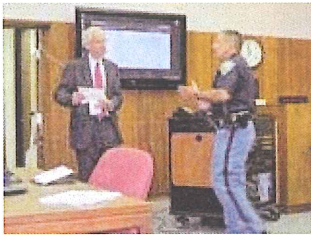


Clark County joins state's court case-management system

*By Matt Thacker
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Clark County has joined a new computer system for keeping court records that will eventually connect every county in the state. The new system is expected to save the county money.

Although Odyssey has been in place in Clark County for a couple of weeks, Indiana Supreme Court Justice Frank Sullivan Jr. officially unveiled the website on Monday when he visited Jeffersonville.



Indiana State Police Sgt. Jerry Goodin demonstrates how police can send traffic citation information directly to the state's computer system, Odyssey, by writing a fake citation to Supreme Court Justice Frank Sullivan Jr. Staff photo by Matt Thacker

There are 23 different unrelated case-management systems in Clark County, but they do not communicate with each other. There are 59 courts in 21 counties, including Floyd, Harrison and Washington, that have moved to the state's system.

"This advanced technology will mean better service the citizens of Clark County who need to access the clerk's office and the courts," Sullivan said.

Current and retired judges, along with state representatives and law enforcement officials, attended the presentation.

Superior Court No. 1 Judge Vicki Carmichael first approached County Clerk Barbara Bratcher Haas before she even took office and asked if she would be on board with being a pilot county for the program.

"I said, 'If you believe in it then I'm on board,'" Bratcher Haas said.

The county had been using a case-management program through the National Associations of System Administrators, a private vendor. There was a \$1,000 start-up fee, and there would have been an annual fee if the county had continued to use it.

Circuit Court Judge Dan Moore praised the new system for giving people the ability to easily view court records from other counties, while Superior Court No. 3 Judge Joe Weber praised the court staffs for their work in learning the new system.

Carmichael said there had been a seamless transition to the new system, and she was pleased that the public can view case information online without going into the courthouse.

Superior Court No. 2 Judge Jerry Jacobi voiced some of the concerns of court staffs that it takes much longer for them to enter information.

"Odyssey does a lot more things once the information is inputted [but] it takes longer to put the information in the system," he said. "Our staff will work through it."

Sullivan said that the process of upgrading to a better system always takes longer at first. He said Odyssey allows court clerks to keep up with many tasks that have been mandated by the state legislature.

"This system does more than the old system did," he said. "There is definitely going to be a transition period."

An estimated 40,000 new cases are filed in Clark County trial courts each year. As with the old Nasa-view system, the public has access to court dates and other information about cases online. The new website is at mycase.in.gov.

Odyssey was first installed in 10 courts in December 2007 on a pilot basis under the Supreme Court's Judicial Technology and Automation Committee. JTAC pays for the computer software, including all maintenance and support, which means there is no charge for the county.

Indiana invested \$7.7 million in the statewide licensing for Odyssey.

Sullivan said Odyssey is JTAC's "most ambitious undertaking" but there have been several technological improvements in recent years. Computer software sends notification of the resolution of all traffic cases through the courts to the Bureau of Motor Vehicles, Indiana State Police, and 160 other law enforcement agencies, use scanners to issue traffic citations and warnings using JTAC computer software.

Notification of all domestic violence protection orders are also sent to law enforcement.

"This actually for police officers is the greatest thing since sliced bread," ISP Sgt. Jerry Goodin said.

He added that the new system means they can look up information on the computers rather than taking a trip to the courts regularly. He said it would save them thousands of hours of police time and thousands of dollars.

In the past, police would have to manually file any traffic citations. Goodin demonstrated how a citation now is entered directly into Odyssey, and officers can even leave electronic notes for the prosecutor's office.