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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

Third Edition

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“Pong” and Core Case Management Systems Have Come a Long Way

You might remember: Polyester shirts, the Bay City Rollers, “Rocky” in the theaters, and someone in your neighborhood showing off the first home video game console with a goofy game called “Pong” sending a little white blip across a black screen.

Apple was selling its computer with 16K of RAM and no monitor for \$1,195, and the first computer spreadsheet program created became hugely popular almost overnight. No one had heard of anything called a World Wide Web, and court business was starting to drown in paper and the time it took to process it all.

You probably wouldn't have known then—about 1976—that the Washington State court system was already building statewide case management systems for its diverse court levels. Court officials decided quickly that the new computer technologies could electronically consolidate statewide court case information for the different levels.

The information in stacks and reams of paper court files could be stored in these systems and even be shared to a certain extent. The systems—JUVIS, ACORDS, DISCIS and SCOMIS—helped unify an essentially non-unified court system.

It was great at the time.

“You could put a bunch of data in and get a lot of data out, and that was the basis of the systems,” said Tim Bates, Director of Information Services for the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC).

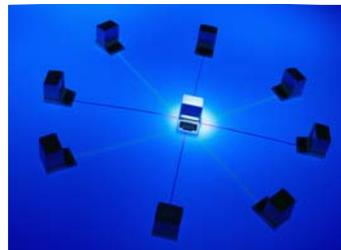
As “Pong” gave way to “Donkey Kong” and video games with color graphics and sophisticated capabilities, computer systems and Internet capabilities advanced rapidly. The AOC upgraded the case management systems of Washington courts to add as many new functions as possible with the rapidly changing technology.

Now AOC is working to bring the next generation of core case management systems to Washington courts. The Judicial Information System Committee (JISC) is in the preliminary stages of issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to acquire a new system, with a goal of having a vendor and system selected by summer of 2007.

Just as Pong no longer thrills the neighborhood, the older case management systems can no longer meet the needs of busy Washington courts, which want and need their systems to do more.

For instance, even five years ago, a judge would not have expected to know that a defendant before the court currently on probation in another county. Now the judge knows that information is in the computer system somewhere, and wants it available right away.

“Today the data is required to do a lot more,” Bates said. “There are bigger demands on who sees the data and when they see it. The information is in the system, but it's not easily shared.”



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How much more?

The new core case management systems on the market today do much more than store data—they help workers manage the tasks that must follow the data.

For instance, each court case begins with a case filing that is entered into the system. In the old systems, nothing more happened without human intervention.

The new systems can be programmed to help manage the processes that are triggered by a case filing — called “**workflow management.**” The system can recognize the type of case filing and from there, automatically generate a case number, schedule hearings (finding the next available date), assign judges and courtrooms and generate notices to different parties.

The systems can record time and activities on cases, attach documents and/or evidence, link related cases, share information in real time (Web-based), automatically generate case summaries, along with helping manage calendars, dockets, compliance activities, disposition, accounting and receipting, and more.

Many of these functions can be customized to Washington’s different court levels and their individual needs.

“There will be latitude in how the new core case management system is configured for each court level,” Bates said, “though the core system will be based on one model.”

With a modern case management system, Washington courts will be able to reduce training, because of a user-friendly system; reduce redundant data entry and errors; improve real-time access to and distribution of judicial decisions; reduce time spent maintaining tables; and reduce costs per case and time per case—which will provide better service to court customers.

“When the JIS systems were first implemented, we were distrustful of computers. We didn’t want the computer thinking for us,” said Cathy Grindle, director of court technology for King County District Court, a member of the JISC. “We don’t have that luxury anymore. We need the power of the software to do some of the work that we have historically done manually.”

Learning what courts need

Along with analyzing workflow management needs, the AOC and the JIS Core Case Management System Steering Committee will use “**business process engineering**” to adapt processes to a new case management system.

It’s critical to document case management processes in order to know what a new case management system must do to be of the most help to a court.

The Core Case Management System Steering Committee has also worked with court focus groups around the state, completed consolidation workshops, and hosted four workshops around Washington to validate core case management system requirements before issuing an RFP.

What’s next?

Under the guidance of the JISC, the AOC will select a vendor and a core case management system that is the best fit for Washington courts. “The vendors and the systems are out there right now. It’s a, growing market,” Bates said.

After acquiring a system, AOC and the JISC will conduct demonstration projects, implement the system in one or more pilot courts and begin statewide implementation. Current plans call for complete statewide implementation in four years or less.

“After the new system is acquired, change has to happen rapidly because court needs and technology are always evolving,” Bates said.

Acquisition of a new core case management system is a key component of the JIS Roadmap—

the plan to modernize the JIS system for Washington courts. Two other new steering committees are also currently operating under the Roadmap plan: The Information Access Steering Committee and the Data Exchange Steering Committee.

Articles on the work of the other steering committees will follow in upcoming Bulletins.

A modern case management system “is where information is centralized and managed, with the ability to share it between courts and other agencies,” Bates said. “This is the foundation of the Roadmap.”

Core Case Management System Steering Committee Members

- **Cathy Grindle**, Chair, Director of Court Technology for King County District Court
- **Jeff Amram**, Clark County District Court Administrator
- **Barbara Brown**, Seattle Municipal Court
- **Lorena Hollis**, Skamania County Clerk
- **Judge Elaine Houghton**, Court of Appeals Division II
- **Richard Johnson**, Court of Appeals Division I Clerk/Administrator
- **Patty King**, Chelan County District Court Administrator
- **Barbara Miner**, King County Clerk
- **Sharon Paradis**, Benton County Juvenile Court Administrator
- **Judge Glenn Phillips**, Kent Municipal Court
- **Judge Chip Small**, Chelan County Superior Court
- **Manny Najarro**, AOC, Program Manager

Tips and Tidbits:

Top Answers From the eService Center

The eService Center made its debut on the Inside Courts Web site (<http://inside.courts.wa.gov>) in October 2004. As of press time, there have been 71,103 internal (from court workers) visits to the center to find answers to thousands of court-related questions.

The eService Center has recently become more popular due in large part to the *Most Frequently Accessed Questions* section, which has been streamlined to provide quick and accurate answers to users. October's top three frequently accessed questions from the court community are listed below:

Top Questions From Court Workers

1. Resetting my JIS password

Washington State court employees with a valid JIS RACF (mainframe) user ID and password may use a self-service facility to reset their passwords. The Inside Courts Web site home page includes a "Reset Your Password" link located in the security box on the upper right side of the Inside Courts home page (<http://inside.courts.wa.gov>). Inside Courts is a Web site created and maintained for the court community.

2. Ordering court printer supplies

Printer supply orders are accepted online from the "Court Resources" page on the Inside Courts home page. Simply click on "Court Resources," "Court Management" and "Court Supplies."

3. Calculating a date in the future to schedule hearings, payments, etc.

Enter "Calculating a date in the future" in the search bar to retrieve Future Date Lists and links to more information. If those resources do not answer your question, use the "Ask an Expert" tab on the eService Center home page and select Topic 3, Case Management. From there you can enter your question in the Question Data area and click "Submit to AOC."

Have questions about this newsletter?

If you have questions or suggestions for future content, please contact Jayme Taylor at jayme.taylor@courts.wa.gov or (360) 704-4027

Information Services Division Welcomes New Deputy Director

The AOC Information Services Division welcomed Stephen Comfort-Mason as Deputy Director in October.

Comfort-Mason is a native of St. Louis, Missouri, and holds bachelor's degrees in Political Science and English Writing. He has been working in the technological industry for nearly 40 years. Before that, he got his start in broadcast journalism covering political and governmental affairs.

Most recently, Comfort-Mason served in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the U.S. Department of Justice working to implement a comprehensive project for assistance to the courts and prosecutors' offices countrywide.



Comfort-Mason joined the ISD team in October

At the AOC, Comfort-Mason has been working with ISD staff on the implementation of the JIS Roadmap and can be reached at (360) 705-5236, or via e-mail at stephen.comfort-mason@courts.wa.gov.