

MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS

ANNUAL REPORT



1999

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INTRODUCTION

The Michigan Court of Appeals was created by the Constitution of 1963, Article VI, Section 1, under which the State of Michigan has “one court of justice.”

The judicial power of the state is vested exclusively in one court of justice which shall be divided into one supreme court, one court of appeals, one trial court of general jurisdiction known as the circuit court, one probate court, and courts of limited jurisdiction that the legislature may establish by a two-thirds vote of the members elected to and serving in each house.

When it first began operation in 1965, the bench of the Court of Appeals was comprised of nine judges. As filings with the Court grew from a low of 1,235 in 1965 to a high of 13,352 in 1992, the Legislature increased the size of the bench to 12 judges in 1969, to 18 judges in 1974, to 24 judges in 1988, and to 28 judges in 1993. Originally, the Court’s offices were located only in Lansing, Detroit and Grand Rapids. The Southfield office was opened in June, 1995 after the last increase in judges, when the Legislature apportioned the state into four districts for election purposes.

The Court now has facilities in six locations across the state. A total of 250 employees (judges and staff) work in these locations, linked by a state-wide computer network that is supported by the Court’s in-house Information Systems Department. On any given day, close to 1,000 docket entries are made on the state-wide computer system by Court employees. At the same time, mail staff in four principal locations are processing approximately 300 newly filed documents each day for movement between offices or for docketing in the local office.

The people who are the Court of Appeals work daily to effectuate its mandate: “To secure the just, speedy, and economical determination of every action and to avoid the consequences of error that does not affect the substantial rights of the parties.” Michigan Court Rule 1.105. As will be seen in this 1999 Annual Report, that mandate drives the Court’s continued evolution as a critical part of the Michigan justice system.

* * * * *

The 1999 Annual Report of the Court of Appeals is the first that this Court has published in such a format. The publication is intended to provide the Court and its customers with a wide range of information and data about its performance in the preceding year. We hope that all readers will contact us with questions or comments about its content.

Carl L. Gromek, Chief Clerk / Research Director
Sandra Schultz Mengel, Chief Deputy Clerk
Larry Royster, Deputy Research Director

JUDGES OF THE COURT OF APPEALS

The Michigan Court of Appeals is a high-volume intermediate appellate court. Although divided into four districts for election purposes, the Court's twenty-eight judges sit in panels of three and rotate with equal frequency with each of the other judges and among the three courtroom locations (Detroit, Lansing and Grand Rapids). A decision of any panel of judges is controlling throughout the state and is reviewable by the Michigan Supreme Court on leave granted.

	Elected or Appointed to Bench	Current Term Expires on January 1 of
Bandstra, Richard A. , Chief Judge	1994	2003
Whitbeck, William C., Chief Judge Pro Tem	1997	2005
Holbrook, Jr., Donald E.	1974	2003
Kelly, Michael J.	1974	2001
Hood, Harold	1982	2003
Gibbs, Roman S.	1982	2001
Sawyer, David H.	1986	2005
McDonald, Gary R.	1987	2001
Doctoroff, Martin M.	1987	2005
Murphy, William B.	1988	2001
Cavanagh, Mark J.	1988	2003
Griffin, Richard Allen	1988	2003
Neff, Janet T.	1988	2001
Jansen, Kathleen	1989	2001
Fitzgerald, E. Thomas	1990	2003
White, Helene N.	1992	2005
Saad, Henry William	1994	2003
Hoekstra, Joel P.	1994	2005
Markey, Jane E.	1994	2003
O'Connell, Peter D.	1994	2001
Smolenski, Michael R.	1994	2001
Gage, Hilda R.	1997	2001
Talbot, Michael J.	1998	2003
Wilder, Kurtis T.	1998	2001
Zahra, Brian K.	1999	2001
Collins, Jeffrey G.	1999	2001
Meter, Patrick M.	1999	2001
Owens, Donald S.	1999	2001

JUDGES BY DISTRICT



District IV
 Richard A. Griffin
 Donald E. Holbrook, Jr.
 Gary R. McDonald
 Patrick M. Meter
 Peter D. O'Connell
 Donald S. Owens
 William C. Whitbeck

District II
 Mark J. Cavanagh
 Martin M. Doctoroff
 E. Thomas Fitzgerald
 Hilda R. Gage
 Kathleen Jansen
 Michael J. Kelly
 Henry William Saad

District III
 Richard A. Bandstra
 Joel P. Hoekstra
 Jane E. Markey
 William B. Murphy
 Janet T. Neff
 David H. Sawyer
 Michael R. Smolenski

District I
 Jeffrey G. Collins
 Roman S. Gribbs
 Harold Hood
 Michael J. Talbot
 Helene N. White
 Kurt T. Wilder
 Brian K. Zahra

COURT PERFORMANCE: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Beginning in 1994 and continuing for the next three years, the Legislature appropriated \$2 million per year to address the Court of Appeals' 4,000+ case backlog. During this time, the Court focused on volume of dispositions and worked first on the relatively easier cases—i.e., those requiring fewer resources to process. The Court expanded its case calls from 8 to 12 panels each month utilizing visiting judges and introduced summary panels that decided routine cases without oral argument. The Court used the additional funding primarily to hire the staff needed to support these efforts. Aided by a steady decline in filings, the Court was able to dispose of the bulk of these less complex cases by the end of 1997. The remaining inventory, although not large in number, consisted of more difficult and time-consuming cases.

In recognition of the Court's ongoing need for additional resources to reduce the age of its case inventory to more closely comport with American Bar Association model standards, the Legislature continued the special appropriation in both 1998 and 1999, albeit at reduced levels of \$1.5 million per year. With these funds, the Court hired more experienced staff attorneys to handle the larger cases and reduced the number of inexperienced attorneys on staff. The Court also began configuring call panels according to the relative complexity of the cases in order to maximize the number of dispositions without unfairly burdening any particular panel of judges. These efforts, along with the drop in filings, enabled the Court of Appeals to hear cases on a first-in, first-out basis in 1999 for the first time in many years.

In evaluating its needs for the year 2000, the Court concluded that it could manage its existing case inventory with 10 fewer research attorneys and voluntarily agreed to reduce its delay reduction funding by \$550,000. That sum equated to the costs of an entire office of prehearing attorneys and so, for several reasons, the Detroit prehearing office was chosen for closure. Because the attorneys all found employment within a short time, the office closed approximately six months earlier than expected, which resulted in having 250 fewer dispositions in 1999.

Despite this, the Court was able to maintain a 100% clearance rate (i.e., the number of cases filed per year divided by the number disposed of) and a case inventory in which 86% of the cases were less than 18 months old. Although these figures are satisfactory in comparison with years past, the Court's goal is to maintain a case inventory in which 90% of the cases are less than 18 months old. This is a difficult task given the time periods required of the appellate process by the Michigan Court Rules, as illustrated by the following chart.

Timeline - Routine Civil Appeal by Right

(Without Complications or Court-Ordered Extensions)

Timeline	Event	Court Rule
	Filing of claim of appeal.	MCR 7.204
91 days	Filing of transcript.	MCR 7.210(B)(3)(b)(iv)
56 days	Filing of appellant's brief.	MCR 7.212(A)(1)(a)(iii)
28 days	Stipulation to extend time for brief.	MCR 7.212(A)(1)(a)(iii)
35 days	Filing of appellee's brief.	MCR 7.212(A)(2)(a)(ii)
28 days	Stipulation to extend time for brief.	MCR 7.212(A)(2)(a)(ii)
21 days	Filing of appellant's reply brief.	MCR 7.212(G)
21 days	Order and receive lower court record.	MCR 7.210(H)
280 days	Total time necessary to start appeal, compile briefs, receive record under the court rules.	
14 days	Refer appeal to Research Division for preparation for case call.	MCR 7.213(B)
49 days	Evaluate cases for assignment, transfer cases to the appropriate research unit, hold cases while awaiting assignment; prepare draft research reports; review and edit research reports by supervising attorney; finalize research reports; make copies and stockpile research reports in advance of case call.	
35 days	Preparation of case call for submission to nine 3-judge panels and 21-day notice period.	MCR 7.214
35 days	Entry of opinion resolving appeal. Copy of opinion sent to each party's attorney and to the trial court.	MCR 7.215(D)(2)
133 days	Total time required by Court of Appeals to prepare, submit, and resolve appeal after briefs and record are filed.	
413 DAYS	14.75 MONTHS: TOTAL TIME TO PROCESS APPEALS IN WHICH THERE ARE NO DELAYS. (BASED ON 28-DAY MONTHS)	

NOTE: The ABA model standard on case processing provides that 95% of appellate cases be disposed of within 12 months of filing. Such a standard cannot be met by the Court of Appeals. Under the Michigan Court Rules, record preparation and briefing in a "perfect" appeal consumes a minimum of ten months (*exclusive* of the briefing extensions that may be granted by the Court under the rules, and assuming that each "month" is comprised of 28 days).

CLERK'S OFFICE

1999: A Year To Solidify Gains and Prepare for Technological Change.

- Decentralization was completed in each of the four district offices of the Clerk.
- A pilot project was approved for the submission and decision of pending motions and applications for leave among all *four* districts.
- The legacy mainframe docketing system was retired and a new client/server intranet browser docketing system was unveiled in mid-1999.

Decentralization Implemented In All District Offices.

Prior to 1998, all documents filed with the Court to initiate an appeal or original proceeding were sent to the Lansing office regardless where they were initially received by the Court. In Lansing, a file was opened and the documents were reviewed for conformity with the court rules and with jurisdictional prerequisites.

The attorneys and support staff who performed these functions were housed in Lansing. And the commissioners (also historically located only in Lansing) reviewed applications for leave to appeal and drafted commissioner reports which accompanied the applications when they were submitted to motion docket panels for resolution. Only after the Clerk's Office review was complete and all defects had been cured, and after orders granting leave were entered, were the files forwarded to the geographically proper district offices for processing during the pendency of the appeal.

Although the centralized plan served the Court well during its early years, the format proved to be cumbersome as the caseload expanded and public expectations of speedy turn-around increased.

In June 1998, the first on-site commissioner began working in the Southfield clerk's office as an experiment with decentralization. The experiment was positively received by the public, the judges, and the staff, and by June 1999 on-site attorneys had been assigned to each of the four district offices of the Clerk. As we move into 2000, the Court's handling of incoming applications for leave has been fully decentralized.

Expansion of Motion Docket Panels to All Four Districts.

A natural corollary of the decentralization of the Court's handling of incoming applications for leave to appeal was the distribution of pending motions and applications to motion dockets in each of the four districts. Historically, the

Court had maintained a rotation of only three separate motion dockets, based on the early division of the Court into only three districts (Lansing, Grand Rapids and Detroit). Although the Court was reorganized in 1994 to include four districts (adding Southfield), the motion docket rotation was not similarly expanded until a pilot project was implemented in January 2000.

The addition of the fourth motion docket panel will have a number of benefits for the Court and the people it serves. The availability of a motion docket in each district will allow for more expedited processing and submission of emergency filings to a panel where the pleadings are filed. Traditional commissioner matters (applications for leave, for instance) will be more equitably distributed among the four districts. Annually, the majority of the motion docket panels will be fully comprised of judges located in the same district as the submitting clerk's office. This local relationship will enhance the Clerk's Office's ability to properly support the panels with immediate access to the file, the record, and legal analysis.

New Intranet Browser Docketing System Unveiled in July 1999.

The work of the Clerk's Office was radically benefited with the July 1999 unveiling of a new intranet browser docketing system that is Year-2000 compliant. The Court's Information Systems Department began working on the docketing component of the browser many years before, and they were joined by an interdisciplinary team of Court staff in late 1998. This joint team worked through mid-1999 to fine-tune a docketing system that is fully responsive to all users.

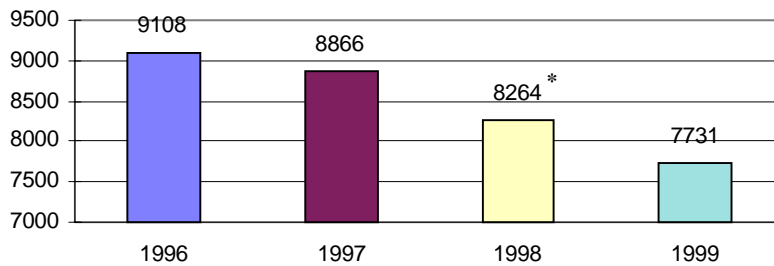
On the new system, data entry is facilitated by the introduction of drop-down menus of options that are linked programmatically to the Court's data analysis functions. Case dockets are presented in full text on screen and in print so that all users can more fully understand the progress of each appeal. Management tickle lists have been carefully reworked to report accurate and full information on the status of each case. And, the constitution of each month's docket of cases to be orally argued before a panel of judges for final disposition is now completely automated.

Together with the immediate impact that the new system has had on the Court's processes and procedures, it also positions the Court for the near-term implementation of a website geared to the needs of the attorneys and parties appearing before the Court. And, in the far term, the system is fully capable of supporting electronic filing initiatives that are moving inexorably toward the Court.

Caseload Statistics.

In 1999, 7731 new appeals were filed and 7715 dispositions were recorded. The clearance rate was 99.8%.

Annual Filings



*In 1998, the Court of Appeals changed the manner in which cases were counted. Prior to 1998, Court of Appeals' statistics reflected one case per each lower court number that was referenced in a file. Starting in 1998, Court statistics reflect one case for each appeals court docket number regardless how many lower court docket numbers may be referenced in that file. Court of Appeals filing trends represent both a decrease in filings and changes in case counting methods.

Court of Appeals Filings and Dispositions Per Judge

	1996	1997	1998	1999
Filed	9108	8866	8264	7731
Disposed	10842	10242	8806	7715
Judges	28	28	28	28
Filed per Judge	325	317	295	276
Disposed per Judge	387	366	315	276

Management Team.

At the close of 1999, the district offices of the Clerk were managed by: Kimberly Hauser, Detroit; Thomas Robison, Southfield; Lori Zarzecki, Grand Rapids; Hannah Watson, Lansing; and Kathleen Kane, Central (also located in Lansing).

On the Horizon.

The Clerk's Office continues its work on a manual for use by parties appearing before the Court *in propria persona*. The manual is expected to reduce the drain on Clerk's staff and Court attorney time. It will aid communication, which is otherwise negatively affected by the lack of a common vocabulary. And defective filings should be reduced. The manual is expected to be made available at the Court's public counters and via Internet access.

Deployment of a Court of Appeals website will occur early in 2000. The website is being designed to be particularly responsive to the needs of the attorneys and parties appearing before the Court. Information that is expected to be provided on the website includes the Annual Report, the Court's Internal

Operating Procedures, Frequently Asked Questions, a current edition of the Court's chapter of the Michigan Court Rules, a listing of cases scheduled to be submitted for final disposition on coming "case calls," maps and directions to the Clerk's offices and the courtrooms, media information, employment opportunities, and press releases. Once work has been completed on the manual for persons appearing *in propria persona*, that document will also be available through the website.

Although the number of new filings has decreased over the past several years, the Court anticipates an increase in the number of filings in 2000 as a result of a 21,387-case spike in pre-tort reform actions filed in the circuit courts in 1996. *Michigan's One Court of Justice 1998-99 Annual Report, p18*. These actions, which were filed in advance of the effective dates of tort reform legislation, should soon be concluding in the circuit courts and be the subjects of appeals to this Court. The Court's ability to manage its case inventory over the next several years with existing resources will greatly depend upon the number of appeals resulting from those actions.

RESEARCH DIVISION

1999: Increasing Productivity Without Compromising Quality

- Commissioners - Increased efficiencies and responsibilities through decentralization.
- Advance Research - Shouldering a heavier workload.
- Prehearing - An inexperienced but promising staff.
- Settlement Office - A new program establishing itself.

Overview of Case Types and Workload.

When cases are designated as ready for reports by the Research Division for eventual placement on case call panels, a staff attorney "screens" the cases to determine how many days they should take the assigned attorneys to prepare the reports which assist the judges in their decision-making process. The day evaluations may range from one day to thirty or more days, although approximately two-thirds of the cases fall in the two- to four-day range. In 1996, the average day evaluation for all screened cases was 3.72 days; in 1999, that number rose to 4.09, indicating an increase in the overall difficulty of the Court's workload. Although most cases are screened, several broad categories of appeals are not, including leave applications, original actions, appeals involving the Public Service Commission, workers' compensation appeals, termination of parental rights appeals, and guilty pleas.

The day evaluations assigned to the cases generally determine which of the three research units (Commissioners, Advance Research, and Prehearing) will be assigned to work on them. Presently, the workload is divided as follows: (1) one- to two-day cases and guilty plea appeals to Commissioners for placement on summary panels; (2) original actions, PSC appeals and workers' compensation appeals to Commissioners for placement on regular case call panels; (3) three- to six-day cases to Prehearing for placement on regular case call panels; (4) seven-day or greater cases to Advance Research for placement on regular case call panels, or directly to complex case panels without reports; and (5) termination of parental rights appeals to Advance Research for placement on summary panels (if routine) or regular case call panels (if non-routine).

The day evaluations also provide the Research Division with a means of monitoring the productivity of the attorneys. Attorney production percentages are determined by dividing the day evaluations by the actual time required to complete the research reports. The day evaluations are estimated in whole number values and represent the amount of days it should take the average **prehearing** attorney to complete a research report in a case. A production rate of 100% means the case was completed in the evaluated time. Commissioners and Advance Research attorneys are expected to perform at higher production rates because of their greater experience levels.

In 1999, the Commissioners assigned to prepare reports and proposed opinions in summary panel cases had a combined production percentage of 157%. Advance Research's production percentage was 137%. Prehearing had a 90.78% production rate, which was commendable considering the experience level of the staff.

Although the Research Division must maintain high production rates in order to meet its case call responsibilities, it strives to do so without compromising the quality of the research reports. Every effort is made to ensure that the reports contain full and fair presentations of the facts, comprehensive analyses of the law, and reasonable recommendations supported by the facts and law.

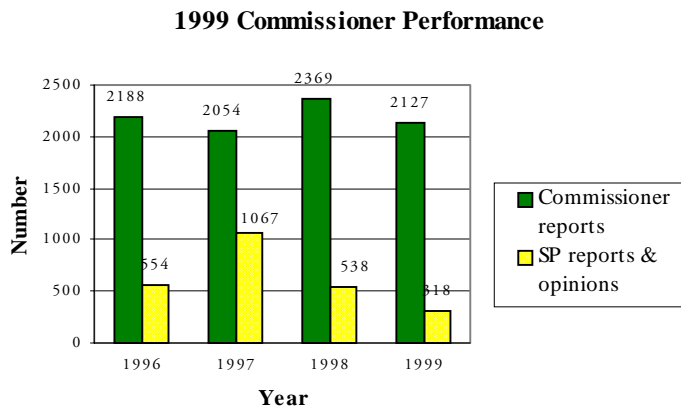
In recent years, the Court has seen a marked increase in the number of appeals filed in termination of parental rights (TPR) cases. The number of filings jumped from 354 in 1996 to almost 590 in 1999. Moreover, the difficulty of TPR appeals is increasing: In 1996, it took approximately 2.4 days to complete a report in the average TPR appeal; in 1999, that number was 2.74 days. The increase in the number and difficulty of TPR appeals has approximately doubled the aggregate work days required to handle those cases. This upward trend is severely straining the Research Division's resources and is affecting its ability to satisfy its other case call responsibilities.

Commissioners.

The Commissioners, now deployed in all four district offices, prepared 2,127

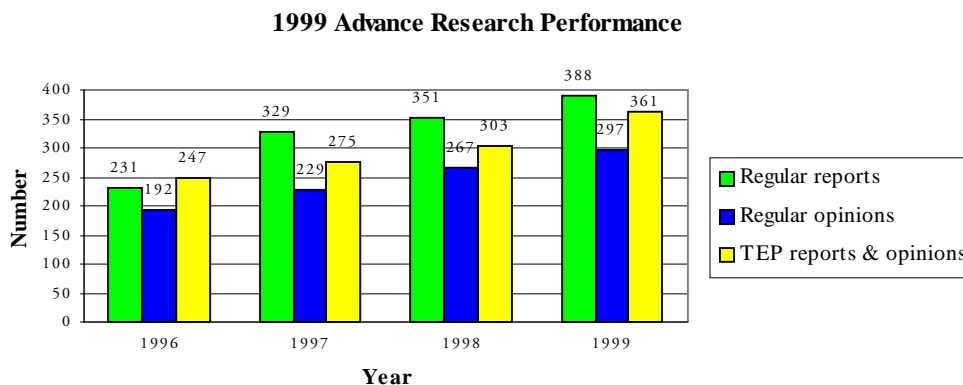
commissioner reports, fifty prehearing reports, and fifty-two proposed opinions in 1999. Additionally, the Commissioners prepared reports and opinions in 318 summary panel cases. With the full implementation of decentralization, the Commissioners now play a greater role in reviewing case files for conformity with the court rules and in working with the Clerk’s Office and litigants to resolve any defects. Decentralization also allows the Commissioners to address emergency filings in a more efficient and timely manner.

The following chart compares the 1999 production of commissioner and summary panel reports with numbers from the prior three years:



Advance Research.

In 1999, Advance Research’s primary focus continued to be on preparing reports and proposed opinions in cases evaluated at seven days or more (i.e., “box” cases), cases removed from summary panels, and termination of parental rights cases. In addition, Advance Research spent a total of 875 days on special projects, primarily clerking for visiting judges and preparing reports in certain motions before the Court. The following chart compares Advance Research’s 1999 production of the three major work products with that of prior years:

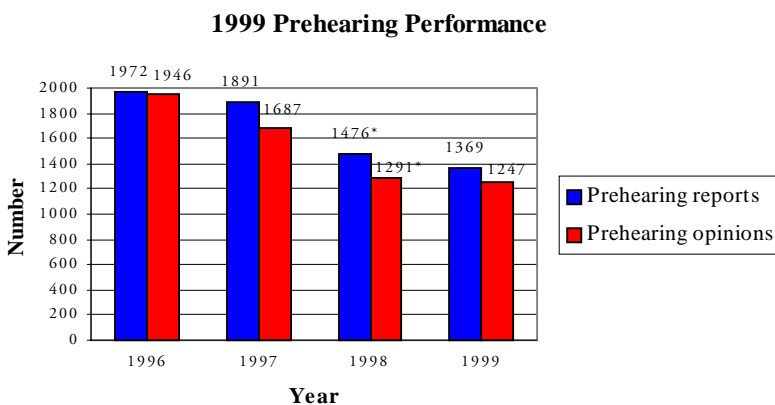


Prehearing.

As with the prior year, 1999 was a difficult year in maintaining Prehearing at its authorized staffing level. After the announcement of the Detroit office's closure in early 1999, the attorneys were either absorbed into the Southfield office or departed for other pursuits within just a few months, effectively closing the office six months earlier than necessary. In addition, the Prehearing attorneys were presented with a large number of clerkship opportunities during the year, including clerkships with former Court of Appeals' judges who were elevated, either by election or appointment, to the Michigan Supreme Court. These two factors contributed to a 93% turnover of Prehearing attorneys in 1999. The high turnover rate also resulted in a decrease in the experience level of the remaining attorneys: approximately six months on average for the existing staff at the end of 1999 compared with an average of over thirteen months for the departing attorneys.

The prospects for 2000 look very bright, however. Thanks to the Court's successful fall recruiting effort, which included visits to each of the five Michigan law school campuses as well as Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C., many highly qualified graduates are scheduled to join Prehearing in early spring and late summer of 2000. Once the new hires are on board, the Prehearing attorneys will be an academically diverse group, representing the in-state law schools of Michigan State University-Detroit College of Law, Thomas M. Cooley, University of Detroit Mercy and Wayne State University, as well as the out-state law schools of University of Chicago, Wake Forest, University of Illinois, University of Cincinnati, Emory, University of Wisconsin, University of Oregon, Howard University, Loyola and University of Maryland.

Due to having fewer attorneys in 1999, Prehearing's productivity in terms of the number of reports and proposed opinions was below that of previous years, as illustrated in the following chart:



* The drop in production in 1998 compared to prior years was a result of personnel reductions following the decrease in the Court's special legislative appropriation from \$2 million per year to \$1.5 million per year.

Settlement Office.

The Settlement Office operates two parallel settlement systems as authorized by MCR 7.213(A). Docketing statements are screened to find suitable civil cases for the program. In 1999, 2,138 docketing statements were reviewed for possible inclusion in the settlement program and 293 were referred for settlement conferences. Approximately one out of three referrals actually settle. Although participation in the settlement program is mandatory, the decision to settle is purely voluntary; there is no penalty or sanction for failing to settle an appeal. The majority of selected cases are assigned to staff attorneys (currently 2 attorneys) for conferences at the Settlement Office in Detroit (80% of cases) or by telephone (20% of cases). The office periodically conducts conferences in Grand Rapids and at non-Court of Appeals locations. There is no cost to parties participating in settlement conferences conducted by the Court's staff attorneys.

In addition to the staff attorney program, the Settlement Office maintains a roster of nearly 40 outside attorneys who are available to act as settlement facilitators. Parties must unanimously agree to participate in this process because the facilitators are compensated directly by the parties.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS DEPARTMENT

Historical Overview.

When the Court of Appeals opened for business in 1965, all data was recorded by hand on paper dockets maintained in each Court file. Thirty-five years later, as the Court closed out calendar year 1999, data entry was being accomplished on a completely new client/server intranet browser docketing system that was entirely designed and developed by an in-house team of Court programmers.

The transition from “docketing tub” to automation began in 1978, when the Court purchased a Burroughs B1700 (Unisys) mainframe and deployed “dumb” terminals throughout the Court to access this device. At the time, this was the most efficient means of supporting high-volume transaction processing; desktop technology (personal computers) did not exist.

During the early 1980's, as automation continued to expand within the Court, two significant events occurred:

- The mainframe was upgraded to a Burroughs B1900 to support larger storage requirements and faster processing as manual functions were increasingly being converted to automation.
- Burroughs B20 smart terminals were introduced within the Court, providing support for multiple applications including word processing, spreadsheets, terminal access to the mainframe, and distributed processing functions.

From the late 1980's through the early part of the 90's, the mainframe went through a final upgrade from the B1900 to a Unisys A Series model (one of the fastest mainframes then on the market.) During the same time frame, the remaining dumb terminals within the Court were replaced with CTOS desktop equipment (the forerunners for today's personal computers).

Debut of the Michigan Appellate Information System.

During the 1990's, significant changes were made in the Court's technological infrastructure to take advantage of advancing trends (i.e. personal computers, relational database technology, CD-ROM technology, and the expansion of the Internet). CTOS-based machines were replaced with personal computers, and the mainframe was replaced with Mappis.



A combination of database and web servers, Mappis was conceived in 1994 when the IS Department embarked on the modernization project that brought PC's to each employee in the Court. That project was geared specifically towards the ultimate goal of developing a browser-based Court-wide appellate information system. And five years later, the fully formed Michigan Appellate Information System was unveiled on July 5, 1999.

Unlike the mainframe days where all processing was done at a central location, local Mappis servers are installed in Southfield, Lansing and Detroit. A fourth Mappis web and database server combination is scheduled to be installed in Grand Rapids before the end of 2000. The servers at each of these locations are running real-time replication which synchronizes the servers every five seconds. This allows for faster processing and also acts as a backup in the event of a server failure. The Mappis database, which is currently 10 gigabytes (GB) in size, is running on an Oracle platform.

Mappis was modeled on the same processes and procedures that had been supported by the mainframe for the preceding two decades. These included assignment of case file numbers, entry of new appeals on the Court's docket, notation of each filing in each case and its conformance with applicable court rules and internal operating procedures, tracking of each case's progress through the usual life of an appeal, including assignment to a staff attorney for review and to a case call panel for oral argument and final disposition.

But Mappis was also designed to automate functions such as case call formation that could not be fully automated on the mainframe. And its full-text menus are personalized with options that are matched to each user group's specific data needs (COA Judicial Offices, COA Research Division, COA Clerk's Office, COA Administrative Office, COA Security Division, State Court Administrative Office, and Supreme Court). It provides staff with links to prominent Internet sites for legal research. It stores and provides access to necessary Court documents such as the IOPs and a variety of research tools utilized by staff attorneys and judges alike. And, as needs evolve, Mappis can be quickly reprogrammed (virtually "on the fly") to meet user expectations.

Computer Training Program.

Computer training for Court employees has evolved with the system itself. Until 1995, such training was very informal and usually consisted of a one-on-one lesson at the user's computer, with the work of the office providing a variety of distractions. With the rapid expansion of the PC network, however, it became apparent that a formal classroom setup would benefit both the employees and the limited IS staff. During that year, a trainer was hired and the IS Training Room was formally unveiled. The training facility was designed to offer hands-on computer training for up to eight students. It has been a very successful endeavor; between 1995 and the close of 1999, over 1,000 "students" have been trained in a variety of topics, including Introduction to Court Technology, all levels of Word and Excel, GroupWise, Mappis and Internet Basics.

Year 2000 Compliance.

Calendar year 1999 brought one other project to the IS Department: Year 2000 compliance. During the course of 1999, each of the 300 PC's on the Court's network was reimaged by a network support staff person to provide Year 2000 (Y2K) compliance. And, in late 1999, all PC's were individually audited to ensure that the very latest Y2K software patches had been installed. As there were virtually no Y2K issues reported on January 1, it is apparent that the time and effort of that enormous undertaking was time well spent.

On the Horizon.

The responsiveness of the COA network, and Mappis in particular, is a critical design element as the Court looks towards initiatives such as its own website and an electronic filing pilot project. As new advancements and requests for more services are made in the year 2000 and beyond, the technology of the Court is well situated to respond.

SECURITY DIVISION

Beginning in 1998, the Court of Appeals increased its focus on providing comprehensive security for its judges, staff and visitors. As 1999 closed, improved Court security remained a top priority. Working within each year's budget constraints, the Court continues to do everything possible to provide a safer environment for employees and the public.

A number of physical security enhancement initiatives were completed in 1999. At Detroit, the closed circuit television system was upgraded. At Southfield, the initial installation of a Court-wide card-access system was completed and the duress alarm system was expanded. At Grand Rapids, improved security hardware was installed on the courtroom bench, and a two-month weapons-screening pilot project was successfully conducted. At Lansing, the courtroom renovations included bench security upgrades and a new fire suppression system for the entire courtroom floor.

In addition to these projects, significant time was invested in the examination of security measures to be incorporated in future Court facilities (i.e., the new Lansing Hall of Justice and the former General Motors Building in Detroit).

During 1999, 96 Security Information Reports were generated. Of these, 25 were criminal reports and 71 were non-criminal reports. Formal police involvement occurred in 31 of the incidents.

Michigan Court of Appeals Organization Chart

