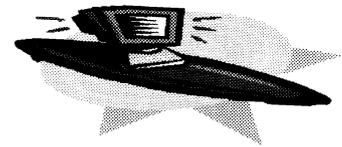


CYBERLEX



THEMIS - LАWNOW

Have you ever heard of THEMIS? For those who have not, THEMIS stands for The Electronic Members Information Service. THEMIS began in about 1997, as a private secure legal network, also known as an "extranet". An extranet, as distinct from the Internet or an intranet, is a business community that uses the Internet as the backbone for communication, commerce and collaboration.

Extranets facilitate the sharing of resources with individuals outside the walls of an individual organisation. In the case of THEMIS, the focus was on the Queensland legal community, their clients and government agencies. At the time THEMIS also provided free access to Queensland Legislation for subscribers (not then available on Austlii). The Queensland Law Foundation was responsible for the management of THEMIS which was designed, as its primary role, to facilitate secure business transactions and communications between solicitors and their key clients.

Users who subscribed to THEMIS were given free and unlimited private secure email complete with audit trail. Subscribers also had access to a range of electronic legal research materials from catalogues and journals to electronic text books and loose-leaf services.

A solicitor who subscribed to THEMIS would pay \$400 for the first connection and \$250 for each subsequent connection. A CD-ROM would then be forwarded which the solicitor had to install. The idea behind THEMIS was that the solicitor would dial into THEMIS, at the cost of a local call, and the databases subscribed to would be updated. After that, the solicitor conducted all searches "off-line". There was no concept of time charging that was familiar at the time in most on-line services (for example, InfoOne). THEMIS has now become LawNow

(www.lawnow.com.au). LawNow is run by lawyers, and their documentation states "for lawyers". While THEMIS was based on an extranet, LawNow now provides its services via the internet. From anywhere in the world a solicitor can access the services provided on-line. LawNow is wholly Australian owned and is pursuing commercial technology initiatives in the legal arena. The technology driving this innovative company and underpinning many of its services is still Lotus Notes and Lotus Domino technology. While LawNow is still content biased toward Queensland, content continues to be developed for both national and New South Wales services, and pricing remains very affordable (from as little as \$600 per year).

Other initiatives on the LawNow web page are practice tools. LEO, an on-line litigation and evidence support tool and PLATO, a knowledge management system for firms. Both of these tools can be demonstrated on-line so you can see how they work. These types of tools will become more prevalent over the next 12-18 months as the legal profession embraces the technology and the benefits, both commercial and professional, are understood and sought after.

NORTHERN TERRITORY COURTS

While the Office of Courts Administration (OCA) web site (www.nt.gov.au/oca/) is still under construction, the changes that have been made warrant another visit.

The site now hosts the daily lists for the Magistrate Court in addition to the Supreme Court. You should pay special attention to the timing of updates. The court lists are updated as follows (as at 14 May 2000):

Supreme Court

Darwin & Alice Springs 4pm previous night (Mon-Fri)

Magistrates Court

Northern Region (includes Darwin to Katherine and remote surrounding communities) 8am daily (Mon-Fri)

Southern Region (includes Tennant Creek to Alice Springs and remote surrounding communities)

Other additions to the OCA web page are the Coronial Inquests listed for this year and a new look Almanac 2000. The Almanac provides a very useful electronic source for information about judicial administration in the Northern Territory with information on the NT & Commonwealth Courts, the Office of Courts Administration and other legal organisations and services.

GST AND THE NET

The Indirect Tax Legislation Amendment Bill 2000 contains amendments to the A New Tax System package of tax reforms. Amendments relating to the issues of rounding, GST-free supplies, agents and financial supplies, just to name a few, are covered by the Bill. To watch the progress of the Bill visit the Australian Parliament House web site (www.aph.gov.au).

Keep an eye on SCALEplus (scaleplus.law.gov.au) and the Blake Dawson Waldron (www.bdw.com.au) web sites. Both sites have previously offered amended copies of the A New Tax System (Goods and Services Tax) Act 1999 incorporating the latest amendments.

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