



The Conference On Court Technology

Implications For Judicial Education

by Susan M. Trippi

COMPUTERS are rapidly changing not only the ways in which courts operate but also some fundamental notions about the nature of the judicial process. More and more courts are discovering that vast improvements in efficiency and effectiveness can be made through the use of technology.

The need to communicate the importance of applying new technologies prompted the second National Conference on Court Technology in Denver last April, where some 1,500 judges, court managers, and other professionals convened. Sponsored by the National Center for State Courts, the Institute for Court Management, and 30 other national organizations, the Conference was designed to help court personnel become familiar with state-of-the-art court technology. The conference provided a look at a broad spectrum of technologies, through more than 57 sessions in 16 general topic areas. These topic areas included case, jury, financial and records management; integrating systems; technology in pretrial and post-adjudication services; financing technology; managing technology and people; commercial software; court reporting technology; and other related subjects. Audio cassettes of program sessions can be purchased from Ronald Meyer, President, RemCom International Corporation, P.O. Box 6176, Denver, CO 80206.

A number of state judicial educators attended the conference to gain a better understanding of the possibilities new technology provides. The following article, written by a conference participant, addresses the opportunities such technologies afford SJE's.

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Three keynote speakers addressed the Conference: Arthur Miller (below), professor of law at Harvard Law School, Roy Romer (top), governor of Colorado, and James K. Stewart (bottom right), director of the National Institute of Justice.



Attending the National Conference on Court Technology in Denver last April provided an opportunity to explore the latest developments in technology for court system applications and to expand my awareness of the implications of technological advancements within a training environment.

Richard Reaves, president of NASJE, and Stephen M. Simon, associate professor of clinical education at the University of Minnesota Law School, discussed direct applications of technology for training. Richard demonstrated the benefits of satellite teleconferencing and promoted the concept to administrators who may influence budgets or provide support to educators.

Steve Simon, a frequent presenter at NASJE programs, conducted his session by using an interactive videodisc as a training tool. Once again we were reminded of the value of a learning process which, as closely as possible, replicates the real environment in which a skill is practiced.

Desktop publishing remains one of the most useful technological tools for trainers. It is, of course, important to educators to market and present our work in a sophisticated manner. Desktop publishing allows us to upgrade the look of all publications and materials, often without the expense of hiring graphic artists and typesetters; a professional consultant will usually

aid in getting such a program up and running. In addition, this technology permits a logo and stylized formats to be carried through all materials generated by the education department. For example, a benchmark becomes one in a series produced by the education department as opposed to a single discrete unit or event. Professional-looking catalogs and brochures become compelling reading material instead of fodder for the circular file. Workshop booklets become self-contained units which include all worksheets and exercises. Uniform or consistent design strategies are a subtle but powerful marketing strategy to reinforce the importance of education and training and the unique identity of our respective organizations.

quality of instruction, the location, and course content. Expanding evaluation forms to include demographic data such as geographic locators, type of court, unit (e.g., probation services, clerk's office, or judges' lobby), job titles, and length of service would require minimum redesign of forms and minimally burden program participants.

quite simple: using expanded data collection in evaluations can provide educators with valuable information on where to target resources and how well programs are meeting the needs of large subcategories of employees.

The presentation on scanning technologies by the California court system was one of the more popular programs. Currently, the Massachusetts Trial Court uses bar code scanning technology for our announcement and registration system. We identify which job titles are to be selected and generate bar-coded, peel-off mailing labels for

each employee with the selected job title. The label is used to mail the program announcement and for registration. We simply scan the employee's bar code from the registration form and scan a program code sheet. The person is automatically registered without any



Scanning technology and data collection (left and top) were among the most popular topics at the Conference, which drew participants from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and nine foreign countries.

Spatial analysis of court statistics, one of the more intriguing sessions offered, was presented by Dennis Conly, of the Canadian Center for Justice Statistics. Mr. Conly defined spatial analysis as "referring to inquiry which is focused on interactions within defined geographic or locational parameters. It is the search for relationships which exist among the consequences of social organization."

The session prompted me to consider what is collected on evaluation forms and how that information is used. Evaluation forms are usually program specific, soliciting information about the

One example of the utility of expanded data collection would be when a significant percentage of program participants evaluates a course as too basic. Where that rating was correlated with length-of-service data, it may show that only employees with extensive years of service evaluated the program as too basic. The implication of such information is that, when advertising a program, SJE's should either emphasize that the session is designed for employees with three or fewer years' experience or offer a different program for senior employees. Numerous other examples come to mind, but the message is

additional data entry on our part. Bar codes can be used in standardized evaluation forms or anywhere that easily coded, repetitive information is collected.

The benefits of technology to education and training organizations are limited only by our imaginations. For me, the greatest benefit of the Court Technology Conference was the opportunity to reflect on how discrete units of data, collected in response to specific procedures and functions, can be easily gathered and integrated due to technology—thus allowing decisions to be based upon greater richness of information. ■