

Heckerling Institute Report

Report #6 - More News on Software Vendors

The following is Report #6 from our on-site reporters regarding some of the highlights from the events and presentations that are taking place at the 34th Annual Philip E. Heckerling Institute on Estate Planning that is being held January 10-14, 1999 at the Fontainebleau Hilton in Miami Beach, Florida.

This Report covers **more news about the software vendors** that are exhibiting at this year's Institute.

This report was filed by on-site reporter, Alan F. Rothschild, Jr. Alan is the current Chairman of the K-2 Technology and Economics Committee of the Probate Division of the ABA Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section.

Alan reports that the Miami Institute always boasts a large number of vendors displaying their latest wares, but that perhaps the biggest news this week is not a vendor's new product, but the lack of one.

RIA, which for the last couple of years spend much of its energy at Miami on the **Wealth Transfer Planning** system, turned the system back over to its originator, **The Technology Group**, in December. RIA will instead focus its efforts on its Internet research product, **Checkpoint**.

CCH's primary focus is also on its **Internet research services**. As CCH and RIA have each built comprehensive web-based research services, many practitioners might find the pricing for these services so great that they must choose a single vendor, rather than continuing to enjoy the luxury of multiple tax research services, and many solos and small firms (who make up over 50% of the membership of the ABA and the Real Property, Probate and Trust Law Section) are simply no longer able to afford to pay for and use many of these tax services.

[**Editor's Note:** Apparently these tax research service publishers have not yet embraced the rather novel but welcome reverse pricing structure that companies like **VersusLaw** (<http://www.versuslaw.com/>) have been so successful with recently, whereby they charge a mere \$6.95 per month per lawyer to gain access to their entire Internet Web site database of federal and state case law. Now that's what we call "affordable" legal research via the Internet.]

Another interesting trend is that many users are electing to go straight from hard copies of research services to their web products, or are "upgrading" from CD to the web --- not because the web is necessarily better, but because it allows the practitioner to go around their own IT departments, which apparently do not timely load or install the latest versions of research services.

The Technology Group's display focuses on its **Wealth Transfer Planning** system and its upcoming **LawOnTheWeb** on-line research and document preparation system. TTG acknowledges the problems WTP has experienced in its recent history, but claims now that the program is back in the hands of its founders, the problems have/will be fixed and the program will soon (2/00?) be accessible over the web. WTP still offers great promise, but I suspect there are many disappointed former subscribers who will not be back soon. [**Editor's Note:** We STILL do not know what the URL is for their new Web site that was suppose to be unveiled on 1/10/00 during the Institute - anyone out there know what it is?]

Unlike prior years, there were a few other exhibitors of "**expert systems**" which include both the document assembly engine, but also prepackaged forms.

These include **Lawgic Publishing**, which released its automated **Florida Wills and Trusts Forms** system in November of 1999. These are the Holland & Knight forms that Ed Koren and Bruce Stone and two other partners of theirs assisted in co-authoring. Diane Balmer-Martin, the Marketing Communications Director for Lawgic Publishing, reports to us that Lawgic announced by Press Release issued on 1/12/00 that it had a record year in 1999. In fact, she says Lawgic doubled its total number of products, grew sales by 78%, and increased customer renewals for its subscription software over 150%. Lawgic claims that it's success in 1999 was due in large part to it's patented software technology - which is only available from Lawgic - which powers all of its products, called **Intelligent LegalTechnology**. This technology provides the platform for what they claim is the only suite of software products that combines a simple Q&A process with legal research, in-depth analysis and dynamic text generation. They claim that these features "expertly guide legal professionals through the creation of comprehensive, customized legal documents." In the Family Law and Estate Planning fields, Lawgic introduced two new Florida-specific products in the 3rd and 4th quarters of 1999, building on their earlier 1998 successes with their **California Wills and Trusts** system and their **Delaware Incorporations** system.. These **new Florida programs** assist Family Law attorneys in the preparation of Marital Settlement Agreements and Estate Planning

practitioners with the creation of state-specific Wills & Trusts documents. More information is available on their Web site at <http://www.lawgic.com/>.

Automated Legal Systems Inc. out of Universal City, Texas, is here demoing its **ProDoc** expert automation program and announced that its automated document authoring program will be available soon. This would allow practitioners to utilize ProDoc to automate any type of repetitive document. ProDoc has developed various **law practice area systems** for states like **Texas** and **Florida**, including Wills and Trusts, **and** a complete **probate practice system** for the State of **Colorado** that is based on and completely automates the use of former Probate Judge Jim Wade's *Colorado Probate Practice Manual*. More information is available on their Web site at <http://www.prodoc.com/>.

One new vendor of estate and probate practice systems, primarily for 9 mid-western states, including **Iowa** and **Illinois**, that is missing from this year's Institute is **Advanced Logic Systems**, the makers of the **Document Production System**. Unfortunately, they do not have a Web site either (at least that we are aware of), but you can contact them by telephone toll-free at (800) 454-7703.

One additional vendor that has been around almost since the beginning, but is also missing from this year's Institute, is **Interactive Professional Software** from Atlanta, Georgia, the makers of the popular and affordable **FastDraft** document assembly engine. We mention this vendor here not only because they have Wills and Trusts drafting systems available for **Georgia** and [through SunBank] **Florida**, but also because **Bank One** has just recently chosen the FastDraft engine to power their new Wills and Trusts drafting system called **The One(r) Source for Wills and Trusts (sm)**. They have state-specific forms libraries available on CD-ROM for 13 states (AZ, IN, OH, UT, CO, KY, OK, WV, FL, MI, TX, WI and IL), and you buy the product one state at a time. The System and one state costs \$399 single user, and each additional state costs \$99 each single user. Separate hard copy Manuals are available for AZ, TX, WI (all CP states) and all the Common Law states. For further information, call (414) 765-2689, as they do not have a Web site at this time, at least for this software, as far as we have been able to determine.

Two exhibits which are attracting a lot of attention this year are **WealthTec** and **estateplanning.com**.

WealthTec is a new player in the forecasting and graphing area, and they are demoing **AdvancedPro Series**, a very sophisticated program with 20 different planning modules divided into 4 general categories for estate planning, charitable planning, qualified plans and executive

compensation. The program's creator was formerly with the national tax department of Ernst & Young and seems to have a strong understanding of the practitioner's wish list of features. More info is available at their website at www.wealthtec.com.

The other busy booth is **Schumacher Publishing's estateplanning.com** website "building and hosting" service. Most well known for its living trust marketing services, Schumacher's estateplanning.com service seems to offer practitioners a rather easy means for establishing a web site presence in the Internet, including selective access to SP's resources on-line, all for a cost of around \$90 per month. More information about this service can be obtained from, and a demo can be viewed at, their Web site at <http://www.estateplanning.com/>.

That's it for Report #6.
