

2012 REPORT

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
AUTOMATION AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE
TO THE ILLINOIS JUDICIAL CONFERENCE**

Hon. Adrienne W. Albrecht, Chair

Hon. F. Keith Brown
Hon. Ann Callis
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Hon. Hon. William G. Schwartz
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I. STATEMENT ON COMMITTEE CONTINUATION

For Conference Year 2012, the Supreme Court charged the Automation and Technology Committee (Committee) with the development of guidelines which promote the effective and efficient use of technology and automation in the trial courts, including recommendations for statewide standards, protocols, or procedures. The Committee's work also included the review of technology applications and their impact on court operations as well as recommendations of rules and statutory changes which manage the use of technology in the courts. The Committee may also research and recommend response protocols to resolve security issues affecting the court's use of technology.

The Automation and Technology Committee, working in conjunction with the Special Supreme Court Committee on E-Business, is to represent the judges' viewpoint for the development and implementation of e-Business applications in the Illinois court system, including but not limited to e-Filing. The Committee is to develop general guidelines and statewide standards, protocols, and procedures on the use of e-Business in the trial courts, the Appellate Court, and the Supreme Court.

The Automation and Technology Committee requests that it be continued in the 2013 Conference Year to proceed with this work.

II. SUMMARY OF COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The Committee actively participated with the Special Supreme Court Committee on E-Business, chaired by Mr. Bruce Pfaff, and a subcommittee from The Illinois Association of Court Clerks, to draft a report recommending guidelines and policies related to e-Filing, electronic

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access, and an official electronic record for the trial courts. At the same time, members of the Committee participated in pilot projects to facilitate electronic access and filing in the appellate court. The proposed guidelines and report have been submitted to the Supreme Court for consideration.

Also in 2012, Committee members participated in a special task force to review and make recommendations to modify the Electronic Access Policy for Circuit Court Records of the Illinois Courts. The proposed changes to the electronic access policy have been submitted to the Supreme Court for its consideration.

The work on these two projects has enabled the Committee on Legal Technology to identify and discuss specific challenges which further the implementation of automation and technology with clerks of court and court personnel. It has also enabled the Committee to gather information and disseminate that information to the various stakeholders. The ongoing process of modification and acquisition in various courts has provided the Committee with unique insight into the challenges associated with implementing change on a statewide basis.

For example, it turns out that not all PDF files have the same utility to the court system, as described by Rick Borstein in an article reprinted in the *Court Technology Bulletin*, on July 12, 2012, *The "Flavors" of PDF*. Also, empirical data with regards to the per page cost of paper filing and storage, compared to electronic filing and storage, is starting to become available. See *Calculating an E-Court Return on Investment*, posted at Court Technology Bulletin, February 16, 2012, <http://courttchbulletin.blogspot.com/2012/02/calculating-e-court-return-on.html>. In addition, an informal and unscientific survey of judges revealed a generalized belief that their

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system was not yet ready to do away with paper files. This observation alone resulted in a renewed effort to identify and accommodate the needs of the judiciary. In fact, the Committee has undertaken the task of identifying and clarifying what those needs are in order to assist counties in the process of updating their case management systems and technical infrastructure. At the same time, the Committee is considering different ways that it can assist judges in learning and embracing the use of technology to streamline their work flow. After all, the investment in technology is only worthwhile when it assists and enhances the work of the court.

The Committee has had occasion to consider the role of technology in data acquisition and utilization. For example, the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts has an ongoing project aimed at collecting data and using the results to spur improvements in outcomes in child dependency courts. For the initial data collection phase of the project, much of the work involved the review by hand of court files. It has since become apparent that an electronic tool is needed. Further, the court systems need to incorporate the requisite fields in order to enable the collection of the requisite data. Those fields would, ideally, be standardized throughout the State.

Appropriate and standardized data collection could enhance the work of the courts in many areas of the law; not just Juvenile Court. There are mandatory time limits in almost every type of litigation. For example, in child custody litigation, the 900 series rules provide clear and mandatory time limits. Similarly, criminal courts face deadlines for speedy trial, as well as post-conviction petitions. Computer systems are ideal tools to calculate and monitor compliance with those time lines. However, they require programming with specific and universally identified and defined fields. It could provide savings in both time and money were those time limits and

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fields to be identified for counties investing in changing or modifying their case management system.

III. PROPOSED COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEXT CONFERENCE YEAR

The Committee remains willing and able to fulfill the Court's mandate, and will respond to any directions from the Supreme Court with regards to specific areas of work and inquiry.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee is making no recommendations to the Conference at this time.