Barbytes

The assertion that there was only one software accounting programme designed for barristers elicited an enthusiastic response from the computer industry. As will be seen from the articles below (and the letter on page 8) there is a variety of programmes on the market.

In the Summer 1991 edition of *Bar News* an article about a new barrister's computerised billing system, written by Paul Blacket, appeared. I would like to point out that Mr Blacket is incorrect when he states that the programme he mentioned was the only software programme in either the IBM or Apple environment that has been tailored specifically for the needs of the barristers.

Some 6 years ago we wrote a Barrister's Accounting System (Version 1) for the IBM platform. There are over 20 copies of this programme installed. In the past year this programme was completely rewritten using Foxpro2 (a database which in July will be marketed by MicroSoft under their own brand name). At present the Barrister's Accounting System (*BAS*) is available for the DOS platform, but by the end of the year there will also be a Mac and Windows version. Version 2 of this programme contains many enhancements over Version 1, most of the extra features being the result of suggestions made by barristers who have used the earlier version. This system allows a barrister to keep track of both fees and outgoing expenses. The operator can use either keyboard "hot keys" or a mouse to operate system and entry to the programme can be restricted if the barrister chooses to install a password.

Features-Memorandum of Fees Section
(Accounts Receivable)
1. A list of solicitors is added to system
2. Matters when received are entered into system
3. Diary details are entered
4. Details are entered for Memo of Fees
5. Receipts are entered

Entries are assisted by picklists. For example, when adding a Memo of Fees, click or press A to activate the "Add" button and a list of matters appears on screen. Type first character of matter and list scrolls to the first occurrence of that character. Use down key to find relevant matter, press ENTER and all details for this matter (including solicitor id, address, parties, etc.) are automatically inserted. Data entered can then be formatted into reports that are viewed on screen or printed:
> Print/View up to date list of solicitors, including contacts, address, phone, fax.
> Print/View complete summary of all transactions for each solicitor
> Print/View Reminder letters to solicitors showing details of outstanding fees*
> Print/View Up-to-Date Register of Matters, including report on Briefs not Returned
> Print/View Diary showing hearing dates, court, time, etc.
> Print/View Memorandum of Fees, including provision for legal aid discount, etc.*

Memo of fees can be forwarded at end of brief or daily, weekly, monthly, etc. There is no limit to the number of items entered on each Memo
> Print/View Report showing total fees billed for any specified period
> Print/View Memoranda of Fees Summary*

> Print/View Report showing total receipts from solicitors
> Print/View Receipt - shows outstanding balance for forwarding to solicitor*

Function keys are used to automatically insert often used memo items, e.g. press F6 and "Draft Statement of Claim" is automatically inserted into Memorandum of Fees.
* Option to print either envelopes or labels to solicitors. Letterhead is generated by system, no need for preprinted forms - phone, fax number, address, etc. is customised by operator.

Features-Expenses (Accounts Payable)
Enter all payments made by barrister from cheque book and bank statement. Provision also exists to itemise payments made for personal investments, e.g. rented properties, farm, etc.
> Print/View Expenses ledger - shows details/totals for each expense item for any specified period, includes grand totals
> Print/View cheque list for any specified period
> Print/View non-cheque list (bank debits, periodical payments, etc) for any period.

At financial year end, print a summary of all income and expenses and hand to Accountant.

BAS Version 2 is written for an IBM or compatible computer and is priced at $1200. It is recommended that the computer used should have an 80386 processor. Whilst this system will run on an XT with 640K RAM the speed drops considerably and is therefore not recommended. A late model Hewlett Packard laser printer (or compatible) which uses a 12 pitch internal font is recommended, otherwise a customisation fee applies.

We hope you will appreciate that this system has certainly been designed for barristers. It is well documented and is supplied with a very comprehensive manual, as well as a Function Key Template, sample envelopes and labels for use with this system. If you would like a demonstration of this programme, please contact me and I'd be happy to arrange this.

❑ Cook's Computer Service