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NEW MEDIA PUBLISHING AND THE LAW

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Abstract

The dissemination of electronic information to lawyers has changed radically since the online days of the early 1980s. While the searchability of legal information in database form has steadily developed through the decade, information in database form has steadily developed through the decade, important archival formats like CD-ROM have joined online as valid ways of storing and making reference to legal text and documentation.

Yet, in a world where the computer is becoming ubiquitous, and modern methods of communication are converging upon computer applications in all types of businesses, legal information used on screen remains an expensive, and largely a minority, text in the UK. Will the British Isles develop a CD-ROM marketplace like Italy? Will network applications for work like conveyancing become more appropriate and possible as a result of the trading of Land Registry information? Will electronic litigation support prevail and become more than a high cost, major litigation luxury? Will genuine multi-media applications become appropriate in legal circles, with the development of video conferencing services for lawyers, satellite-distributed video update services and the distribution of more legal information and training materials through multi-media distance learning packages? Finally, will fax-based information services and audiotex find a place in the legal information market?

This contribution endeavours to look at the market for legal information conveyed electronically against the ever-widening range of possible options open to those who publish and disseminate legal information.