



CM/ECF Anniversary!

Today is Yesterday's Tomorrow

November 3, 2007 marks the ten-year anniversary of the first electronically filed case! After much preparation, and with much anticipation, Attorney Susan Shiptenko filed not only one, but two Electronic Case Files (ECF) on November 3, 1997, with the first, 97-90001, assigned to former Chief Judge Cotton, and the second, 97-90002, assigned to Judge Massey.

It all started ten years ago in May 1997, when the Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts (AO) approved the Court's request to participate as one of five prototype courts in the development of an electronic case filing system. As agreed with the AO, the Court concentrated its initial efforts on Chapter 13 bankruptcy cases, and with the full support from the Judges, the Court initiated its ECF project, taking the first steps toward becoming a paperless Court.



During the six-month implementation period, the Court initiated an incremental implementation strategy, selecting three of the Court's eight Judges (former Chief Judge Cotton, Judge Drake and Judge Massey) and two of the Court's four Divisions (Atlanta and Newnan) to pilot electronic filing. The Court's incremental strategy included the selection of only a few attorneys to pilot the ECF system along with the Court. With input from the Bar, the Court selected twelve attorneys who incorporated technology into their existing legal practices and who could commit to long-term participation in prototype developments.

The Court controlled the number of e-filed cases and maintained all other cases as paper cases entered into its legacy UNIX case manage-

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- Shiptenko filed the first electronic case
- Northern District of GA in five prototype courts
- CM/ECF changed the way federal courts do business

ment system (now considered the “Bad old days!”) During November 1997, the selected debtor attorneys filed a total of eleven ECF cases.

On January 1, 2000, the Court entered into a bold new phase of its implementation plan. The remaining five Judges and two Divisions began using the ECF system and the Court removed restrictions on the number of attorneys who could file ECF cases, as well as the number of cases they could file. The Court also discontinued opening and maintaining cases in its legacy UNIX system (now considered “A happy day!”)



First ECF case was filed 11/3/1997

Among the five pilot bankruptcy courts, the Northern District of Georgia led the way in ECF activities. Listed below are statistics that reflect ECF activity from the point the pilot court implemented ECF to December 31, 2000:

ECF Activity	New York Southern (Pilot for Ch 11's)	Arizona (Pilot for Ch 11's)	Virginia Eastern (Pilot for Ch 7's)	California Southern (Pilot for Ch 7's)	Georgia Northern (Pilot for Ch 13's)
Initiated CM/ECF	11.25.96	10.19.97	10.30.97	03.28.98	11.03.97
Total Number of CM/ECF Cases Entered	26,599	3,500	12,923	28,476	35,838
Total Number of CM/ECF Cases Entered in December 2000	1,299	185	746	978	2,617
Total CM/ECF Docket Entries	250,829	66,384	137,971	235,312	510,176
CM/ECF Docket Entries in December 2000	13,094	4,491	9,807	13,967	40,977
Total CM/ECF Docket Entries by Attorneys	81,357	19,566	30,851	17,542	67,856

Ten years ago, I often heard attorneys say “I’m not going to do the Court’s work.” Today, I often hear them say “I don’t know what we would do without CM/ECF!”

As noted in the above chart, during the three year period November 3, 1997 to December 31, 2000, attorneys entered 67,856 electronic docket entries in CM/ECF. During the one month of September 2007, attorneys entered 32,620 electronic docket entries in CM/ECF! Attorneys familiar with CM/ECF have been the Court’s best ambassadors for the CM/ECF project. During September 2007, attorneys filed 2,316 electronic cases, representing 90.3 percent of all cases filed.

The driving force behind the Court’s successful ten-years old endeavor has been YOU. The Judges, Court staff, attorneys, and all CM/ECF users are to be commended for their efforts during the past ten years to effectuate the biggest change to ever hit the Judiciary. Ubiquitous and instantaneous access to all documents filed in the Court’s cases has improved the efficiency of case management for not only the Judges and Court staff, but also the attorneys and parties of the electronic cases.

“Attorneys familiar with CM/ECF have been the Court’s best ambassadors for the CM/ECF project.”

But, don’t get comfortable, talk is brewing about the next generation of CM/ECF, and guess which Court is out there ready to pilot..... Remember, “Today is Yesterday’s Tomorrow.”

With my deepest gratitude,

W. Yvonne Evans
Clerk of Court

A Note from Our First CM/ECF Filer

It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since we filed our first electronic bankruptcy on November 3, 1997. Of course, it took us about three days to get that one ready, between paper originals and duplicates, and saving each electronic document separately for filing, then figuring out how to get the thing actually docketed. Yvonne, Gary, and Irene must have fielded hundreds of calls from us trying to muddle through those first few filings. Times have definitely changed since then, with direct and batch uploads, automated email notifications, and auto-hearing entries. Honestly, we can't imagine how we managed before CM/ECF. (Although we still bug Irene on a regular basis as new issues arise!). It's an honor to have been involved from the start and to help form the basis for something that has made such a positive impact on our practice. We look forward to the changes the next 10 years will bring!



Susan H. Shiptenko
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How CM/ECF Began...

The electronic case filing system was launched in November 1995 when a team from the Administrative Office helped the U.S. District Court in Northern Ohio cope with more than 5,000 document-intensive asbestos cases. The court faced up to 10,000 new pleadings a week, and a workload that quickly became unmanageable. Together the team developed a system that allowed attorneys to file and retrieve documents and receive official notices electronically.

The system's impact was felt most significantly last month when the Bankruptcy Reform Act took effect. In October 2005, more than 600,00 bankruptcy petitions were filed nationwide, compared to 130,679 in October 2004. Some bankruptcy courts worked around-the-clock and throughout the weekend to process the cases, but without CM/ECF, the courts would not have been able to cope with the unprecedented workload.

"There are not many projects that warrant such praise," Ralph Mecham, former Director of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, said, "but CM/ECF has forever changed the way federal courts conduct business and the way the public accesses court records. It will go down in history as one of the most significant milestones in federal court operations."

(excerpt from a News Release dated November 21, 2005 at the U.S. Courts website)

http://www.uscourts.gov/Press_Releases/cmecfat10.html



Feedback

We value your participation and opinion!

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NOTE: Thanks to Lawrence R. "Larry" Landry, a CM/ECF attorney with the law firm of Quirk & Quirk, for sharing his cartooning talent with us! Larry has drawn many humorous cartoons for us through the years. See the cartoon on the last page of this newsletter!



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