objectives.

Change is coming faster than ever before and the pace of change will continue to accelerate. It will be essential for law firm administrators/managers to establish and maintain an open dialog and to communicate to staff that keeping up with change is their job, not an exception to their job. On the other hand, strong law firm leadership will be required to envision, implement and manage changes, such as that envisioned by a Client Service Team approach.

The once predictable and stable law firm environment is a thing of the past. Changes in the global market labor force, level of client expectations and advances in technology will provide law firms with the opportunity to distinguish themselves as providers of superior client service through a new approach to effective use of qualified support personnel.



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## Quest for the Paperless Office

### One solo shares how he went digital.

*by Norman Gregory Fernandez*

When I began practicing law and the cases started tolling in, I discovered that I had many problems that needed to be resolved before I could efficiently practice law. How do I keep track of all of my cases so I don't miss deadlines? How do I do the legal pleadings for the cases that I handle? How do I keep track of and manage the thousands of incoming and outgoing documents? How do I manage and keep evidence for the cases I handle? These questions go on and on.

In the beginning, I experimented with various combinations of computer and paper filing systems. I found that it was virtually impossible to keep track of everything, and that I was spending too much time managing the paper and computer files instead of doing what was most important, practicing law.

I hired a secretary to keep track of my filing system and a paralegal to help with the pleadings and

research, but I found that without an efficient way to resolve the above-mentioned problems, I would undoubtedly fail in some area of my practice.

I spent many hours and thousands of dollars trying to find an efficient way to handle the many issues involved in operating my law office. I soon realized that I could computerize my files in a way in which any of the tasks that I needed to accomplish could be one with a click of a mouse, I could efficiently and profitably practice law without having to hire additional personnel.

The solution I came up with was simple; computerize everything in my law office, and only use paper files for original pleadings, evidence and signature documents. I knew that in running my office in this way, I could compete with major law firms on a level playing field, without having to hire additional support personnel.

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## **Step One**

### **Case and File Management**

The first thing that I did was search for a computerized case management system that could handle the many tasks that I needed to accomplish. After looking into the features and prices of many different programs, I decided that a program called Gryphons, Law Office and Case Management System would be the perfect solution for my many needs. With Gryphon I have: (1) detailed client accounts management; (2) detailed case management; (3) incoming and outgoing document management; (4) automatic document assembly directly into my word processor (Microsoft Word 97); (5) rules-based calendar management; (6) phone management, both incoming and outgoing, with timer; and (7) detailed billing management and reports. Gryphon has allowed me to substantially become a paperless office without having to rely upon many different programs. Gryphon itself has solved most of the problems that I faced.

Next, I needed the ability to scan documents and images into my system so that the scanned items were readily accessible with the click of a mouse. I found that there are basically two types of scanners on the market, sheet-fed and flatbed. I found that I needed both. I use my sheet-fed scanner, a Visioner PaperPort, to input incoming pleadings, letters and evidence in paper form. My flat-bed scanner, a Umax Astra 600p is used for legal size documents and other items that cannot be fed directly into my PaperPort scanner.

With both scanners, I am able to scan incoming documents and evidence directly into my case management system, and then attach appropriate information about the document on a paper slip within Gryphon, (e.g., document type, who it is from, date received, etc.). I can then access the scanned document directly with the click of a button.

## **Step Two**

### **Capturing Evidence**

Another requirement I felt that needed to be addressed in my paperless law office was the ability to capture pictures, video and audio into my computer. I found that many of my cases involved evidence in picture form, or evidence that needed to be photographed to help prove my case. In addition, I wanted to have the ability to audio tape and video-

tape depositions for use at trial, and have that information readily accessible to me on my computer.

I first addressed the audio problem by looking at the various PC sound systems on the market. My main concern in this area was having the ability to record and playback CD-quality recordings from my personal computer. My second concern was to be able to input and instantly recall sound bites from my law office management system for use in court or trial preparation.

I decided on a sound system from SIIG called the SoundWave 128 PCI because of its high-quality input and playback capability. Furthermore, this system came bundled with programs that gave me the capability of copying and pasting segments of recording for instant recall at my leisure.

I then addressed the video problem by looking at the various PC video systems on the market. I found that some video capture devices use a standard parallel printer port, others come with a separate PCI or ISA card, and others use the new USB (universal serial bus) connection. I decided that I needed an input device with a standard video input connection because I wanted to be able to input videotape depositions directly into my PC from either a VCR or camcorder. I also wanted to be able to take high-quality pictures with this device and input them directly into my case management system for later viewing at the office or in court.

After looking at the various options, I decided on a video-input system and camera from Best Date. The package came bundled with a best Date video capture and output device, and a high-resolution camera. The package also included the Ulead Studio 2 video software suite. This package gives me the ability to record video from a VCR, Camcorder, or the Best Data Camera, directly onto my PC. The package also gives me the ability to output video to a television, monitor or VCR.

The Studio 2 software from Ulead gives me the ability to make studio quality video presentations directly from my PC. With this software I can create professional quality demonstrative videos with sound for use in court. The software also gives me the ability to copy and paste portions of videotaped depositions and capture digital pictures of evidence directly into my PC for use in court.

Recording audio and video on my PC requires vast amounts of disk space. I found that a CD Recorder would be the perfect solution to this dilemma

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because it would allow me to record all of the video and audio that I needed on inexpensive CD-ROMs. I chose an Acer CRW-6206A CD-Rewriter for this task.

### **Step three**

#### **Creating a Virtual Library**

The next aspect of my paperless law office was the implementation of a computerized law library. I especially wanted the ability to copy and paste statutes and citations directly into my legal pleadings and briefs.

I decided to implement a combination of CD-ROM and online resources, to fulfill my computerized law library requirements. The CD's provide a ready access to substantive and topical materials, while the online service gives the ability to instantly check electronic resources for up-to-date changes in precedents and law.

I currently have a library of 90 plus CD-ROMs from the West Group, Matthew Bender and other providers. My library encompasses titles from federal to state, including many different practice guides. Some of my computerized law library requires a monthly subscription payment, while others require annual update payments.

I chose Lexis-Nexis as my online library provider. Lexis-Nexis has a fixed-fee monthly payment setup that allows me to budget my online time. Furthermore, Lexis-Nexis has Shepard's online, the standard in the legal world for checking case status.

Most of my CD-ROM library consists of a system from the West Group named Premise. This system lets me store my library on hard disk – it's convenient and allows for faster searches than running directly from the CD.

I currently have 20 GB of hard disk space on my computer, which consists of one EIDE 6.4 GB

Seagate hard disk and one EIDE 13.5 GB Maxtor hard disk. I still have plenty of room on my hard disks for data, even after installing a substantial portion of my law library.

Another portion of my law library consists of a system from the West Group called LawDesk. This system must be run from the CD-ROM. For this system I have installed two NEC 6x4 CD-ROM jukeboxes for access to up to eight CD-ROM titles at one time.

One dilemma I still face is that I can't access all of the titles in my library without manually inserting a CD-ROM at some point or another. I am in the process of searching for an inexpensive CD-ROM server, which will allow me to install and mount all of my CD-ROMs. I am, however, quite satisfied with my computerized law library because it has greatly decreased my research time and made me a more efficient attorney.

### **The Inevitability of Paper**

My quest to create a paperless law office has not been easy. It has involved much research and many pitfalls. I must admit that a major problem with such a system is the computer itself. If my computer fails, my entire practice is down. To account for this I have to regularly backup all of my data.

I still have a paper law library with titles such as West Federal reporter, Federal Supplements, and the West California Reporter; however, they are now used primarily for decorating my law office.

There are some paper titles, however, that I still use frequently, such as Black's Law dictionary.

Overall, however, my paperless law office has helped to level the playing field between my solo practice and the major law firms, and helped decrease my overhead to an extent where substantial profitability can be achieved with minimal outside resources.



## Highlights

### Executive Committee Meetings

#### April 2, 1999

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- Work on the Legal Tech Show 1999 is in high gear. It is expected there will be 31 vendors participating this year and perhaps a total of 125 participants from law firms.
- Newsletter Editor Steve Hutchinson announced deadlines for Spring, Summer and Fall editions and thanked members for their forwarding of suggested articles to him. He asked that any member who runs across an article in another publication that they think would be worthy for the newsletter to please send it. Prior editions of the newsletter are being scanned into the computer for inclusion in the LPMS web site.
- LPMS will be making a presentation at the Oregon State Bar Convention in September. The Bar has assigned us the same presentation slot as last time, 4:00 p.m. on Friday with the Section Reception meeting to be held immediately after. We expect to use the same format of quick tips as was used the last time with very good results. Volunteers to speak at the Convention include David Daniel, Rob LeChevallier, David O'Brien and Steve Hutchinson. Carol Wilson will coordinate the session and the reception.
- Carol Decker reported that the Section now has 240 members. There has been increased interest in membership after our seminar.
- Scott Palmer reported that Jeff Ouderkirk and Bradley Wall have resigned from the Executive Committee. The Nominating Committee will suggest replacements.

#### May 14, 1999

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- John Cummins, Mark Oldenburg and Mary Sauer reported on the ALA conference which was held in Chicago. Topics included globalization of legal practice, formation of strategic alliances, and changes in staffing requirements. The ALA white paper on staffing was particularly good and will be submitted to the newsletter for publication (Ed. Note: it's printed as lead article this edition).
- David O'Brien reported on the Legal Tech Show '99. Registration was not at our projected 125 so that was disappointing. The presentations were excellent. Many, many donated door prizes were given out to the delight of all attending. Many participants reported they found it extremely helpful in planning for computer and software upgrades at their offices, particularly with regard to expectations for future improvements.
- Scott Palmer reported on a proposed joint program with the Business Law Section and the Computer Law Section for a section meeting in October 1999 with three tracks, including documentation by technology in business deals, globalization and strategic alliances, and budgeting for technology. This is still in the planning stage.
- Carol Wilson reported on the LPMS Section meeting and CLE at the OSB Convention. We will have the use of three meeting rooms. Hand-out materials from the speakers must be submitted by August 9.
- The Committee welcomed Craig K. Edwards from Bend as a new member of the Executive Committee. The Committee is used to having members telecommute for meetings but it is suggested that members should attend personally at least one meeting in four. Scott also indicated that nominations for officers for next year must be published in the newsletter in time for elections to take place in August of this year.
- Rob LeChavellier reported on the progress of the internship program which his law firm has initiated.
- Scott Palmer distributed materials regarding a potential curriculum for a Lawyering 101 seminar. David Daniels noted that the outline is similar to a program that is offered at Willamette University School of Law. It was suggested that a program could alternate live among the three law schools with the program being presented via television at the other schools on their off years. This is still under study and will be worked on more later.

**L**aw Practice management Section of the Oregon State Bar emphasizes the administration and managerial side of the profession of practicing law with the following mission:

1. To assist sole practitioners and lawyers in small, medium size, and large law firms to develop better law practice and firm management skills.
2. To enable law firms to improve their profitability in a competitive environment.
3. To help lawyers and law firms adapt to technological change.
4. To assist lawyers and law firms to improve their client service, professionalism, civility and the attorney-client relationship.
5. To provide national law office management resources to members of the section.
6. To work closely with the Oregon Legal Management Association, The Professional Liability Fund, the Young Lawyers Section and the emerging Sole Practitioners and Small Firm Section in realizing such goals.

**O**regon Legal Management Association (OLMA) is a volunteer organization working to provide educational opportunities to managerial/administrative personnel in law firms. The Oregon State Bar and OLMA have worked together for many years in the presentation of CLE programs and the promotion of management awareness in attorneys. OLMA serves approximately 100 members across the state.

**A**ssociation of Legal Administrators (ALA) is a national organization of which OLMA is a chapter. Like OLMA, ALA provides educational opportunities for both attorneys and legal administrative/managerial staff including conferences, educational materials and publications. ALA serves approximately 7,800 members internationally.



## **Annual Meeting and Executive Committee Meetings**

June 25 at Bend  
August 6 at Eugene  
September 17 at Seaside/ OSB Annual Meeting

Bulk Rate  
US Postage  
PAID  
Portland, OR  
Permit #341

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**Law Practice Management Section**  
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