If you are setting up a *free text system* choose a case that:

- will not reach hearing for a least another month;
- is likely to run for 1 to 2 weeks.

You may also wish to select a Federal Court case because the Commonwealth Reporting Service is now making transcript available on disk.

3. Use your office personal computer – make sure you have at least 20 megabytes of disk storage.

4. Select a commercial software package.

    For example, *document control* packages:

    For **IBM** and **compatibles**:

    - *INMAGIC*
    - *NOTEBOOK*
    - *DBASE III OR IV*
    - *ORACLE*
    - *R:BASE*
    - *Q & A*

    For **Macintosh** computers:

    - *FILEMAKER II*
    - *OMNIS*

For *free text* packages:

For **IBM** and **compatibles**:

- *The Micro Retriever*
- *Zyindex*
- *ISYS*
- *Wordcruncher*
- *Microstatus*

For **Macintosh** computers:

- *Sonar*

- *Solicitor, Blake Dawson Waldron*

THE COMPUTER AS A ROBOT LAWYER

- *by Michele Asprey*

Are you ready for Computer Assisted Drafting (CAD)?

The author, who is currently involved in overseeing the development of the CAD project at Mallesons Stephen Jaques, suggests some matters to consider before embarking on a CAD project, offers suggestions for identifying suitable documents and gives some practical advice on how to get started. Her paper is divided into these three main areas.

How To Start

The three important factors to analyze when considering a CAD project are:

(a) time;
(b) settled text; and
(c) the team.

Computer aided drafting is time consuming and requires a substantial commitment in terms of lawyer time, partner time, paralegal time, computer time, and of course money. If you haven't yet committed resources to general precedent

development then perhaps the scheduling of your CAD project is premature.

You must have the text of your documents settled. If you are not happy with your text there is no point in spending time automating that text. As the author points out, automation will only make it easier and quicker to access unsatisfactory text.

Thirdly, you must be prepared to devote the time of people at several different levels. For example, your paralegal may be the best person to

liaise between the computer and the legal text but will that person have the requisite legal knowledge to make the hard legal decisions that must be made? Probably not. You will require a partner to make those decisions and then finally approve the documents.

How to Choose a Document

There are three main factors influencing your decision as to the appropriate document.

* look for documents that your firm has to draft regularly; ones that take a lot of time and thought each time because they are reasonably complex and have many variables;

* look for documents where the text is already settled and easily available;

* look for documents in your area of practice where lawyers are willing and able to devote enough time to the project.

How it Works

Look closely at the text of the document you are starting with. What are the questions a lawyer would ask before deciding whether to include a certain block of text.

Unlike many forms of conventional drafting, to use CAD successfully, you must logically map out your text, perhaps by reworking the text into a flow chart. You then construct a set of questions to connect the text to the flow chart. Every piece of text must be connected to a question, unless it is text that is common to all documents.

Computer assisted drafting starts with an analysis of the transaction rather than starting with the text itself.

The CAD team works out what text goes with what questions. It works out the best order for the questions so the lawyer can understand what is being asked. The questions need to be intelligently grouped in logical order so the user interface is easy and comphrensive.

Most CAD programs allow you to insert reference windows and warnings so that lawyers appreciate the full significance of the questions being asked.

* *Director of Legal Precedents, Mallesons Stephen Jaques*

CONVEYANCING IN A COMPUTERISED WORLD

* *by Jude Wallace*

The failure to centralise information is the single most obvious reason why conveyancing has become paper heavy, and why enquiries have become boring and are often ineffectual, states Jude Wallace of the Victorian Law Reform Commission.

On the other hand the slowness in centralising has allowed the possibility of creating systems that can communicate, and has helped to avoid the creation of inappropriate systems.

South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia have organised a large amount of land information into centrally accessible data bases. Victoria and New South Wales are still working on the possibilities.

The Victorian Law Reform Commission found 153 different Acts affecting land and allowing government and semi-government