

# The Internet and the Justice System – An Unbeatable Combination

By

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The ever-growing Internet continues to have a dramatic effect upon business and commerce in America and without a doubt will continue to do so. We have seen nearly a doubling of adult Internet users in three years. In 1996 23% of adults used the Internet, in 1999 41% of adults use the Internet. 35% use it for e-mail. In 1995 4% of Americans went online for news, now in 1999 15-26% go online for news. The number of visits per month to some web sites is astonishing. BlueMountain Arts receives 12,315,000 hits a month, Amazon - 9,134,000, eBay.com - 5,491,000, and etoys.com - 3,851,000.

Approximately 40 percent of the CEOs participating in the second annual Price Waterhouse Coopers World Economic Forum global CEO survey anticipate that *more than 10 percent of their company revenues will come from e-business* over the next five years. Approximately half of these CEOs expect their e-business revenue share to exceed 20 percent.

The Gartner group predicts the top technologies will be faster hookups (DSL and cable modems) with faster connections reaching their peak within two to five years. Natural-language information retrieval will take a major step forward in search capabilities. Extranets, Intranets that external parties can access will become widespread. Speech recognition products that let a computer recognize a user's vocal patterns and translate them into commands or text will be the killer application for the 2000's. Internet Chat, the real-time, text-based chat sessions among people on corporate Intranets or the World Wide Web will see a dramatic increase.

What impacts will these technologies have upon the justice system and can we use them to provide quicker, more affordable access to the justice system?

First, the State of Arizona's government branches, with some exceptions, have made significant strides in providing access through the Internet to justice system data, forms and legal tools to citizens and practitioners free of charge.

For example, the Maricopa County Superior Court and Clerk's offices under the leadership of The Honorable Robert Myers, Michael Jeanes, Gordon Griller, Marcus Reinkensmeyer and Richard Teenstra continue their national innovative technological leadership by providing *free* access to critical Superior court case docketing and calendaring information, caselaw, statutes, and forms. Visit their web site at [www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/](http://www.superiorcourt.maricopa.gov/) to view the docket for cases, scheduling access by lawyer or courtroom, and history of cases. The superior courts website also offers free access through LOIS to Arizona caselaw and statutes at [www.maricopa.gov/lawlibrary](http://www.maricopa.gov/lawlibrary). The Superior court self-service center provides downloadable forms for civil, domestic relation, probate and other matters.

The State Bar of Arizona under the leadership of Stuart Forsyth and Patrick Jones offer several Internet member and citizen services. First, fully searchable ethics opinions from 1985 are on-line at [www.azbar.org](http://www.azbar.org). Second, lawyers can now be located by potential clients by last name, first name, firm/organization, [practice area](#), [area of specialization](#), [section membership](#), [language spoken](#), city, or state. Third, the new service, "your.name@azbar.org" provides a unique e-mail address. Once you have a "your.name@azbar.org", you can publish this address on a business

card, stationery, etc. and you will not have to notify people when your job or e-mail provider changes. Fourth, many law-related Internet links are available for attorneys.

The legislature has always provided free searching of the Arizona Revised Statutes on the Internet [www.azleg.state.az.us/ars/ars.htm](http://www.azleg.state.az.us/ars/ars.htm). They are available on CD-ROM for \$50.00 [www.azleg.state.az.us/arsoncd.htm](http://www.azleg.state.az.us/arsoncd.htm). Also included on their site are bills, members, committees, session laws, legislative process, etc. ([www.azleg.state](http://www.azleg.state)).

However, significant major Internet improvements have yet to be adopted such as a uniform citation system for case law, Arizona court rules on-line, electronic filing and interactive Internet court communication with citizens and lawyers. All of these improvements are viable with the faster Internet hookups for video conferencing from lawyers' offices or citizens homes.

Ideas abound for making a faster and more cost-effective justice system such as alternative dispute resolution, settlement and pretrial conferences on-line, ordering court documents over the Internet, electronic filing, actual court documents searchable on-line, witness appearances via the Internet, e-mail notification of court orders, jury instructions on-line, law enforcement officer scheduling, paying fines and other court costs, and clerks on-line to assist lawyers and citizens as they navigate through the justice system. Justice system web sites should mirror business sites such as Dell Computer Company's site at [www.dell.com](http://www.dell.com) where assistance to the customer using many advanced Internet technologies is paramount.

We have made an important start but all court justice system processes by lawyers and judges must be reexamined to determine if technology and the Internet can be applied to increase affordable and timely access by our citizens. We cannot go backwards to the way things were. We cannot stand still since the Internet will not stand still for an evolutionary process of adaptation. We must take to heart the words of Albert Einstein as we implement technological solutions for our justice system when he said " The world we have made as a result of the thinking we have done thus far creates problems we cannot solve at the same level at which we created them". This is an opportunity to think at a new level and make a more accessible justice system for all.