

Dear Editor

I read with interest the article on p. 30 of the Summer 1990 edition of your magazine. Its title was "Which Computer: IBM or Macintosh?"

I am a barrister in practice in Brisbane. I use a Macintosh computer myself. I share a secretary who uses an IBM compatible machine.

On my observations and experience there is just no comparison between the machines for ease of use. The Macintosh is far superior. The importance of this for a barrister cannot be understated as most barristers do not have the time to learn and relearn the requirements of an operating system or a particular program.

The big advantage of the Macintosh is not only its ease of use but the consistent user interface both in the operating system and in the applications that run under it. It is true to say that once you have learnt one program on the Macintosh it is very easy to use almost all the other programs available on it with little need to have recourse to manuals.

Mr Schnell said that, in general, barristers have very standard computing needs, mainly word processing. My observations of barristers who use IBM compatible machines support that conclusion. My own experience, and the experience of other barristers whom I know who use Macintosh machines is to the contrary.

I certainly use the Macintosh for word processing but I also use it to keep a cash book, to keep a database of the briefs I have to do and the fees outstanding and paid for work I have done. I use a more powerful database in my capacity as Editor of the Queensland Reports to manage the production of those reports and also use communications packages for on-line access to legal databases, spreadsheets, outliner programs and an address book program which dials telephone numbers for me.

Many of these programs also lend themselves readily to the use of graphics which can be particularly useful during submissions in a case. A complex company structure can often be better explained by a tree diagram which the outliner/word processor called More 3.0 can produce automatically. I also use text retrieval software to index trial transcripts and my own opinions and outlines of arguments so I can rapidly retrieve information when I need to. My diary is kept on the machine which also automatically reminds me of appointments and hearing dates.

With the right software and equipment the Macintosh can also respond to voice commands and can read aloud written text, albeit in a mid-western accent. Voice notes can also be appended to files in the latest machines which have fallen significantly in price.

Mr Schnell says that the two best products for litigation support are WordCruncher and Evidence.

I have seen him demonstrate WordCruncher which seemed to me to be able to do no more than the Macintosh program "Sonar Professional" which I use.

I have also seen Evidence demonstrated, although not in its most recent version, and it could then do no more than the database program called FileMaker available for the Macintosh at a much lower price than was charged for Evidence. The beauty of FileMaker is, also, that it is very flexible and can be adapted to an individual barrister's needs and the needs of a particular case. The latest version of Evidence, which, I gather, is an impressive program, is presently not available on DOS machines. It requires a Unix operating system and is very expensive. The high end Macintoshes can run under Unix although I do not know yet whether Evidence can be adapted to those machines.

A recent program developed for the Macintosh called Marco Polo is the ideal document storage and retrieval package while I doubt that any DOS database program could match the power and flexibility of 4th Dimension.

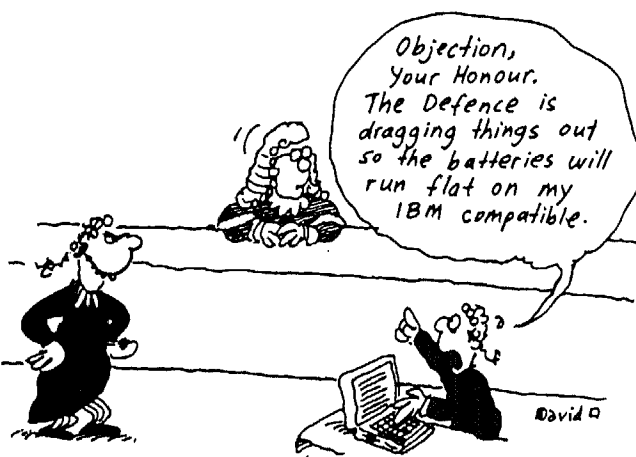
I have had very few difficulties in translating files from my secretary's machine to my machine and back again as the floppy disk drive on the Macintosh is able to read 3 1/2" diskettes formatted for IBM compatible machines with great ease.

I also question whether it can yet be said that the Windows 3.0 interface recently developed for IBM compatibles can match the advantages of the Macintosh in ease of use. To my knowledge there are very few major programs yet available which take full advantage of the Windows interface and, of course, the advantage of the Macintosh interface is particularly marked because it has such a wealth of software developed over the years for that interface.

I also question the contention that the best software appears initially on IBM compatibles. The spreadsheet program developed by Microsoft, Excel, was first developed for the Macintosh and later ported to the IBM world where it has become a significant competitor for Lotus 1-2-3. The same thing happened with Microsoft Word and is happening with Wingz, another spreadsheet program. Two of the most interesting software packages for the legal market, Document Modeller and Project Modeller, were developed in Canada for the Macintosh and only later translated for use in the DOS world.

It is not correct to say that there are significant difficulties in upgrading the cheaper Macintoshes. It is simple to add more memory, larger hard disks (internal or external) and accelerator boards.

He also refers to laptop computers. I recently used a Macintosh portable when on circuit. That machine has now



dropped substantially in price, I gather, because a new model is about to come out. One reason for its weight is that it has a large battery and a long battery life. That is particularly useful for a machine to be taken to court. Most of the IBM compatible laptops' battery lives are no more than 2-3 hours where the Macintosh's can be up to 12 hours.

It is also significant that the Macintosh can be made IBM compatible by the running of a cheap software package. I have yet to see any Macintosh user willingly cripple the machine by doing that. It was suggested to me by the sellers of CD-ROM products as one way around the problem created by the fact that their disks are at present only suitable to be used with IBM compatible machines.

Unlike Mr Schnell, I am a practising barrister. From that viewpoint, the most telling observation I have made is that almost all the barristers I know who have bought Macintoshes use them very regularly, productively and for all sorts of applications.

On the other hand, my observation of barristers who have IBM compatibles is that, very often, they do not use them, as they have been unable to overcome their unfamiliarity with the user interface. If they do use them, they are likely only to use them for simple word processing.

Even where they use them for litigation support using programs such as WordCruncher, I gather that, in many cases, the indexing required for the proper use of WordCruncher is not done by the barrister but at significant expense by companies like Mr Schnell's. The ease of use of the 'Sonar' program available for the Macintosh is such that the indexing required of a day's transcript can readily be done by me using my machine, which is, admittedly, a powerful machine, for about 10 or 15 minutes at the end of the day. All I have to do is put the disk in, open the application, start processing the file and then turn my attention to something else for the 10 to 15 minutes the computer takes to index that day's transcript.

In truth the comparison is not between a Mercedes and a BMW but between either of those cars and crunching the gears on a tank - sorry, IBM compatible.

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## Double Trouble

*Dr J.W. Shand under cross-examination*

*"Doctor, in giving your evidence you give it as a psychiatrist?"*  
— Yes.

*You do not give your evidence as a surgeon or as a rheumatologist?"* — No, but as a doctor trained in the various areas.

*But your specialty is psychiatry?"* — That is right.

*You are not an orthopaedic surgeon?"* — No.

*You are not a rheumatologist?"* — No.

*And you are not a neurologist?"* — No.



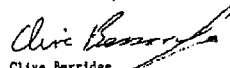
*In relation ...*

*Mr Shore: He looks very like a barrister.*

*Mr Fernan: He certainly does. A very good one."*

(Gjuratic v Australian Telecommunications Commission - AAT, 6 June 1990).

## Perseverance

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(His Honour now has his Odgers)