Ensuring Access to Justice, aiding in Expedition and Timeliness and assisting the Court's Accountability

Information and Communications Technology
VIEW

The Information Systems (IS) Unit continued to support the activities of the organisation during the past year. The staff complement remained the same while the demands of the organisation grew and kept the Unit busy. The Courtroom technology solutions remained the highlight of the numerous tours of the CCJ. It showed the use of technology as a solution to support the operations within the courtroom and the organisation.

STAFFING

In January 2008, Ms. Natalia Redman joined the Information Systems Unit as the Information Systems Clerk. Ms. Redman functions at both the technical and clerical level and provides support to the Information Systems Manager and the Unit.

Ms. Lavaughn Agard together with Ms. Sonia Thompson provide support to all end users at the Court. They support the organisation’s activities by:

- Maintaining the technological operations in the Courtroom;
- Providing support for end users including troubleshooting and
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repairing hardware and software;
- Researching new technology;
- Implementing new projects;
- Providing training for new and existing technology; and
- Providing support for projects undertaken by units within the organisation including the newly created Regional Public Education and Communications Unit, whether on or off island.

This team is led by Ms. Carlene Cross, Systems Manager who is supported by Mr. Ayinde Burgess, Systems Administrator.

CONTINUING STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING

Three members of the Information Systems unit attended the Caribbean Association of Court Technology Users (CACTUS) Conference which was held in Nassau, The Bahamas in August 2007. It brought together key court information technology professionals from the region to share and learn over a three day period.

The Information Systems Manager attended the Annual Conference of the International Association of Court Administrators (IACA) in Dublin Ireland in April 2008. This conference allowed for learning sharing and meeting key contacts in international court administration. It also provided contacts in regional court administration who have become valued allies.

The Systems Administrator attended InfoComm in Las Vegas, Nevada in June 2008. This is a premier event highlighting audio and video technology through classes as well as onsite exhibitions. This training is part of the court's effort to provide the necessary skill set to support the technology in the courtroom.

Members of staff were trained in-house in the use of Microsoft Office 2007 which is an upgrade to Office 2003. Sessions were conducted by members of the IS System Support team.

PROJECTS

NETWORK SECURITY

The Unit began the process of implementing the network security system. Significant time was invested in planning and designing the solution so that the Court's data and information is adequately protected from intrusion. As part of this process the Court is also refining the policies related to computer and data security.

CASE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS

In July 2008, the staff of the Registry and Information Systems Unit participated in two weeks of training in an effort to implement Judicial Enforcement Management Solution (JEMS) as the case management information system software solution. Training was conducted onsite by Ms. Vicki Madaras of Professional Computer Software Solutions (PCSS), Texas.

The approach for the implementation of this project at the CCJ was different from other projects for the implementation of case management information systems. The CCJ is a new organisation and as a result there was no need for the conversion of old existing documents as part of the process. An exercise was done to identify all documents filed by attorneys and all documents generated by the Court. The expected workflows were mapped out, based on the Rules of Court in both the Appellate Jurisdiction and the Original Jurisdiction. This key information was required for setting up tables and codes for use at the backend to allow the end users functionality at the front end.

It is expected that during the court's vacation period all existing files will be entered into the system. It is also expected that all matters filed at the start of the new term in October will be entered into the system. A further exercise of training key users in other areas e.g. finance and secretarial support is also planned for the upcoming year. This case management information systems software is the base solution required for the implementation of electronic filing of documents (e-filing) which is expected to be implemented in 2009.
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Registrar and Chief Marshal, Ms. Paula Pierre and Deputy Registrar, Ms. Radha Permanand engrossed in training in the use of JEMS.

Below Left: IS Support Officer, Sonia Thompson setting up the court recording system.

Below Right: The Hon. Mme Justice Bernard together with IS Support Officer, La authoritarian trying her NoteLink pen.

ALTERNATIVE ANNOTATION INPUT DEVICE

The official record of the Court is captured using software that digitally records the audio during the hearing of a court matter. While recording is taking place, time-stamped notes are created using annotation software by the Court Support Officer and Judges in the courtroom. The time stamp created helps with locating points interest in the audio for playback. One method of capture is done using a QWERTY keyboard and for those who are less keyboard familiar there is an option of using a digital pen.

The Notelink System (which was in beta testing by the CCJ and was deployed in 2008) uses a digital pen together with digital paper to capture the handwritten text. This system integrates with the existing For The Record (FTR) software which is used for making an accurate audio and video record of the court’s proceedings. The note is made on the paper and at the end of the proceedings the pen is docked in a cradle. The file stored on the pen is uploaded to the end user’s computer where the handwritten notes can be viewed.

To use the search function the end user refers to the note made and with the CD of the proceedings loaded, can click on the time stamp to hear the reference to the note. To date some judicial officers have been trained in the use of the pen and during the coming year it is expected that additional users will be trained.

PORTABLE COURT RECORDING SOLUTION

The Portable Court Recording solution was purchased to support the court when it sits elsewhere. At this time the solution enables us to capture the audio record of the proceedings not held in the courtroom. It is primarily used for Case Management Conferences (CMC) which are held in the multi-purpose training room at the seat of the Court. While the solution is suitable for moving to various locations within the building for recording the Court’s proceedings it has proven to be less suitable for overseas transport given the new rules that govern air transport. Another portable solution for recording has been identified which will enable the capture of audio and is easier to transport and setup. The Unit will therefore look into the procurement of this device to support the Court’s movement through the region. This will enable the capturing of the record while maintaining portability.