



Courts in line for new computer system

Changes designed to make records more accessible

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By next summer, criminals in Cass County will have a harder time hoodwinking the courts thanks to a new case management system the county is implementing.

The county recently received from the Indiana Supreme Court a \$10,345.99 grant that will help with the deployment of a case management system. The county will join 22 other Indiana counties already using this system.

Cass Superior Court II Judge Rick Maughmer said the Supreme Court was hoping that all 92 Indiana counties would eventually move to the system. Right now there are 23 different and unrelated court record management systems used in the state. Having a statewide system would allow everything to be standardized, Maughmer said.

"Every court will be interconnected with this system," said CJ Gilsinger, the county's information technology manager.

That means when Maughmer is handling a case, he will be able to get on the system and see if the defendant has had any trouble with the law in other Indiana counties.

"People will no longer be able to game the system like Bonnie and Clyde did," Maughmer said.

With the current antiquated system, Maughmer said, he has difficulty determining whether someone is lying to him when they say they have no warrants for their arrest in another county.

With the new system, Gilsinger said, people won't be able to lie to the judge and get away with it.

Odyssey also allows anyone to access public records remotely by visiting a website rather than having to make a trip to the courthouse to get information.

Maughmer said any lawyer, reporter or private citizen would be able to look up records as soon as they're entered into the system. "It's pretty cool," Gilsinger said. He noted, however, that the current system, called MHI, has worked well for years.

"It was purchased in the late 1970s," Gilsinger said. "It's a good system. It works. It's just not user friendly."

Maughmer had a different opinion.

"I hate it," he said. "I grew up with Microsoft Word. This system doesn't use Word documents. It's an antiquated system that I can't even use."

He said he routinely used the paper documents from court to avoid logging on to the system, which requires him to enter a user name and password. Maughmer said he had no idea how to navigate the system.

The Odyssey system will not only connect the various courts in the state, it will also connect the three Cass County courts with the probation department and the county clerk.

Maughmer said Odyssey would completely change the way the clerk does business. The system has a component that manages finances.

"I think it will make keeping track of money a little simpler," said Cass County Clerk Beth Liming.

She says she's excited about the system.

Gilsinger says that before the system can be installed, about a dozen computers at the county building will have to be replaced. The grant money will cover the cost of replacements. Other than that, he said, there isn't much work involved in implementing Odyssey. He noted that system is projected to be up and running by next summer.

"The judges are in favor of this happening tomorrow," Maughmer said.