one person in IT also knows how to update and edit the intranet. Partners in an organisation such as a small law firm tend to prefer to delegate administrative tasks, but may still want to have some control over who contributes to an intranet. Points to consider:

- **Who will take ownership of the project?** The successful introduction of an intranet needs partner support as well as someone to project manage the whole exercise. If you are the person doing this, a large amount of time will be eaten up with implementing, training and running the system.
- **Editor.** Having one overall editor allows some control over content and consistency in style
- **Listen to all your colleagues** once the intranet has launched to find out what features work well and what can be discarded. Having initially designed departmental areas where teams could publish their own documents and comments we found they were not being used and have been removed
- **Outside contractors.** If you are using an outside systems developer make sure the hosting and support costs are factored into your original budget. Make sure to specify that your supplier responds quickly to problems (you set the time limit) in your original contact. If an outside contractor is hosting ensure any system downtime is limited to the contractually agreed hours per year.

Biography

Helen Dewar is a free-lance law librarian and website editor.

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Current Awareness

Compiled by Katherine Read and Laura Griffiths at the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies

This *Current Awareness* column, and previous *Current Awareness* columns, are fully searchable in the *caLIM* database (Current Awareness for Legal Information Managers). The *caLIM* database is available on the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies website at: http://ials.sas.ac.uk/library/caware/caware.htm

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Product Review – Solcara Solsearch

In common with all law firms we want to ensure the effective use of resources. Effective and efficient use of legal information resources has become a particular issue with the development and availability of material on the internet. The basis and methodology of legal research has changed. To a significant extent, it has moved from a controlled activity carried out through the public core of a library to one of private uncontrolled access to resources of variable quality. Internet resources can provide vast amounts of relevant focused material while at the same time leading enquiries up wrong paths and wasting valuable time with multiple "false positive" results.

But what if a system could provide a one point search against multiple resources returning the equivalent search as the target database? What if this system could direct users to the recognised internal and external resources for case law, legislation, know how, legal news and template/precedent documents? What if, in addition, the system provided an audit function to track the searches which have been conducted and identify any issues which users have encountered in their search routines?

In 2007, Matheson Ormsby Prentice (MOP), one of Ireland's largest law firms, installed Solcara Solsearch as a means of tackling some of the issues associated with internet database usage. The aim was to provide template access to key internet and internal resources. This would reduce the number of individual searches required to locate relevant material and would also direct users to conduct searches against specific resources. The concept of a federated search engine is not complicated. It provides a mechanism to run the same search against a multiple of databases and websites, using the same search routine as would apply in the target and returning the same results for this search. The main benefits are apparent, less searches for the same result and confirmation that users are directed towards relevant resources.

Installation and connectors

We installed, customised and trialled Solsearch over a period of eight months and launched the application for all users in January 2008. On commissioning we named the system MOP Search and it runs off our intranet launched through an editable home page. This MOP Search home page provides basic instructions and links to additional information on the system.

Solsearch runs through a series of connectors which define the target databases, the search routine mechanisms specific to each database and other protocols required for access. The connectors accommodate IP recognition access. If a login is required to access material, Solsearch will complete and display search results, but the user has to login to access the target material.

One of the biggest tasks in planning the system is to identify the target databases that are to be included and to then group them in some logical and user friendly fashion. Like many users we opted to group collections of databases under cases and legislation. Thus, a search against the grouping under Irish Case Law runs the same search against material from a range of free to use databases (e.g. BAILII) and subscription databases (e.g. Lexis Library). Successful grouping requires clear identification of the databases to be included, what parts of those databases should be searched and the way in which search routines run in different databases. For example, decisions have to be made during the design of connectors as to what particular part of a database is to be searched. In the instance of BAILII, this is akin to "ticking the box" for the particular set of cases against which you want to search. This then allows for the design of a relatively intuitive and single search routine for a user against a multiple of sources.

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