

Encyclopaedia Britannica: On-Line and Ready for Business

BY CARY GRIFFITH

COMBINE the oldest continuously published reference work in the English language with the Internet and what do you have? Britannica Online. The Encyclopaedia Britannica was begun in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1768. Since that time it's undergone many revisions, expansions and similar changes, but probably none are quite as dramatic as Britannica Online.

The newest way to access the Encyclopaedia Britannica can be experienced by logging onto URL site <http://www.eb.com>, says William J. Bowe, executive vice president and general counsel of the 2,800-employee Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. (Before you get too excited, the use of Britannica Online isn't free. The preceding address is for trial use—an annual subscription runs \$150 a year.)

Both Bowe and Associate Counsel Keith B. McDonnell like to promote the site as a legal tool. "Lawyers are the kind of people who are Britannica's customers," Bowe says. "Because of the nature of their work and their requirements for authoritative, unbiased information, consulting Britannica is a fairly common occurrence."



William J. Bowe

"With the on-line version," says McDonnell, "we had unlimited space that enabled us to include the entire text of the printed set, an additional 1,200 articles that don't appear in the printed set and a number of classic articles from previous editions."

McDonnell refers to Britannica classics—articles written by people such as Albert Einstein that appeared in older sets, but had to be cut from more recent sets. "With 32 volumes," he adds, "you're restricted. For example, in order to put in President Clinton, you have to pull someone out."

A GODSEND

Bowe and McDonnell are part of the four-lawyer staff that attends to Encyclopaedia Britannica's (EB) legal needs. Britannica Online, Britannica CD (the CD-ROM version of the Encyclopaedia) and Merriam Webster CD (the CD-ROM version of the Merriam Webster 10th Collegiate Dictionary and Thesaurus, produced by one of the 40 subsidiaries of EB) are just three of the recently released products to which Bowe's legal staff must attend. With all these high-tech products, it's no wonder Bowe and his staff use a wide variety of legal technology tools to support their own efforts.

The ability of legal technology to "powerfully enhance all of our attorneys' communications capabilities has been a godsend," says Bowe. "The company overall has reduced staff, and we've found that technology in the legal area and elsewhere has played a role in that."

Bowe has had a PC on his desk for most of the 10 years he's been working at EB. "It's such a part of my life," he says, "I couldn't imagine operating without it."

Creative use of the Internet isn't the only way the EB legal department uses technology.

TECHNOLOGY

Both Bowe and McDonnell—as well as the other members of the legal staff—are heavy users of e-mail. They currently subscribe to and use *Microsoft Mail* and are investigating other packages.

"Using our existing e-mail we can send documents back and forth to each other or outside the company," explains McDonnell. "A lot of times during the day I won't even see Bill, but we'll communicate via e-mail."

Three attorneys are on one side of the floor, while Bowe is on the other. So rather than walk across the floor all the time, the four attorneys send things over e-mail to one another. They're also proficient word processors (*WordPerfect for Windows 6.0*). And they've adopted the Lotus Suite of products for many of their other tasks. The Lotus Suite consists of *Ami Pro*, *Lotus 1-2-3*, *Lotus Organizer*, and *Approach* (a Windows-based database manager).

FREQUENT LOGGING

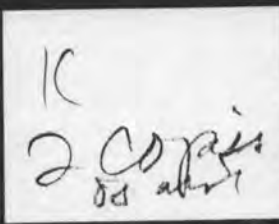
Bowe's use of the Internet isn't limited to promoting the new Britannica Online; he

logs onto several other Internet sites. These include:

- The Cornell Law School site (<http://www.law.cornell.edu/lii.table.html>), where you can get into a variety of on-line legal resources, such as project Hermes, which offers hypertext front-end access to recent Supreme Court decisions, on-line access to New York Court of Appeals decisions, access to the full text of the U.S. Code, an on-line directory of U.S. law school faculty and staff, and a variety of other legal information;

- The Internet law library of the House of

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Technology

Representatives (<http://www.pls.com:8001/>), which has laws arranged by agency, source and in similar useful ways;

- The U.S. Patent & Trademark Office web site (<http://www.uspto.gov/>), which both Bowe and McDonnell use for trademark information; and

- The U.S. Copyright Office site (<http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/>), for copyright matters.

PAPER? FOR WHAT?

Bowe is a strong advocate of *Lotus Organizer*, an application he says "serves the function of telephone directory internally and externally. *Organizer* has consigned the Rolodex to the ash bin of history."

Bowe is also a frequent user and believer in Delrina's *WinFax*. *WinFax* gives him the ability to send and receive faxes from his PC. "I've found the desktop fax capability of Delrina *WinFax* to be of enormous help," he says. "It goes through my local PC. I have a dedicated line so I'm not sharing a modem on the network. In terms of time saving it's instant and eliminates the delay experienced when faxes come into a central fax machine."

Although Bowe and his staff have Dell 486 PCs on each of their desks that are tied into an enterprise-wide network, Bowe also uses a Sharp OZ-9520 Wizard Palm-Top with a fax/modem.

"I threw away a paper scheduler years

"The company overall has reduced staff, and we've found that technology in the legal area and elsewhere has played a role in that," says William J. Bowe, executive vice president and general counsel of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

ago," he explains. "The Wizard has a QWERTY keyboard and fits inside the breast pocket of my jacket. I use it for all my appointment scheduling, and it serves as my portable telephone directory for business and personal use." The Wizard also has a PC link that permits Bowe to back up and search its information on his PC.

McDonnell, whose job involves obtaining all trademarks, prosecuting copyright and trademark infringements, and other licensing and transactional work, uses a wide range of software applications to help him with his work.

He has used one application—*Approach*—to build several tailored databases for many functions. Some of them include:

- The Living Database, a records management application that tracks all the department's legal files. "Say there's a contract with *Time*," says McDonnell. "We use a filing code scheme to organize and track our files. Encyclopaedia Britannica is company 01; CON is the acronym for CONTRACT. Then we list the name of the file. For example, this file could be labeled 01 CON Time NewMedia." Their

Approach database also tracks most of the basic information about the file.

- The copyright database, which tracks all copyright registrations.

- The domestic trademark registration file, which tracks the registrants for all domestic trademarks.

- The foreign trademark registration file, which tracks basic subsidiary information on more than 40 EB subsidiaries.

- The infringement database, which tracks all of EB's infringement matters and generates a report that McDonnell distributes on a quarterly basis. The report goes to various officers in the company, keeping them apprised of the status of all of the company's current infringement matters.

"Specialized databases are quickly designed with *Approach*," says Bowe. "It helped us adapt to tracking the growing number of Internet infringements. They've been minor to date, but we feel we're prepared if that changes."

McDonnell has also used *Lotus 1-2-3* for various spreadsheet applications. For example, he recently used it to track data on the last three years of an employment

claim in Puerto Rico.

Of course the EB legal staff's use of CD-ROM products isn't limited to the Britannica CD or Merriam Webster. They also use some tax package CDs—RIA's Onpoint—that help them with the tax issues involved with selling Britannica Online internationally. And they subscribe to the "BNA Portfolio Plus" on CD-ROM and "FastTax" electronic tax forms.

One of the things McDonnell likes most about using CD-ROM products is the way they are accessed. All of the products he uses are available on a networked CD-ROM device. Log into the network and you have access to these products, without having to worry about swapping discs or changing titles.

For on-line computer-assisted legal research capabilities, the legal department subscribes to Lexis-Nexis. McDonnell describes having access to services such as Lexis or Westlaw as a necessity for large or small law departments.

Although the EB legal staff has an excellent and sophisticated technology platform currently in place, they anticipate expanding their use of other applications. "I'm looking forward to the improvement of the network functions in terms of scheduling," says Bowe. "We're in the process of getting a network scheduler. And we will shortly be changing our e-mail system away from Microsoft to one that is more efficient and better for permitting remote access from home and on the road."

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