



TECHGEAR

The Archos 704 WiFi (\$550) has a 7-inch touch-screen display and supports video and music playback and web browsing. An optional DVR dock allows you to record television shows directly to the player.



WEBLINKS



ANN NEWTON

is partner in the Houston office of Haynes and Boone, L.L.P., where she helps large and small clients with all types of technology transactions. She was previously vice president and general counsel to a privately held software company and counsel to Tenneco Energy.

United States Patent and Trademark Office

www.uspto.gov

This site is of great assistance in determining whether a client's new "brainchild" trademark will cause them heartbreak and in looking at the current status of patents when a client is acquiring the owning company.

EDGAR

www.sec.gov/edgar.shtml

While many people look at Edgar for information on specific companies, the filings can also be a treasure trove of information regarding the terms and conditions that vendors and purchasers have accepted on previous transactions.

Hoovers.com

This site has great information about most companies in the United States. If you pay the modest subscription fee, it provides significantly more information on a number of aspects — like competitors, management, analysts, and other items — that are invaluable for due diligence on private companies.

CrazyGuyOnABike.com

My passion outside the office is cycling. This great site has numerous journals of people riding their bicycles all around the world on adventures. Even if you are still tied to a desk, it is good to help plan for that someday.

eFiling Modernizes Texas Courts

BY JUDGE JOHN DIETZ

TexasOnline introduced eFiling for Courts as the official eFiling solution for the state of Texas in 2005 and electronic filing continues to unfold in courts across the state. Developed to enable filers and clerks to process documents and fees electronically, eFiling for Courts is a key element in modernizing our courts and better serving the public. To date, eFiling has been implemented in 29 counties and more than 250 courts, serving nearly two-thirds of the population in Texas.

While much has been published about the benefits of eFiling for filers — the convenience, flexibility, and efficiency that eFiling offers attorneys, paralegals, and legal assistants — now is a good time to review the value eFiling provides to clerks and judges of the courts.

With the proliferation of email, the Internet, cell phones, and even iPods, the spread of technology into the courts is inevitable. Technology can be scary, but it is vital to the ongoing success of our court system. Harnessing technology can help us do our jobs more efficiently.

As our courts handle ever-increasing caseloads, many of the familiar, trusted methods, including processing paper documents, are simply unable to adequately meet the demand. As leaders of the judiciary, it is imperative that judges understand that eFiling offers a means to improve the way courts conduct business. From the court's perspective, there are three distinct advantages of eFiling: reducing paper, increasing efficiency, and improving access to documents.

PAPER

One of the most pressing problems the courts grapple with, like most in the legal industry, is the seemingly endless amount of judicial paper. Clerks process millions of documents in Texas trial and appellate courts each year. This accumulation of paper not only creates processing inefficiencies for court personnel, but also places a burden on facilities as we constantly search for available space to physically file and store documents. This strain on resources results in higher costs for courts, filers, and taxpayers.

As eFiling is adopted as standard business practice by both filers and the courts, the reduction in the amount of paper that must be processed, filed, and stored is considerable. Although eFiling does not completely eliminate paper, it does allow for a print-on-demand environment where documents are printed only when necessary.

EFFICIENCY

The manual, paper-based filing process also requires that clerks and court staff perform many repetitive, time-consuming tasks. Reviewing, stamping, bar-coding, unstapling, scanning, and indexing documents are all duties that must be completed for each paper filing the clerk receives. The traditional steps for processing paper result in an unavoidable lag time between when a document is filed and when it is available to the judge.

With the implementation of electronic filing, many clerks are experienc-

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ing first-hand the emerging reality of a paperless court ... and they like it! Using the eFiling for Courts system, clerks process documents electronically and export them directly to the court's existing document management system (DMS). This interface allows the DMS to barcode, index, and store each electronic filing automatically, thereby reducing the amount of time that clerk and court personnel normally spend on these activities. The docketing data can also be moved directly into an existing case management system (CMS).

This time savings is no longer just a promise; it is a reality. The Travis County District Clerk's office recently measured the amount of time required to process a manual filing versus an electronic filing. The district clerk, Amalia Rodriguez-Mendoza, randomly selected cases that had been filed in paper and

electronic format. She found that the time required for her staff to fully process a paper filing — from receipt of the document until it was available to the judge in the DMS — was about 13 hours, spread over two to three days. With electronic filing, the document was fully processed and available to the judge in the DMS in less than 30 minutes.

ACCESS

Judges also benefit from eFiling because we can retrieve electronic documents quickly and easily. With the faster processing and storage of electronically filed documents, judges can view eFiled documents within minutes of filing. This promptness and ease of accessibility is particularly crucial in cases involving emergency matters, allowing judges to view documents almost immediately, rather than after several days.

Paperless trials should be the norm rather than the exception. Large, complex cases such as school finance can be better managed electronically, freeing judges to consider the merits rather than being distracted by misplaced or incomplete files.

From my perspective, there is little need for paper to enter the courtroom. In fact, I feel so strongly about improving the efficiency of my courtroom that I recently issued a standing order mandating eFiling and eService for designated case types in the Travis County District Courts, and I fully expect to add all case types in the future. The citizens and taxpayers of Texas can now receive the benefits of speedier justice at reduced costs.

For more information about eFiling for Courts or to register to eFile documents, visit www.TexasOnline.com/eFiling. *

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