

Victoria

The first meeting for the year was held on 2nd April, 1996. It was a presentation by Dr. Philip Ryan aka "Mr Internet" on the latest data security and encryption techniques for email.

Forthcoming meetings will cover topics such as data privacy, technology and IT facilities in courtrooms (hopefully with a life in situ demonstration) and the latest in computerised legal research techniques.

The Society is beginning to take a much more active role in the development of law relating to technology and in supporting continuing legal education.

The Society has, for example, provided a submission in response to the Australian Broadcasting Authority's recently published discussion paper on its investigation into the content of online services.

Business on the Internet: Opportunity or Black Hole?

The Victorian Society's conference on 4 October 1995, with an 'audience' of some thirty or forty million on the Internet, was not likely to bring forth too many negative perceptions of the Internet. Rather, the speeches and presentations dealt practically and responsibly with those issues of security, reliability and liability and the practical evidentiary issues which touch users of the Net involved in commercial transactions.

Readers can access part of the proceedings at <http://www.mira.net.au/netlaw95/>

Dr Phillip McRea gave an encouraging and strategic assessment of the value of the Net to Australian commerce. Apart from the obvious benefits of improved and/or alternative communications and access to information, Phillip reminded us of the improvements to customer service, the flattening of middle management and the opportunities to re-engineer business by empowering

employees to access (relevant) information and make decisions based on that information.

As a side note, Australia has the second highest per capita use of the Internet, after Iceland. Accordingly, said Phillip McRea, we can use the Internet as part of our infrastructure to export services and knowledge and goods, with appropriate payment arrangements. In passing, it seems that the current electronic commerce model, EDI, may be bypassed. Electronic commerce will be driven by US and other governments including the Australian government.

The keynote speaker was Jason Romney of Price Brent Melbourne and the Australian Financial Review newspaper. Jason presented an all singing all dancing summary of how new businesses should present themselves on the Net together with a selection of recommended and other sites. Comparison was made with deadly dull paper brochures for law firms, and an emphasis placed on the need to monitor real hits or access to a page developed to attract business. Clearly, as with advertising in/on the media, there is a need for skilled advice to attract and hold business customers. Hold the graphics may be the first good advice.

Peter Faris QC (reformed barrister and now solicitor, advocate and service provider who runs LawNet) divided commerce on the Net into classes of business which are Web-specific and those which use the Web to expand and existing business. However, effectively it looks as though business uses the Web in the same manner as other forms of communication media. Peter's talk provided a large range of pages of varying quality to inspect.

Tim Roper discussed security models for Internet access (see the full article elsewhere in this issue).

An Australian first was then provided by the Age Newspaper Shootout between Mira Networking, CompuServe, On Australia and

Apple Eworld. Andrew Herbert of Mira extolled the virtue of over one hundred Australian service providers in providing a customer-oriented basis for access allowing individuals to develop their own businesses on the Net inexpensively. By contrast, the large companies endeavoured to show that they combined these advantages together with a higher level of security and support from a managed large resource network. For example, CompuServe provides access to 3000 services, many commercially based, which may not be available to "ordinary" Internet users without separate subscriptions or access arrangements. (The writer notes that in the six months since the conference, Microsoft appears to have taken a 90 degree turn in relation to the Internet but not in relation to its ultimate intentions. It appears that Apple has abandoned Eworld).

The Victorian Society President Phillip Catania of Corrs Chambers Westgarth presented a paper dealing with the Myths and Reality of Business on the Internet.

Phillip reminded us that as at September 1995, there were some 22,000 commercial 'shop-fronts' on the Net. Allied to the 48,000 computer networks, the potential customer base appears enormous. Although we all agree that the potential is there, accurate statistics as to the dollar usage of the Net are not so readily available.

The future is estimated to be of the order of \$US 800 billion by the year 2000 in only four years time.

VicNet is an initiative of the Victorian State Library and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Library and is managed by Gary Hardy (garyh@vicnet.net.au) and financed by a government grant from Victorian gambling taxes. The aim of VicNet is to make access to the Internet available to the wider public particularly through public libraries. Gary raised the major issue of protecting the "information poor" and also combined these comments

with the business oriented comment that 'using intelligently shaped tools, Web generates business opportunities'. Gary believes in the "fish" principle that information is like fish (best and freshest is closest to the source). So, organisations (like lawyers) should use Web literate people internally, not contractors, to develop and enhance their Web pages. He said that VicNet has observed that the groups which look after their own Web presence have the most relevant, useful and current pages as a rule.

Butterworths were represented by Evan Predavec their electronic

publishing manager. Butterworths has now absorbed the old CLIRS service which should therefore become user friendly sooner rather than later. Evan discussed the Web as another publishing medium. He said that material is passive requiring the audience to make a conscious effort to look at it; because there is no editorial control, you have the real danger of being ignored and of course the corollary is that things constantly change. Evan advised not to just publish a replica of your company brochure. You need to attract people by offering useful information by way of concise articles or by providing

indexes to material which is of importance to business. Evan distinguished between using a designer to present good attractive pages and a cheap student or similar person who can write the pages in the appropriate code; having done that, advertise the site by having it indexed in services such as Yahoo.

Julian Burnside QC then gave an in depth paper on Virtual Liability which can be read elsewhere in this issue. Gordon Hughes also gave a related paper entitled "Nowhere to Hide" about privacy and other issues on the Internet (which can also be read in this issue).

New South Wales

The NSW Society monthly seminars have been up and running on schedule this year.

In March the topic "Technology and the Olympics" saw SOCOG representatives discuss the IT requirements for those mounting the largest participation multi-event sporting extravaganza ever in Australia. In April Andy McDonald, the Commonwealth Government's Chief Information Officer, spoke on the long term vision for the architecture and technology platforms for the Commonwealth. Andy answered plenty of questions from the floor on topics including the new Government's attitude to the CIO's discussion paper, IT spending

cuts, attitudes to the open systems debate and interoperability generally, as well as on his tenure and personal vision. In May, Society stalwart Les Lawrence and Steve Orłowski from the Commonwealth A-G's gave a fascinating presentation on the topic subject of computer system security standards. Steve Orłowski in particular aroused interest with his discussion of the Government's tentative vision for a digital signature legislative framework, and the technology solutions available for the problem of black marketeering of electronic money.

The NSW Society Committee is also busy, considering proposals to publish the Journal electronically (ie

as well as in hard copy) and to establish a Society home page. Both proposals have been under detailed consideration and are well advanced. The home page proposal in particular is subject to review by a sub-committee which is considering alternative service providers, type of content and the strategy and vision of a Web presence for the Society. The content would certainly include the Journal, and a home page would enable all interstate and the NZ Society to link together and communicate more easily. The Committee is also considering a proposal for the electronic publication of parts of the Journal on the AusiNet proprietary new service.

Queensland

The Queensland Society has seen a steady start to 1996 with our program of Members' Seminars. In March, our first Members' Seminar for the year was held at "The Hub" Internet Cafe where members were introduced to legal resources available on the Internet.

In April, members were introduced to new and innovative document management systems including QA Pro for Lotus Notes and PC Docs Open.

Coming seminars include:

- patentability of software - an update;
- wide area networks and direct client access;

- software security with a focus on e-mail; and

- an update on the *Telecommunications Act* and privacy issues.

For information concerning any of the approaching seminars, please contact the President or Secretary.

There have been some changes to office bearers and the current contact details are as set out below.

Queensland Society Office Bearers

President	Hamish Fraser	Ph: 07 3356 1820
Vice President	Simon Newcomb	Clayton Utz Ph: 07 3228 5811 Fax: 07 3229 7566
	George Fletcher	Brisbane City Council Legal Department Ph: 07 3403 4747 Fax: 07 3403 5432
Secretary	Phillip Hourigan	Deacons Graham & James Ph: 07 3833 0444 Fax: 07 3833 0555
Treasurer	Mary Hockaday	Phillips Fox Ph: 07 3246 4000 Fax: 07 3229 4077
Committee Members	Allan Mason	Office of State Revenue Ph: 07 3227 8428 Fax: 07 2892 6388
	Mark Winn	GPS Spencer Woodhead Ph: 07 3368 2577 Fax: 07 2268 4918
	Bob Gurney	Ph: 07 3355 4982 Fax: 07 3355 4982
	Jonathon Corby	Clayton Utz Ph: 07 3228 5811 Fax: 07 3229 7566
	Matthew Hall	Hall & Co Ph: 07 3229 4933 Fax: 07 3229 4988