

ELECTRONIC ADVOCACY

by

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We will analyze advocacy as an information interchange with emphasis on possible use of electronic means in this article. We will learn of the research (and its results) focused on this topic run by an attorney.

According to Czech Attorney's Law (§ 1 par. 2 Act no. 85/1996 Sb.) the attorney's performance consists from:

- a) procuration in court (and other bodies) proceedings,
- b) defence in criminal cases,
- c) giving legal advices,
- d) writing legal documents,
- e) elaboration of legal analysis.

We can imagine the last three points as an information interchange between attorney and his client. The attorney gets demands, requests and instructions from his client, processes them together with his knowledge and legal information and transfers the result back to his client as advices, documents or analysis. The situation is pretty the same with the first two points. The attorney gets also demands, requests and instructions from his client, processes them together with knowledge and legal information but the result passes to some public body in form of apply or proposal. The results (interim or final) of the proceedings are returned back to the attorney. He processes them for his client again to give him an explanation and an advice what to do next.

Attorneys use only communication tools and devices (such as phones, e-mails and a web) and some information tools (such as text processors and specific tools for specific operations) from information and communication

technology at most cases. We can name this era an information middle ages.

A research was open by one attorney to push the advocacy forward to information modern times. The aim of this research was to investigate the utilization of information technologies in advocacy. The research had three phases:

1. To investigate demands of advocacy for information technologies.
2. To investigate if the demands can be fulfilled with information technologies.
3. To find a technical solution what will fulfil the demands.

Incremental development of specific tools on each demand what arose incorporated in one global system was chosen as a method of the research. These specific tools were for:

- a) creation of documents
- b) structured storage of created documents
- c) activity documentation
- d) reservation of resources (vehicles, rooms)
- e) connection to public electronic sources

Creation of documents is based on the fact that there are some types of documents which are created pretty the same way. Only a few entries are changing depending on specific cause. A user fills only the entries in a form and the system creates whole document automatically including regular formatting and results of necessary calculations. All such created documents can be printed or send to a proper recipient. They are also stored in the system that they can be found under name of a specific client and a specific cause (in the same way files are created).

Any activity of any lawyer in the office is documented similarly. He chooses only proper client, type of operation, and inputs its duration. It can be shown miscellaneous statistics due to this. For example: how much time some lawyer worked, what time was worked for some client, or what type of operation is the most frequent.

The system has recorded capacity of shared resources in its database (vehicles, rooms). Any lawyer can reserve a resource for him for specific time. It is checked if there is no collision in reservations.

The system tries to utilize public electronic sources. For example it can automatically fill data from commercial registry when there is filled only the identification number by a human.

The conclusion of the research is that there are two basic kinds of opera-

tion in advocacy. We can call them generic and specific. Generic operations are repetitive, similar even in different cases, they have foreseeable sequence. Specific operations have every step different – the next step cannot be predicted before it is known the result of the previous. A complex system has to be use for all generic operations. Specific operations can utilize only specific tools of the complex system.

There are demands on the system resulting from that conclusion. It has to completely cover generic operations and it has to be also available for specific operations. It has to be connected with public electronic sources and use them. The system has to be modular to be able to extend it with new tools. It has to be easily usable to be helpful not obstructed for users.

The system has to have these modules:

- a) Electronic files: storage for all documents (not only made by the system with possibility to search among them), document-flow (monitoring who created a document, who changed it, where it was sent), activity documentation (duration and types of activity in connection with the file).
- b) Work-flow (submissions of work depending on results of previous step).
- c) Registry of resources and its registration.
- d) Automatic access to public resources (connection to courts and public bodies to send them proposals automatically and electronically and to gather important public information)
- e) Connection to clients' systems (to communicate automatically)

We were searching for a system meets these requirements. First, we tried to combine different existing tools but they are isolated and cannot cooperate. We also did not find any existing complex system. The demands for an advocacy are too specific. So we are developing a new system nowadays based on the conclusions of our research. It will transfer routines on a machine what will increase operation speed and capacity. We can call that change Industrial Revolution in advocacy.