
AUTOMATING LABOR INTENSIVE WORK PROCESSES

The Judiciary will continue working on various systems over the next few years to create efficiencies by automating labor intensive work processes. The following highlights several of the major efforts.

Financial Accounting System for Tomorrow

The Judiciary continues nationwide implementation of its new financial system. Currently operating successfully in four test sites, the Judiciary is preparing to implement the system in additional courts.

FAS₄T will provide a single court financial accounting system linked to the Judiciary's central accounting system. When fully implemented, it will produce significant administrative efficiencies by automating and streamlining many financial recording and reporting activities. Further, the system will produce timelier, more reliable reports to enhance decision-making and will improve internal control processes to reduce the risk of potential fraud or abuse.

Important to maximizing the value of the new financial system is passage of pending legislation to appoint statutory certifying officers in the Judiciary to verify receipt of and funding availability for goods and services. This lack of authority results in duplicate voucher and payment reviews, redundant paperwork, unnecessary copying of documents, and related administrative inefficiencies.

Criminal Justice Act Replacement System

The Judiciary is implementing a new payment and management information system for panel attorneys. Linked to the Judiciary's official accounting system, the new system will provide a more efficient means of making payments to panel attor-

neys. Further, it will allow the Judiciary to collect additional, more timely, and better quality data to improve management of the program. The data enhancements will improve the Judiciary's ability to conduct financial and other analyses of the program, as well as assist judges with routine voucher payment activities. For example, judges will be able to compare a payment request with data on similar cases to assist with determining the bill's appropriateness before approving payment.

Integrated Library System

The Judiciary continues implementing its new integrated library system (ILS). The commercial-off-the-shelf system is a suite of interrelated software programs that automate library functions based on a single bibliographic database. In October 1998, all circuit libraries began using ILS to purchase lawbooks.

The new system streamlines four major work processes: (1) procuring and managing lawbooks for 108 libraries and more than 2,000 chambers and office collections; (2) tracking the receipt of thousands of journals, magazines, and other publications published on a regular schedule; (3) maintaining records of library collections; and (4) tracking borrowed library materials. In addition to performing these activities more efficiently when the ILS is fully implemented, the Judiciary expects to realize the following benefits from ILS: more accurate reporting of purchases, better inventory control and cost management, easier and more accurate serials control, improved research capabilities, enhanced chambers access to library catalogs and information, and easier and more accurate tracking of borrowed materials.

Magistrate Judge Statistics Through Automated Records

The Judiciary plans to begin implementing a new automated means of collecting magistrate judge statistics. Currently in the design phase, this project aims to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness with which the Judiciary obtains, presents, and uses the magistrate judge workload information that Congress requires it to collect.

With this initiative, the Judiciary will capture required data automatically during docketing. This will eliminate the substantially manual, tedious process chambers' staff currently use to assemble, enter, and report workload data. Magistrate

judges and their staffs will be able to reallocate time saved to core adjudicative duties.

The effort also will improve significantly the quality of the Judiciary's statistical data on the duties and workloads of magistrate judges and on cases in district courts since data will be collected automatically in a uniform and reliable way rather than through disparate manual record-keeping processes. Besides improving data accuracy, this will facilitate data analysis, such as nationwide comparisons of magistrate judges' workloads and enhance the Judiciary's flexibility in presenting and reporting data.

Probation and Pretrial Services Automated Case Tracking System

The Judiciary will implement nationwide a new case management system in probation and pretrial services offices. Called PACTS, the system will vastly improve the effectiveness and efficiency of probation and pretrial services offices.

Probation and pretrial services offices will have access to PACTS from the computers in their offices as well as from the mobile computers the Judiciary will eventually provide to officers conducting supervision and investigation activities (see page 9). PACTS will provide 1) electronic generation, storage, and retrieval of all investigation and supervision case information; 2) electronic retrieval of presentence reports, pretrial services reports, chronological records, and other vital reports and records; 3) integrated access to the Judiciary's criminal case management system; and 4) defendant/offender imaging. The system will automate many of the tasks that a probation or pretrial services officer currently handles manually, thereby enabling officers to focus more fully on serving the needs of the defendant or offender, the court, and the community.

Jury Management System

The Judiciary is implementing nationwide a new jury management system. It will modernize and standardize current processes for managing juries in district courts.

District courts currently use one of three processes for jury selection, management, and tracking. These include manual in-house processes, partially automated

in-house systems, or vendor-provided systems. Implementation of a single standard system will eliminate or reduce inefficient time-consuming manual work processes and rising vendor support costs.

With the new system, all courts will handle in-house jury selection, management, and tracking. The software will build qualified wheels, print and scan qualification questionnaires, print summonses, track jurors, maintain statistics, and provide financial calculations for juror payment. The system will produce many benefits. Most notably, it will reduce juror processing time and the cost of jury selection, management, and tracking; create efficiencies by eliminating labor intensive and redundant functions; improve data quality; provide immediate access to race, gender, and ethnicity information in response to jury composition challenges; and enhance juror satisfaction through better service.

Integration of Automation in Data Collection

The Judiciary is implementing recommendations from a recent study on how to use automation to improve the efficiency of collecting statistical data and to produce more timely information. Completed in October 1998 by an outside contractor, the study evaluated current automated systems for collecting Judiciary statistical data and presented short-, mid-, and long-range recommendations for improving operations through automation.

Personnel Systems Modernization Project

The Judiciary is modernizing its automated personnel systems and related work processes. Most notably, the Judiciary is preparing to implement a new personnel and payroll system; an automated system to track and report to carriers employee health benefit option choices; and a networked system for monitoring the use of official personnel files.

The Judiciary is using commercial-off-the-shelf software, which it is modifying to meet specific requirements. The new systems will produce more accurate records and will reduce the amount of printing, copying, postage, long distance calls and faxes, and staff time associated with processing personnel actions. Another important benefit is that courts will have ready access to payroll cost data needed to make personnel decisions.