

## TECHNOLOGY

MIS (Management of Information Services), along with a special staff committee convened to assess the needs of The Missouri Bar web site, devoted most of the first quarter of 2005 to preparation for a complete redesign of the site.

Set to roll out in the fourth quarter of 2005, the new web site constitutes the first revamping of the site in eight years. The new site's primary benefit for members of the bar and the general public will include significant improvements in ease of navigation and access to information. The primary benefit to the bar's staff will be a dramatic reduction in time spent on maintenance of the site, which will allow the staff to concentrate on providing dynamic content for the site on a timely basis.

The highlight of the redesign will feature an improved "find a lawyer" page of the site, which should dramatically increase online location of lawyers by the general public. Accordingly, a campaign to increase lawyer participation in the bar's online service will precede the rollout of the new site.

The Missouri Bar's aging servers were also replaced in early 2005, both in preparation for the demands of the new web site and the increasing in-house use of electronic storage of archival information.

Most of the information used by the bar is in a database that is shared with the Supreme Court of Missouri. The database resides on a server located at The Missouri Bar. Members of the Supreme Court staff access this server via a high-speed direct connection. Due to the proximity of the Court building, this connection costs less than an ordinary phone line.

Changes made at the Supreme Court to a member's record (address, dues category, dues payment status, etc.) are instantaneous. This data, along with virtually every bit of information on a member, is immediately available on the bar's website.

Providing data to the web site and developing interactive pages for the web has become the primary use of technology at the state bar. Recent additions in that area have included:

- Dues payment status, and the ability to print a copy of a member's dues statement from the web site.
- A revamped committee page that provides a real-time count of the number of members on a committee, the number on the committee's list server, and one-click access (for bar members only) to the complete list of members of a committee and members of the list-server. Bar members can quickly join a committee from this site as well.
- Online surveys – first the "Billable Hours Methods" survey demonstrated that response can be overwhelming in number and that members' response to online surveys is likely to be astonishingly quick. The fact that no staff time is required to enter response data provides a tremendous productivity boost. Response data is instantly available for analysis. This process has proven so productive that the CLE department routinely generates a "survey" and uses it to input evaluations of MoBar CLE programs.
- Online MCLE reporting – the most data-intensive project on the web site. This area draws historical, member-specific information from the database, and facilitates input of new information that is recorded and maintained on the bar's server. In its third year, the

reporting site has been extensively redesigned, and now provides a year-by-year summary of each of the three years in the current MCLE cycle.

Practically every technology issue at the bar now involves a database and the Internet. Current projects involve placing documents and images in a database in such a manner that some publications can be concurrently developed for traditional print and for display on the web site.

Even projects that do not directly involve the bar's web site most often rely on an exchange of information via the Internet. The Missouri Bar's weekly electronic newsletter, *Esq.*, is available via a link on the web site, but is actually delivered via e-mail. Each week's delivery is monitored, with failed deliveries recorded in a database. After a number of deliveries fail to reach a member, a fax is sent (via the Internet) notifying the member that *Esq.* is not reaching the e-mail address of record. Such close monitoring of "snail-mail" delivery of a printed publication would be prohibitive due to staff time. In the environment of databases and the practically free of cost delivery method of the Internet, it is a trivial event.

Since existing systems are sufficiently robust to allow an astonishing array of services to be provided to bar members, deliberation of uses of technology can now focus on what *should* be done instead of what *can* be done. The absence of information can limit the use of resources, but those who are involved in deciding what might be significant can now focus on priorities rather than details. For instance, due to careful selection of historical information, highly-targeted marketing of CLE publications has been developed. A dramatic reduction in the cost of marketing has not been accompanied by a reduction in sales. Rather, sales have remained consistent with historical levels. Careful consideration is being given to a phased-in approach to electronic delivery of CLE program marketing similar to the publication marketing approach.

The use of technology at the bar involves an awareness of what seems to be an almost infinite list of what is available, before careful selection of what is most useful. A small group of directors whose involvement in scheduled events comprises a significant portion of their daily routine makes use of personal digital assistants. These small devices are integrated with the e-mail, calendar and contact information software in place at the bar, allowing these staff members access to all of the information listed above while they are out of the office. Recent enhancements to these PDAs allow them to function as a complete repository for PowerPoint presentations, eliminating the need and expense of taking a laptop on the road.

Most consideration of future uses of technology involve more consideration of policy than technology. We *can* conduct elections for the Board of Governors via the Internet, but *should* we? We *can* accept dues payments online, but is it worth the attendant increase in the cost of collection?

A continued focus on providing data-based interactive services on the web site and through electronic information seems to be an obvious path for the immediate future. A judicious selection of subjects to be surveyed via the Internet also seems to be in order, since member response has been enthusiastic.

However, most widely adopted uses of technology are rarely foreseen. Accordingly, a bar staff technology committee periodically convenes to review current technology and discuss potential uses of technology.