

AUTOMATING ARKANSAS COURTS
A Summary Report for
Senate Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs
House Committee on State Agencies and Governmental Affairs
Meeting Jointly

Wednesday, April 11, 2012

Arkansas Court Automation Project

The Arkansas Court Automation Project began in 2001 with the Supreme Court's adoption of a Strategic Technology Plan, the primary goal of which was to improve public access to and confidence in the judiciary and to improve public safety, by providing a technology solution to Arkansas Courts that includes case and jury management, online public access, online payment for fines and costs, electronic filing, and integration with justice agencies for the timely, accurate, and complete sharing of criminal justice information.

In 2002, the Administrative Office of the Courts contracted with ACS, now Xerox, for its Jury Management System and Contexte Case Management System. In 2003, the AOC contracted with ACS for a multi-year effort to customize its off-the-shelf product for use in Arkansas Courts.

Since bringing the case management system online in 2004 with the Montgomery County District Court, the AOC has completed more than 25 implementations, and more than half the state is using the jury management system. In addition to those implementations, the AOC has completed integration with the Office of Driver Services to receive driver information and transmit driver convictions, and integration with the Arkansas Crime Information Center to transmit convictions – both in near real time. We are providing online public access to court information through CourtConnect (<https://caseinfo.aoc.arkansas.gov>), and we are accepting online payments through eTraffic (<https://pay.courts.arkansas.gov>). The AOC is nearing completion of integration with ACIS for the VINE notification system.

In addition to continuing the rollout of case and jury management, to complete the Court's technology vision, in July 2010, with the adoption of Administrative Order 21, the AOC was authorized to develop or contract with a vendor for electronic filing. After issuing a request for proposals in October and evaluating responses, the AOC contracted with ACS and Tybera for their electronic filing system. The professional services contract was approved by the Legislative Council in December, 2011. The contract included a capital outlay for \$725,000 for a statewide license, \$185,000 in annual maintenance, and professional services in the amount of \$600,000 for the implementation. In June 2011, the capital outlay was increased by \$160,565 for Arkansas modifications to the system.

Electronic Filing (eFiling) Project

The Pulaski County Circuit Court is participating in the electronic filing project as a pilot court. Phase 1 of the pilot project began in January 2011. A core team consisting of attorneys, judges, circuit court staff, and AOC staff was formed early in the project to provide input to the project team in developing statewide best practices for the electronic filing system. The core team analyzed the system features, with a focus on Arkansas court procedures, and developed a set of business requirements for the electronic filing application.

During the analysis phase, an amendment to Arkansas Supreme Court Administrative Order 21 was submitted and approved in June to allow the option to electronically file case-initiating documents. The amendment also requires training for those who apply to be registered users of the state electronic filing system and to allow Continuing Legal Education credit for the completion of the training. Subsequently, a change to the initial August 2011 target Phase 1 go-live date was made to incorporate the addition of these new items into the project.

On March 19, 2012, Phase 1 of the eFiling project initiated with Pulaski County Circuit Court becoming the first circuit court in Arkansas to accept electronic filing. Phase 1 of the project was aimed at deploying the main components of the electronic filing system components, which includes the ability to submit initial and subsequent case filings for civil, domestic, and probate cases in the application. This phase also involved integrating a filing fee payment processing engine, a document management system, and the Contexte case management system with the Tybera EFlex electronic filing system. During Phase 1, staff in the Pulaski County Circuit Court was trained on how to handle the electronically filed case submissions. Registered users (Attorney Filers) were also trained on how to perform initial and subsequent case filings in the system.

Phase 2 of the project will enable the electronic filing of Juvenile cases to the Pulaski County Circuit Court. Work for the Phase 2 is now in progress and is targeted to complete during the end of second quarter of 2012. The final phase of the project will enable the electronic filing of Criminal cases to the Pulaski County Circuit Court and is targeted to complete during the third quarter of 2012.

The project is being managed by Beatrice Nelson, PMP, Senior Project Manager for the CIS Division of the Arkansas Supreme Court Administrative Office of the Courts. Nelson is an officer in the Central Arkansas Chapter of the Project Management Institute, in which she has been a member since 2000 and has been serving as the organization's president since 2010.