

Technology Holdings

TechnoLawyer Archive

PeerViews Inc.

www.technolawyer.com
Price: \$9 for a one-day subscription. Contact company for other options.

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The TechnoLawyer listserv is one of the largest and most established for the legal community. Gone are the days of rough-and-tumble exchanges, replaced by a series of more systematic and structured newsletters. Signing up for the newsletters is free, and if you select the "Topical Compilations" newsletter you can choose to receive it only when it covers a topic (there are 32 to choose from) that interests you. Other newsletters include "Answers to Questions," "Fat Friday" (a forum for members "to discuss whatever they damn well please"), "TechnoFeatures," "Classifieds" and "TechnoDeals."

regular basis (I do as well), so the quality of the posts tends to be a cut above many listservs. As with any such forum, however, people with an axe to grind on either side of any given issue tend to be out in force, so "*caveat lector*" — reader beware — is definitely a watchword and is noted at the bottom of every newsletter. This is particularly true about topics evoking strong opinions, such as the merits of various practice management systems. The up side to this is you might discover program problems vendors don't like talking about.

The TechnoLawyer Archive consists of selected newsletters and posts to the forum from January 1997 to September 1999, and everything since September 1999.

It advertises itself as superior to Google in terms of finding information about legal technology. To a large degree, this is true. Of course it's not all-encompassing, and depends on the contributions various people have made over the years. However, with nearly 9,000 subscribers, you are likely to find information about products and programs you are interested in.

For example, I was considering purchasing a new computer carrying case with wheels. A search for "wheeled" turned up a number of wheeled computer carrying case manufacturers. There are the usual limitations; you have to experiment before getting the search right. The informal "wheelies," for example, turned up nothing. Also, the list certainly isn't exhaustive —

there were many manufacturers that didn't come up because no one had contributed anything concerning them. But since lawyers tend to be particularly attached to useful little gadgets and utilities they have discovered, there is a lot of information that might otherwise be hard to come by.

The advanced search function lets you restrict searches to specific areas, such as copiers, scanners and printers,

accessories, gadgets, document management, litigation support and others. You also can limit the search to a specific time frame, which can be useful in eliminating references to outdated versions or products. The Archive lets you use normal Boolean functions, but doesn't support wildcards. All in all, you are likely to find at least a good starting point for further research.

An archive search is free, but to read the content of any result, you must pay for a subscription.

Subscribing to the newsletters is free, but searching the archive isn't. When you search the archive, TechnoLawyer shows your results, but if you want to read any of the items, you must subscribe. This way, you can see if there are things that interest you before paying. If you are doing a one-time search for specific items, you can purchase a one-day subscription for \$9. A year's subscription costs \$65. If you contribute to TechnoLawyer, even by answering questions, and your contribution is published, you get "View-Points." These are worth 2 cents each (as in "your two cents worth") and can be used toward a subscription to the archive.

The listserv is well-worth subscribing to. If you have specific or ongoing research needs, a paid subscription to the Archive — even for a limited period of time — will repay the expense. **100**

Closing Argument

Pros: A lot of information about legal technology products and programs written by people who actually use them. Might reveal problems with programs you are interested in.

Cons: Except for the minor cost of subscribing to the Archive, none.

Verdict: If you are involved in buying or implementing legal programs and technology, this is a must.

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I have subscribed to TechnoLawyer for years, and there almost always is at least one item worth reading in a given newsletter. On Tuesdays, TechnoLawyer is given over to paid advertisements in the form of articles by various vendors extolling their products. You can't opt out of receiving these unless you suspend delivery of all newsletters.

Many well-established consultants contribute to TechnoLawyer on a fairly