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# JIS Roadmap Bulletin

A monthly newsletter keeping the court community and justice partners informed on the modernization of Washington State's Judicial Information System

Premier edition

September 2006

## Who's steering the ship? Meet new Information Services Director, Tim Bates

When he walked away from his small Iowa farm town about 40 years ago, Tim Bates had no other plans than to take in the big-city life of Chicago.

He couldn't know that soon after landing a job at a bank, an off-hand request from a supervisor would steer him into a lifelong career that would eventually take him to Bosnia and to Washington State's Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

Bates arrived early in August as the new Director of Information Services for AOC, with his primary mission to manage the extensive upgrade of the Judicial Information System (JIS) to better serve the needs of the state's courts.

"I saw this as an opportunity to keep working in an area I find interesting," said Bates, who has just returned from overseeing installation of a case management system for Bosnian courts, but has spent most of his career managing information technology (IT) in the corporate world.

"I'm very pleased with the reception I've had, but also the dedication and willingness to make changes that I've seen here," he said.

Bates landed in the IT universe in 1967 when a supervisor at his bank job designated him to visit the 10-bank data

center several miles away each night to check the bank's work and bring it back.

It was like stepping into a different world.

"I was hooked. It was something new every day. Computers were science fiction at its best, and I recognized they

were the future," he said. "I'd spend whole nights there, just watching what was happening."

From then on, Bates would learn and grow along with the information technology field itself, while working within it.

There were no IT college curriculums for him to take in the 1960s. When the Army drafted him, a question on his paperwork asked if he had computer experience.

"I checked that box really big," he

laughs.

So he furthered his IT knowledge for two years in the Army, and was released to keep working on it in the private sector. He worked mostly in banking and finance, and later became director of operations for Best Buy.

Bates "semi-retired" from Best Buy when he felt he wasn't learning anything new in the corporate world, spending his time golfing, fishing and consulting. A friend asked him to help for about six weeks with an IT contract in Montenegro, and Bates



*Tim Bates, new Director of Information Services for the Administrative Office of the Courts.*

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## Q & A with new ISD Director, Tim Bates

**Q:** *How did you view the task of overseeing modernization of Washington's JIS when you first considered joining the AOC?*

**A:** I have to say that the challenge is a big one, not so much because of what has happened in the past, but where we need to go in the future. Government, along with the AOC, was a little slow to start the transition to modern IT systems. That's not unusual. You get a good IT structure to support you and you get a little complacent, and pretty soon the structure isn't as supportive as it was or needs to be. At the same time, the industry and technology are changing rapidly around you.

**Q:** *What differences have you noticed between IT in the commercial and public sectors?*

**A:** Government agencies have been much more conservative in their demands of what IT can provide. They scheduled their investments over a much longer time — four, five, six years. Commercial IT was changing more rapidly. Now, government is realizing what the rapid changes can do to enhance their abilities and services. Where government is now, the commercial world was 10 to 15 years ago.

**Q:** *How has this affected the AOC's current need to overhaul its JIS?*

**A:** Here there was a little bit of a tendency to over-

commit to the big steps without understanding the little steps needed to get there. We will make sure there's a plan that builds on the small steps needed to accomplish the big ones.

**Q:** *What first steps do you have in mind?*

**A:** Communication and trust are the core of any change, especially when things haven't gone as people would have liked to see them go for the last few years. We will build communication vehicles to make sure it happens. This change directly affects everyone out there. They're our customers. If we're not communicating with them, we'd likely make the wrong changes.

**Q:** *How many changes are we talking about?*

**A:** This organization will now constantly be changing. There will be constant upgrades. There will be an immediate refocus of direction. There will be changes and new requirements every day.

**Q:** *Any advice for weathering these changes?*

**A:** It's important for everyone to know that there are no silver bullets or magic wands in the IT world. It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to keep an IT organization aligned to its users. There is a lot of energy and commitment here to do just that, and we will build on that to make sure Washington courts have the IT system they need to support the important work they do.

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### **(Meet Tim Bates, cont. from page 1)**

thought it sounded interesting — though he admits he at first thought it was an island in the Caribbean rather than a country next to Bosnia.

"I fell in love with it," he says. "The country and the opportunity to have such a dramatic impact on the people."

Bates ended up staying for nearly two years, then moving on to help oversee development of a case management system for Bosnian courts.

It was then that staff at the National Center for State Courts got to know of him. And when Washington's AOC began looking for an Information Services Director, the National Center suggested Tim apply for the position.

"It seemed like an ideal way to come back to the U.S.," Bates said, because he had enjoyed working with the Bosnian court system, and because "Washington has always been a favorite of mine."

He and his wife — who have two children and a new grandson — also have many family members in Washington and Oregon.

Though most of his experience has come through the commercial sector, Bates said he had no hesitation in joining the AOC as it overhauls the statewide Judicial Information System.

"The basic principles of change are the same," he said. "This absolutely can be done. There's a high energy level here in wanting to make the change, and no change agent can ask for any more than that."

## JIS then and now: From Migration to Roadmap

If you're a court worker or someone who partners with the courts in another justice-related field, you're likely familiar with the Judicial Information System (JIS) — a statewide court case management and information delivery system.

But what's all this talk about migrations and roadmaps? And what's being done to catch the system up with current technology?

Actually, the terms "migration" and "roadmap" describe the work over the past few years to transition the large and complex JIS into a modern system that better serves the needs of the courts and its justice partners.

Plans for that transition have shifted in a new direction, and this monthly JIS Roadmap Bulletin will be one vehicle for keeping users of the system informed of what is happening.

The JIS was built piecemeal beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, with different applications serving different court levels, but with a structure that electronically consolidated statewide court case information.

Technology and court needs changed rapidly. In 2001 the Judicial Information System Committee (JISC), which oversees the JIS, approved a plan to "migrate" the old text-based applications to a modern Web-based platform.

This would provide for better data sharing and access to information along with easier enhancements, corrections and changes to business processes.

So the plan to modernize the JIS became known as the "Migration."

The approximately \$45 million project was expected to take about six years if funding from the state legislature kept pace. A number of important upgrades were completed, including replacement of the Appellate Court Records and Data System (ACORDS), replacement of JUVIS with the Juvenile and Corrections System (JCS), implementation of an improved Judicial Receipting System (JRS), and establishment of data exchange with the Secretary of State's office.

As the Migration was about to move into the next major phase in 2005 — an in-house rewrite of all case management systems — the JIS Committee requested an outside review of the project to ensure that the direction being taken was still valid.

The importance of the statewide system, changes in technology, the inherent risk in large technological projects, and the individualized nature of the different court levels across the state all called for a review.

The Gartner Group, an internationally known consulting firm with an expertise in large technology projects, was chosen for the evaluation. After months of

work, interviews at multiple levels of operations, and extensive review of the project's resources, goals, costs and risks, the Gartner Group confirmed that the JIS project was crucial and a modernized case management system was needed to support the needs of the courts.

However, the Gartner Group also found that the Migration goal — a single, fully integrated system built by the AOC — was too large to be realistic, measurable or achievable.

Essentially, the goal to be all things to all courts was putting the project at high risk.

In late 2005, the Gartner Group recommended that the Migration be carved into distinct priority projects needed to support the courts — core case management, access to court information collected by the JIS, and the ability to share information between courts and justice agencies — with more input from the courts, definitive timelines, budgets and success factors to build on.

The new direction would shift the Migration plan from building a single management system for the whole state, to focusing instead on the JIS as a "data integrator" enabling disparate systems to exchange data.

The new direction would also turn to outside vendors to supply software components of an integrated system, rather than AOC staff building a system.

The JIS Committee voted to approve the new direction, and in early 2006, the "Migration" became the "Roadmap."

Recent steps taken include:

- **The AOC's Information Services Division** has been reorganized for better management of the new strategy, including creation of a distinct unit to focus solely on improving availability of information to the courts and public.
- **A Data Exchange Steering Committee** has been established to set criteria and priorities for the exchange of information among courts and criminal justice partners.
- **A Core Case Management Steering Committee** has been established. It has begun planning for a request-for-proposal to acquire a case management system.
- **A Reporting and Information Access Steering Committee** has been created to increase information available via the Washington Courts Web site.
- **AOC will request funding** for the 2007-09 biennium to acquire a case management system, to support development of an integrated architecture for the case management system and for data exchanges, and support further development of the public data warehouse.

## In the spotlight: Juvenile and Corrections System (JCS) now operating statewide

Last year, Clark County Juvenile Court staff members operated with limited information about a youth's status, detention or sanctions because the Juvenile Information System (JUVIS) did not provide it in a meaningful way.

Juvenile court detention and probation staff struggled to determine if juvenile offenders had warrants for their arrest, would not know for certain what they look like, or if their parents had contact with the justice system.

In August of 2005, Clark County became one of the early counties in the state to convert from JUVIS to the new Juvenile and Corrections System (JCS). The JCS is a major component of the effort to better serve the needs of courts and judges.

As of June, all juvenile courts in the state had completed a conversion to JCS, an important step in the modernization of the JIS.

"We've come a long way in improving the JIS, and we have a lot of work left to do. This milestone reminds us that we are making good progress in the challenging transition from old to new," said Washington State Court Administrator, Janet McLane.

The JCS was developed to support the unique needs of juvenile departments, standardizing data and enabling statewide data sharing with JIS, local court systems and other justice agencies.

The new system is Web-based — much more user-friendly than the old code-driven system — and eliminates the need for multiple entries of the same data.

The JCS began development in 2002, with pilot conversions starting in May of 2005 in Yakima and Walla Walla/Columbia, and then statewide conversion continuing from there.

### 'Ten times' more information

"They had to do something. JUVIS was actually not doing much for us," said Gary Ripley, Intake Manager for Clark County Juvenile Court.

Ripley has been with the juvenile court for 36 years, and worked with the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) on development of the old JUVIS system, as well as participating in his court's conversion to the JCS — which was not an easy transition, he said.

Data could not easily be moved from the old system to the new system, so initially court staff

members worked a lot of overtime "doing a lot of data correction instead of just data entry...It was painful."

There was also a steep learning curve as staff members left the old system to learn the new one. "If you compared us to a year ago, it's 100 percent better," Ripley said.

He knows some recently-converted counties are still struggling with the transition. "The whole state is not all the way up to speed. They're having the problems we had six months ago."

And now?

"It's worth the frustration and time," Ripley said. "JCS has 10 times more information and it's in English, not coded. With JUVIS, if you didn't know the code for something, you couldn't interpret the information. Now it says 'Guilty' on it, instead of 'CSP' or some other code."

Staff members can view information on the youth who may have had district or municipal court contacts, can view mug shots to verify that the description in the file matches, can find out if the youth is currently in detention, can check for warrants and upcoming hearings for the youth or the parents, see the sanctions that were imposed and more.

"We didn't know if someone had a warrant unless you read the entire criminal history and knew the codes, and now there's this thing in red with a yellow background that says, 'Warrant'," Ripley said. "The JCS system can do a lot more."

Ripley believes that enhancements to the program's "Sentencing Worksheet" and other enhancements planned for the system will keep improving its usefulness for juvenile departments. A significant future improvement to the JCS will be a probation case management component.

The next step for the JCS involves providing notification to the Juvenile Department when a previously sealed record qualifies to be unsealed, and a JCS "Batch Add" feature.

One goal of the JCS was to reduce double data entry between County Clerks and juvenile departments, and one Clerk finds that "case entry goes much quicker."

"It is much easier with the juvenile offender filings, as long as we are provided the referral number from the juvenile department," said Skamania County Clerk, Rena Hollis. "It takes coordination, but it works well."