

## Hinmann, Howard & Kattell - From Three Rooms to Ten Disks



Four years ago, the computer system at Hinmann, Howard and Kattell, LLP consisted of 10 or 12 PCs that couldn't talk to each other. The law library -- one of the largest in the region -- consumed three and a half rooms. Today there are well over 100 networked PCs serving the Binghamton office and a great number of legal reports and statutes are duplicated on an NSM CD\DVD library, with plans to dispense with hard copies in the future.

Back in the days before the firm had CD\DVDs, maintaining the law library was a time-consuming and expensive proposition. "Because we had so many attorneys, we had multiple subscriptions," said Mitchell, the firm's information systems administrator. Not only was this expensive, it was difficult to keep everything updated.

"The publishers made it economical to get their libraries on CD\DVDs," said Mitchell. "What used to fill an entire room now fit on 10 discs. And of course there were big time savings. The browsers that come with the publishers' CD\DVDs make it fast and easy to find what you want. It was a better solution than paper, but there was important element missing."

That element, Mitchell explained, was multiple access capability. If one attorney was using a certain CD\DVD at his desk, or worse yet, had taken it home, the information was unavailable to any of the firm's other 50-some attorneys. Mitchell decided that instead of each attorney having a CD\DVD reader on his desk, they needed to find a way to spin the discs over a Windows for Workgroups network, which the firm had installed and continues to use to this day as its only network.

The first solution that came to our minds was something with multiple CD\DVD readers, like a tower. But we had more than 100 CD\DVDs, so I envisioned replacing the library with walls of towers. But it was an expensive solution in every sense.

For many years, Mitchell has attended two computer shows: PC Expo and Legal Tech. While browsing through Legal Tech, he saw an NSM demo. "The jukebox was just going bananas in the booth," Mitchell remembered. He stopped and asked how many CD\DVDs it held. "When they told me 150, I knew it was exactly what we needed." Because the law library was so critical, Mitchell wanted to make sure he wasn't betting its integrity on a new, unproved technology. "The representative explained that the technology was basically the same as the one that's kept jukeboxes playing in diners for years," Mitchell said.

"It was time-tested. It wasn't going to melt down." What impressed Mitchell most was the fact that NSM's simple, time-tested technology was coupled with a sophistication unparalleled in the industry. "There were other players in the market, but none matched the NSM volume or flexibility," Mitchell said.

To assist with the Mercury 40 installation, the firm contracted with MicroNetworking Systems, a consultant they'd used before. The consultant implemented Logcraft LAN



CD as the software tool, and the system has been functioning beautifully for the year and a half since it was installed.

In addition to storing their law library on the NSM system, Hinman, Howard and Kattell, LLP has plans in place to archive documents, as well. The firm has budgeted to purchase a CD writer.