

NEW PRODUCTS



SOFTWARE, HARDWARE, DATABASES AND PERIPHERALS OF INTEREST TO LAWYERS

Details of products for review, or inspection copies, should be forwarded to the Editor.

FAMILY STUDIES DATABASE ON AUSINET

Prepared by the Institute of Family Studies, the Australian Family Studies Database (FAMILY) released on AUSINET September, includes references to family law and family court material, as well as to topics such as child abuse. The FAMILY database contains a bibliographic reference for each item, plus an abstract. It includes references to journal articles, books, research reports, conference proceedings, government reports and statistical publications issued since 1980.

(from Australian Law News, November 1984, p43)

ESTOPL DATABASE LAUNCHED

Counsel's Chambers Limited, a company founded by the N.S.W. Bar Association to provide professional services to the Bar, has released ESTOPL (Easy Search of TOPical Law), a topical case digest service under some 60 headings covering immediately recent cases of significance in the High and Federal Courts, the N.S.W. Supreme Courts (with other jurisdictions under negotiation), and relevant U.K. courts. New cases are added weekly, often within 7 to 10 days of a decision. Once cases are digested elsewhere, they are selectively deleted from ESTOPL.

The ESTOPL database is held on the C.S.A. (Computer Sciences of Australia) mainframe. Anticipated typical costs are \$4:00 for connection, then \$1:00 per minute. Dial-up will be available most times of the day, seven days a week. Contact Counsel's Chambers Limited on (02) 231 3147 or (02) 241 3345.

(From advertising material supplied by Counsel's Chambers Limited: see insert to this issue.)

NEW CDH LEGAL DATABASES

See Article by Judith Sperling in this issue.

NEW CLRS DATABASES

See insert to this issue.



JURY TRIAL: A COMPUTER GAME REVIEWED

Review by Steve Neilsen

This game simulates a court and the conflict between the defence and prosecution lawyers with the computer keeping score. A series of crimes is presented (they seem to concentrate on rape, kidnapping and robbery with varying degrees of associated violence and of course murders). After the crime is selected the details are presented on the screen and clues are flashed at high speed. I couldn't remember all the clues and therefore a number of witnesses will prove useful. By remembering all the clues your chances of winning are significantly improved. There is a requirement to select a jury of six from a collection of "wierdos". The potential jurors can consist of those who will always find for the prosecution to those who will always find for the defence. They also include those who will only decide on the evidence presented. Each lawyer obviously needs to select jurors who will favour his/her own case. Challenges to jurors are allowed but are restricted to two rejections. Experience in the game would teach you to accept a moderate and only reject the extremist point of view.

The computer asks each witness five questions, to which opposing counsel may object. The computer (i.e the judge), will rule with arbitrary discretion. Questions correctly answered will score points for a conviction. The questions vary in quality from simple to compound and may be leading or assume facts. Sometimes witnesses are asked for an affidavit, this being typed in by the witnesses in their own words. If correct or credible then points are scored for the conviction. Their verdict is obtained by polling the jurors. Cases lost can be reheard on appeal thus giving you the opportunity to try again.

Jury Trial is not MY idea of a computer game. (I'm into space invaders and adventure games) It lacks a number of important features which "make" a game. Firstly it's not addictive. Having played it a few times I had no desire to play it any more. This could have been for a number of reasons. Firstly, I'm not a legally trained person therefore some of the concepts are not familiar. Secondly, to play it effectively requires between two and six people and therefore a single player cannot get the best out of it. (It's a bit like playing Scrabble or Monopoly by yourself) Thirdly, it probably would have made a reasonable board game for two to six people but its implementation on a computer leaves a bit to be desired. An improvement would have been to have the computer take the role of defence or prosecuting lawyer.

Despite my criticism of the game I can see that there may be some educational value in it for students and maybe some pleasure in it for lawyers. I can also see that it could possibly be a forerunner for a lot of similar legal education games which might make even better lawyers.

The review copy was obtained from Navic Software, P.O. Box 14727, North Palm Beach, FL33408 and cost \$US29. It was tested on an Apple II requiring 64K and one disk drive. A version for the IBM PC is also available.

(from the A.C.T.S.C.L. Newsletter November 1984)

