Moving Justice Forward

The implementation of Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) will change the way courts will conduct business in the future. This quarterly bulletin provides information about these changes and the work that lies ahead.

HOW MDEC will Change the Work of Judges

Just as MDEC will change the way clerks and attorneys work, as described in previous issues of *Moving Justice Forward*, it also will transform the way judges work. Starting with case assignment, and working through the life of a case, the things judges now do with paper will be done electronically for the most part.

One of the biggest benefits for judges, as well as clerks and the public, is that MDEC will allow for immediate access to any case. Think about how much time is wasted when trying to locate files and pleadings. Staff and citizens expect immediate access to a case; now everyone will have simultaneous and immediate access in accordance with their level of authority.

Another benefit for judges is that once all courts are using MDEC, information about a party with a case in other jurisdictions will be accessible. With interoperability between the courts an correctional facilities, the status of incarcerated individuals will be available much more quickly.

Changes to Chambers Work

Judges will see modifications to work done both in their chambers and in the courtroom. Cases will be routed electronically by the court clerk to the judge's chambers where judicial support may first sort and prioritize the work, then send it to the judge. The electronic file will allow for document flagging and bookmarking for ease of navigation, using a touch screen computer in the courtroom. Judges will be able to keep electronic notes. The work queue can be sorted by case type or action, and can provide notifications of new and overdue items. Judges will be able to revise draft orders and sign them electronically. Templates for orders and other frequently produced documents will be available.

Maryland
Judiciary

HOW MDEC will Change the Work of Judges (cont.)

Changes to Courtroom Case Processing

Future courtroom case processing will focus on real time data entry. There are many benefits of immediate data entry, including:

⇒ Ability to provide information/notices to litigants in the courtroom;
⇒ More timely processing of and access to judicial proceedings;
⇒ Reduction in duplicative work between the courtroom clerk and the office clerk;
⇒ Decreased reliance on the paper court file; and
⇒ More timely data exchanges with justice partners (via "the bus." See "MDEC Gets on the Bus" on page 3).

Yet another way courtroom operations will change is the manner in which exhibits are shared with jurors and attorneys. Judges will be able to send electronic exhibits (scanned documents and pictures) to monitors at the attorneys' tables and the juror box for their review.

Looking at the big picture, the net effect will be to reduce the backlog in processing court decisions, and provide citizens with more effective and efficient administration of justice.

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MDEC Gets on the Bus

By Mark Bittner, Director of Judicial Information Systems

MDEC requires that lots of information be transported electronically. That kind of 'transportation' involves many different types of 'vehicles' and 'passengers'. Many of the passengers are familiar to us – judges, clerks, attorneys, and litigants. Some are not as easily recognized perhaps, but are very important to the full cycle of justice administration. Passengers in this category include the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, Motor Vehicle Administration, Department of Juvenile Services, several law enforcement agencies (state, county and local) and victim advocacy groups. Still others are computer systems that need to talk to each other to provide the whole range of functions needed to operate the courts – systems that provide support for collecting revenue (cash registers), accounting systems, land records, business licenses, marriage licenses, etc.

Exchanging data and information between the Judiciary and these passengers has been akin to operating a large fleet of taxis to pick up each passenger and take them to and from the Judiciary's case management systems where the core data about cases is maintained. Each of these 'taxis' has been designed specifically for the passenger it is carrying. This transportation mode was built little by little over a long period of time. As you can imagine, a lot of gas and a large number of 'mechanics' are needed to keep the fleet running smoothly. It is not efficient.

As we move to MDEC, we want to find a better mode of transportation to get data into and out of the Odyssey system. Enter the 'bus' (short for Enterprise Service Bus). Designed to carry many 'passengers' with defined 'stops' where passengers can either provide or get the data they need, technology is being used to communicate with other computer applications.

Rick Parker, aka "Bus Driver," heads the Enterprise Architecture Team at JIS and is responsible for the "bus."

Mary Hutchins, aka "Ticket Taker," heads the JIS Interoperability Team, which is responsible for exchanging MDEC data with justice partners and customers.

MDEC Gets on the Bus (cont.)

One example is the revenue collection function for GEARS, the Judiciary's new centralized software system to manage and coordinate procurement and other behind-the-scenes business operations. The GEARS bus is responsible for transporting revenue data from several cash register applications, both old and new. A bus 'stop' is created for each cash register application. Cash register data gets on the bus at each of these stops and is carried by the bus to the GEARS 'terminal,' where all of the data gets off and goes into GEARS for processing.

Why do it this way?

When MDEC is implemented, a new cash register passenger will be added and an old passenger, UCS cash registers, will be removed. Using the bus approach, only a new 'stop' for MDEC needs to be created along the bus route. Nothing needs to be done to GEARS to accept the new MDEC data – it just gets off at the GEARS terminal. If you expand this concept across hundreds of 'taxis' that are now in use, you get an idea of how much time and effort can be saved.

This design is currently used to make Judiciary Case Search work. Data from eight different case management systems, each with a different format, hop on the bus, and the bus translates the data into one format that makes Case Search look like it is all coming from one system.

The JIS bus driver is Rick Parker. He has been working for more than five years to design and create the JIS bus. Parker and his team will work with all of our justice passengers to define and build the bus 'stops' needed to smoothly interoperate with MDEC.

Mary Hutchins is the tour guide and ticket-taker for the bus. She works with all our external passengers (state, county and local agencies) to provide directions to the bus stops and coordinate using the bus to exchange data.

As you can see, without the bus, launching MDEC would be nearly impossible. Without the bus, we wouldn't get very far.
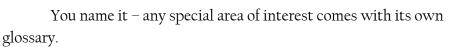
> Without the bus, the implementation of all the major IT projects the Judiciary has undertaken would be nearly impossible. Without the bus, we wouldn't get very far.

Remember a time when you took up a new sport or hobby? In addition to learning the rules of the sport and training your muscles to make the moves, you also learned the words that are unique to that particular activity.

With football, for example, you learned about "first and ten," touchdown, offsides, and "hike!"

In sailing, you learned about fore and aft, port and starboard, jib and main, and "jibe ho!"

In music, you learned about scales, bass clef and treble clef, adagio and allegro, crescendo and decrescendo, and "forte!"

You name it – any special area of interest comes with its own glossary.

The same is true in the management of large IT projects. There is a whole dictionary of terms that allow people to convey complex ideas in a word or two. For example, the MDEC implementation team has been spending a lot of time "sprinting" the last few months. No, they are not running races. They are conducting **"business process sprints"** with subject matter experts. This term refers to going through a particular case type as it will be done in MDEC, to make sure that the way the software is configured supports the goal of the business process.

Concurrent with sprints, teams started **"design sessions."** That means they are working with programmers from Tyler who are creating the new programs for the Odyssey software that will address the gaps and provide the functionality needed in Maryland.

You can add these terms to others we have already talked about in previous issues, including gap/fit assessment, database conversion, and SME (subject matter expert).

"Technical terminology evolves due to the need for experts in a field to communicate with precision and brevity."

Wikipedia

Willie Sanchez of Tyler Technologies facilitates a business process sprint.

Consistent Court Practices

The transition to a new case management system that will be used by all levels of courts statewide involves many decisions about the business practices that will be used in the new system. The system is then configured to accommodate these practices.

Consistent Court Practices (CCPs) is a process for identifying and developing standardized business practices. CCPs are important because they:

⇒ Promote reliability and consistency in statewide statistical data and reporting.
⇒ Promote consistent application of court rules or statutes where various interpretations could be made.
⇒ Educate court staff about the features available in the system.
⇒ Allow the automation of core court case management functions by reducing complexity caused by practice variation.
⇒ Provide a predictable environment for testing future software releases.
⇒ Promote development of reliable reference materials for court staff including online help and other training materials.

Not every process can or should be consistent – certain local practices must continue to be supported. Without a large degree of consistency in business practices, however, a system cannot measure, count and automate effectively.

Decisions about the following practices have been approved to date by the Executive Steering Committee.

Case Numbering

Examples of how the new case numbers will look:

D-021-CV-13-000001 – This denotes District Court - Dorchester County - Civil - Calendar Year 2013 - sequential number

C-07-CR-13-000001 – This denotes Circuit Court - Cecil County - Criminal - Calendar Year 2013 - sequential number

Party Based System

Information in the system about a party can be reused in another case, thus reducing data entry. Any court in the state will be able to view a party and see other cases in the system, including information about outstanding warrants, costs and fees, and special requirements (such as need for an interpreter). Reuse of party records where possible will take full advantage of MDEC's party centric functionality.

"Not every process can or should be consistent – certain local practices must continue to be supported. Without a large degree of consistency in business practices, however, a system cannot measure, count and automate effectively."

Carla Jones
Deputy Executive Director,
Court Operations

Consistent Court Practices (cont.)

Juvenile Cases

All judges will have access to juvenile cases.

Public Record and Court Record Definition

Confirmation information from e-filing applications, a judge's personal notes on a case, and undocketable electronic information are not public records. A schedule for purging information from the e-filing application will be determined.

Cause of Action

The Judiciary will use causes of action for all non-criminal case types. Causes of action are sometimes referred to as "issues." This will allow us to track specific claims or requests for relief from petition to final disposition.

Standardized Form Elements

Decisions regarding the format of forms, window envelopes, headers and footers, and alignment of case and reference numbers on the forms have been established. District Court forms will have the District Court seal. Circuit Court forms will bear the court's individual seal. For the pilot, only the typewritten name of the clerk and title will be included.

Conversion of District Court Voided Cases

Voided traffic citations will be converted to MDEC since they are in the mainframe, visible on Case Search and currently used in a validation interface with Maryland State Police. Voided District Court criminal cases will not be converted to MDEC as they represent true errors and are not visible to anyone. DV Office voided cases will not be converted.

District Court Criminal/Traffic Warrants Conversion

All related cases/citations will include a warrant with the same warrant number.

And now you can add "consistent court practices" (CCP's) to your IT Project dictionary.

The consistent court practice decisions highlighted here are the first to be determined. Watch for decisions on additional consistent court practices in future issues.

Styles of Handling Change

In the first issue of *Moving Justice Forward* we talked about dealing with change. In this issue, we will further explore the topic of change by looking at different approaches people use when they make decisions. Understanding your approach may give you insights as to how you can approach change in a positive way.

There are many tools professionals use to analyze personality traits and decision-making styles. It is important to understand that using these tools provides insight, but the tools are not always accurate. Kate Ward states, "While most of us have one dominant style, the reality is that we all have a little bit of each of the four styles within us ... You should use the personality style model to guide your own behavior, not to try to mold or change other people's behavior." [1]

The four decision-making styles, as defined by Alan J. Rowe and Richard O. Mason in their book "Managing with Style: A Guide to Understanding, Assessing and Improving Decision-Making"[2] are analytical, conceptual, behavioral and directive. Read about each style in the left column on the next page, and choose the one you feel best describes you. The right column has information about how you might react to change, depending on which decision-making style best describes you.

In thinking about changes that will be brought about by MDEC, ask yourself if you will react to the change in the way summarized in Column B for your decision-making style. If so, what would be good about that response? Would you want to respond differently?

Does knowing something about various styles of taking in information and reacting to change help you better understand yourself and others with whom you work? Based on what you know about your decision-making style, is there anything you want to do to prepare yourself for change?

> "If nothing ever changed, there'd be no butterflies."
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> Author Unknown

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[1] Kate Ward, "Personality Style at Work – the Secret to Working with (Almost) Anyone. "McGraw-Hill, 2012.

[2] These styles are described in Rowe and Mason's book, "Managing with Style: A Guide to Understanding, Assessing and Improving Decision-Making ."(San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Management Series, 1987).

Styles of Handling Change (cont.)

Style	How you may handle change
Analytical Style – Technical, logical, careful, methodical, needs much data, likes order, enjoys problem-solving, enjoys structure, enjoys scientific study, and enjoys working alone.	If you use an analytical style, you see change as a challenging puzzle to be solved. You need plenty of time to gather information, analyze data, and draw conclusions. You may resist change if you are not given enough time to think it through.
Conceptual Style – Creative and artistic, future oriented, likes to brainstorm, wants independence, uses judgment, optimistic, uses ideas vs. data, looks at the big picture, rebellious and opinionated and committed to principles or a vision.	If you use the conceptual style, you are interested in how change fits into the big picture. You want to be involved in defining what needs to change and why. You may resist change if you feel excluded from participating in the change process.
Behavioral Style – Supportive of others, empathetic, wants affiliation, nurtures others, communicates easily, uses instinct, avoids stress, avoids conflict, relies on feelings instead of data, and enjoys team/group efforts.	If you use the behavioral style, you want to know how everyone feels about the changes ahead. You work best when you know that the whole group is supportive of each other and that everyone champions the change process. If the change adversely affects someone in the group, you may perceive the change as a crisis.
Directive Style – Aggressive, acts rapidly, takes charge, persuasive and/or is manipulative, uses rules, needs power/status, impatient, productive, single-minded and enjoys individual achievements.	If you use the directive style, you want specifics on how the change will affect you and what your own role will be during the change process. If you know the rules of the change process and the desired outcome you will act rapidly and aggressively to achieve change goals. You may resist change if the rules or anticipated results are not clearly defined.

Which description best describes your style for handling change?

How might you best prepare yourself for change, given your style?