



*MICHIGAN COURT OF APPEALS*

*Assessment of Operations & Technology*

FINAL REPORT  
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## A. Project Overview

### I. Scope of this Study

The National Center for State Courts conducted this study at the invitation of the Michigan Court of Appeals. The study involved two focus areas that were conducted concurrently:

- 1) **Assessment of Operational Efficiencies.** This assessment considered possible changes to processes and procedures, and the use of staff attorneys and other Court support personnel.
- 2) **Technology Assessment.** This assessment included a review of the current applications of technology such as the case management system, electronic filing, scanning and imaging, etc.

A third area of focus involving a workload and staffing assessment was included in the original proposal but was not conducted because of a lack of sufficient funding. This assessment would have provided for the development of a systematic method to determine the appropriate number of judges and staff positions based upon workflow, procedures and caseload (including both volume of cases and the mix of case types). A workload assessment could be of great value to the Michigan Court of Appeals given the significant changes in the volume of caseload and the possibility of future reductions in the number of judges and staff.

The NCSC project team visited the Michigan Court of Appeals from January 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011, and from March 9<sup>th</sup> -11<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The team visited the Lansing, Detroit and Grand Rapids locations and conducted interviews with judges and the staffs from the Clerk's Office, Research Division, Judicial Chambers, and the Information Systems Department. We also observed various functions and user procedures related to MAPPIS, the Court's case management system.

Our overall observations, based upon the information gathered during the site visits as well as from other sources, are that the Michigan Court of Appeals stands out as a well managed and

smoothly functioning appellate court, especially in a period of shrinking budgetary resources. We were genuinely impressed with the dedication and commitment of the individuals with whom we met and their readiness to consider alternative processes and make adjustments to existing procedures. The Court uses technology effectively and has implemented several very good applications. As a result, our recommendations are primarily intended to identify opportunities and concepts for further advancements while acknowledging the possibility of additional budgetary reductions.

## II. Organization of the Michigan Court of Appeals

The Michigan Court of Appeals was created by the Michigan Constitution of 1963 and originally included nine judges who handled a total of 1,235 filings in 1965 (its first year of operation). The Michigan Court of Appeals is statutorily divided into four electoral districts which are designated by county boundaries, each with a current allotment of 7 appellate judgeships. While each judge is elected from a specific district, they sit statewide and participate in deciding cases from all districts. The Clerk's Office has full service offices in each of the four districts, although the Lansing office is designated by statute as the primary location. The district office locations are Detroit (District 1), Troy (District 2), Grand Rapids (District 3) and Lansing (District 4).

The size of the Court was periodically increased in order to keep pace with the steadily increasing volume of appellate filings. The number of annual filings reached its highest level in 1992 at 13,352; consequently, the Court was expanded again, reaching its current size of 28 judges<sup>1</sup> in 1995. Over the years, the number of sitting judges was supplemented with the assignment of visiting judges, both retired appellate judges and specially assigned circuit judges, to assist in deciding cases. Visiting judges were used most extensively from 1992 through 1998 and have not been utilized since approximately 2003. See Table 1 below:

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<sup>1</sup> At present, the Court has only 26 judges. Governor Rick Snyder has expressed an intention to not fill the two existing current vacancies by appointment, and to further reduce the Court's size to 24 judges through the legislative process.

YEAR	RETIRED APPELLATE JUDGES	SPECIALLY ASSIGNED CIRCUIT JUDGES	TOTAL
1991	0.27	0.00	0.27
1992	1.64	1.45	3.09
1993	1.09	4.09	5.18
1994	0.82	10.91	11.73
1995	1.09	9.00	10.09
1996	1.45	10.27	11.73
1997	0.00	3.36	3.36
1998	0.45	0.45	0.91
1999	0.36	0.36	0.73
2000	0.45	0.36	0.82
2001	0.00	0.45	0.45
2002	0.00	0.00	0.00
2003	0.09	0.00	0.09

Upon reaching the high-point of annual filings in 1992, the caseload began a period of sporadic decline, reaching 6,177 filings in 2010. The Court attributes much of this decline to three factors: 1) a constitutional amendment in 1994 that eliminated an appeal of right in criminal cases when the defendant pleads guilty or *nolo contendere*, and 2) a significant reduction in the number of trial court annual filings<sup>2</sup> and, 3) a change in the appellate case counting and statistical reporting methodology.

Because of ongoing discussions within Michigan regarding a possible future reduction in the number of legislatively authorized appellate judgeships, we prepared Table 2 comparing the number of filings per judge as of 2009. It is important to recognize we did not analyze variances in appellate jurisdiction, statutory requirements, court rules and procedures, or relative volume of trial court filings and dispositions. All of these factors can impact the workload of an intermediate appellate court and the appropriate number of judgeships. In addition, a single year snapshot may not be representative of all these state appellate systems.

<sup>2</sup> Circuit Court filings in Michigan declined from 407,291 in 1996 to 310,235 in 2009, a reduction of 24%. During that same time period, the Court of Appeals annual filings declined from 9,108 to 6,257, a reduction of 31%.

	# of Judges	2009 Filings	2009 Filings per Judge
Massachusetts Appeals Court	28	2,784	99
Illinois Court of Appeals (Statewide Total - 5 districts)	54	7,730	143
New Jersey Appellate Division of Superior Court	37	6,606	179
Virginia Court of Appeals	7	1,350	193
Michigan Court of Appeals <sup>3</sup>	28	6,257	223
California Court of Appeal, (4th District only)	25	6,041	242
Indiana Court of Appeals	15	3,988	266
Pennsylvania Superior Court	20	8,000	400
Florida District Court of Appeal (State Total - 5 Districts)	61	25,906	425

Although detailed data was not readily available to provide a comparison with all intermediate appellate courts, this comparison of similarly sized courts suggests that the Michigan Court of Appeals is not at either the high or low extreme in terms of filings per judge.

<sup>3</sup> At the current actual level of 26 judges, the filings per judge (using 2009 filings) would be 241; if the number of appellate judges is legislatively reduced to 24, that number (using 2009 filings) would be 261.

## B. Observations & Recommendations

### I. Operational Assessment

#### a. Clerk's Office Operations

The Clerk's Office consists of 42 staff members among the four district offices: 11 in District 1; 8 in District 2; 6 in District 3; 14 in District 4; and 3 "statewide" staff consisting of the chief clerk, a deputy clerk and an opinion clerk. Cases are generally handled by the various districts based upon the county and appellate electoral district from which the underlying trial court case originates, although pleadings can be filed in any of the district offices.

The former chief clerk<sup>4</sup> reported that the current staffing level represented an approximate 20% reduction over the past seven to eight years. This reduction in staffing has resulted in fewer specialized positions within the Clerk's Office; an increased emphasis on cross-training of positions has enabled the staff to share responsibilities effectively. Because the staffing reductions have not occurred equally among the four district offices, the corresponding workload has varied considerably among the districts. During the first site visit, staff in the District 1 office indicated that data entry was approximately 2 to 3 weeks behind schedule. In an attempt to address the varying impact on the district offices, procedures have been implemented to send various types of pleadings as well as the resulting document review and data entry tasks, from the relatively short-staffed offices to more highly staffed locations (primarily District 4). This requires staff in the sending location to package the documents to be sent out and to subsequently receive them back for filing and storage. Staff of the receiving location must unpack the documents and repackage them for return after completing the necessary review and data entry. At the time this report was being prepared, the District 1 office had become current in its data entry and was sending only a limited number of pleadings to other districts for docketing and review. As a long term approach, the chief clerk should

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<sup>4</sup> On January 31, 2011, shortly after the initiation of this study, the longstanding chief clerk, Sandra Mengel, retired from the Court of Appeals.

periodically assess the relative workloads in each of the district offices in order to ensure that staffing is appropriately and efficiently distributed.

The District 1 office also encountered workflow inefficiencies related to the notices of transcripts from the Third Judicial Circuit Court (Wayne County).<sup>5</sup> The Wayne Circuit Court often submits separate transcript notices as each transcript is completed by a Court reporter, although the transcripts themselves are not transmitted to the Court of Appeals until all of them are available and the Court formally requests that they be sent. Many appellate cases will include transcripts from multiple days of hearings and/or trial which will often be prepared by multiple Court reporters. As a result, the District 1 office's processing of these individual notices requires additional handling and data entry. The project team was advised that other circuit courts commonly consolidate these transcript notices in order to minimize the staff time necessary for preparation at the trial court as well as processing and docketing in the Court of Appeals. We recommend that the district clerk make arrangements with the managerial staff at the Wayne Circuit Court to simplify and streamline the transcript noticing process.

The Court of Appeals has made great strides in creating or maintaining electronic files for all of its cases. During our visits, it was estimated that only about 20 percent of cases are filed electronically, although that number has reportedly been steadily increasing. For pleadings that are filed in hard copy, the Clerk's Office staff manually scans every case-related pleading, and saves the filing in a temporary folder. Staff subsequently must go through separate manual processes to docket the pleadings in the Court's case management system (known as "MAPPIS"), attach the scanned images to the MAPPIS event entries, delete the scanned images from the temporary folders, and then insert the paper documents in the case files and return the files to the shelves. In effect, Clerk's Office staff is responsible for maintaining two parallel case file systems: paper and electronic. In addition, even with e-filed pleadings, the staff prints and mails hard copy notices to the parties (which are subsequently scanned in order to provide

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<sup>5</sup> This issue was raised in District 1 regarding its interactions with Wayne Circuit Court. It is not clear whether the situation described is unique to Wayne County or whether the other district offices encountered similar situations that were not perceived to be problematic due to differing circumstances such as the volume of transcript activity or individual trial court practices.

electronic images), rather than using the e-file system. We recommend that the Court of Appeals make plans to increase the utilization of e-filing, simplify and minimize the necessary scanning of documents, and move toward a “paper-on-demand” environment. The Court should also clarify its use of the e-file system to send notices, orders, and similar documents to the parties at no charge<sup>6</sup>. More detail regarding this recommendation is included in Section II, c. - Electronic Case Files, of this report.

## b. Research Division

The Research Division currently has 41 central staff attorneys and supervising attorneys. The central staff attorneys are either career track (senior research attorneys) or limited tenure (research attorneys) positions. Senior research attorneys are long-term employees with significant tenure and expertise<sup>7</sup>. Research attorneys are usually recent law school graduates whose tenure on the Court is limited to a maximum of three years. The central staff attorneys prepare research reports for most cases and draft proposed opinions for those cases expected to be resolved by an unpublished opinion. Before a case is assigned to either a research attorney or a senior research attorney, a senior staff attorney will review the lower court record and the appeal briefs in order to estimate in number of days it is likely to require for preparation of a research report. Senior research attorneys are typically assigned the harder cases (expected to take seven days or more) and the research attorneys work on cases of that are routine or of moderate difficulty (expected to take one to six days).

During our discussions with a number of judges, there was a decidedly mixed view regarding the quality of the reports and draft opinions prepared by staff in the Research Division.

Generally, the reports and draft opinions prepared by the senior research attorneys were

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<sup>6</sup> Some Clerk’s Office staff expressed concern that the Court’s e-filing vendor would assess a \$5 charge for using the system, although an IS manager stated that such service would be provided without charge.

<sup>7</sup> The Court also utilizes the services of approximately 25 contract attorneys (mostly former research attorneys) who work on a part-time basis preparing research memos and draft opinions in routine cases. They are paid a predetermined amount for each case based on the estimated time for completing a report and proposed opinion.

viewed much more favorably than those from the limited-tenure research attorneys. This result can be expected because the senior research attorneys are more experienced and have typically moved up through the ranks to achieve their current positions. There is an established procedure that provides for all reports and draft opinions to be reviewed and edited by supervising attorneys, and any changes, other than insubstantial edits, to be shared with the authoring attorneys. However, there is no corresponding process for providing feedback and comments from the judges or law clerks. In fact, it is a rare exception when judges or law clerks communicate any feedback, either praise or criticism, to the Research Division regarding a report or draft opinion. Both research attorneys and senior research attorneys indicated that the only real feedback they receive from judicial chambers is if they compare their draft opinion to the final version when it is issued. This is usually well after the fact and does not provide constructive feedback – only an indication of the similarity in the two documents. Providing such feedback and direction to the staff attorneys, especially those in the limited tenure positions, would enable them to consistently produce better quality research reports and draft opinions. Aside from evaluating the quality of the work products from the Research Division there is a sense among some judges that the number of senior research attorneys relative to research attorneys, given the mix of more difficult and more routine cases, is not properly balanced.

We recommend that the Court of Appeals develop a methodology for obtaining regular feedback from judges and/or law clerks regarding the quality and usefulness of reports and draft opinions generated by the attorneys in the Research Division. It would be impractical to attempt to collect feedback on every report and draft opinion but judges should certainly have the option to do so any time they feel it would be appropriate. We had discussions with the research director and supervising attorneys about utilizing MAPPIS as a vehicle for providing feedback to the central staff attorneys. However the methodology would operate, in addition to such ad hoc use, it should also include a systematic process to ensure that some feedback is received on a regular basis for all attorneys. In such a process, supervising attorneys could select particular reports for feedback. When the cases are assigned to the three judge panels,

the supervising attorney should request feedback on the reports from the judges and law clerks. The feedback should be returned to the supervising attorney who would relay the comments to the staff attorney. In this way, each staff attorney would receive regular feedback, the supervising attorneys would have more information with which to evaluate the performance of the staff attorneys, and all would have a better understanding of what the judges find most useful and beneficial in reports and draft opinions.

We additionally recommend that the Court of Appeals evaluate the number of senior research attorneys relative to research attorneys, given the mix of more difficult and more routine cases. It is clear that the higher experience level of senior research attorneys enables them to provide a better quality written report requiring less time from law clerks and judges in review and editing. In addition to the expected increased quality, an important consideration should also be the relative costs (salaries and benefits) of the two job classes compared with their relative productivity requirements (the number of reports/draft opinions produced).

### c. Judicial Assistants

The chambers staff of each Court of Appeals judge includes one full-time judicial assistant (JA) whose responsibility is to assist in the operation and management of the chambers. This responsibility includes a wide variety of administrative, clerical, and secretarial duties. While appellate courts make decisions in panels necessitating collegial and cooperative working relationships, the chambers operate independently. As a result, the particular duties of individual JAs vary among the judicial chambers. However, in discussions with a variety of judges, JAs, and other staff members it was widely perceived that there was some unused productive capacity with the JA positions that could be used to better serve the Court as a whole.

This issue of available capacity was discussed during interviews with several JAs; the JAs generally agreed and provided a written proposal listing several duties that could be reassigned

from the Clerk's Office where staffing reductions have impacted its operations. The proposed duties include:

- Motion Dockets (particularly the Regular District Motion Docket)

"Currently, the Presiding Judge's JA prepares the orders, scans or copies them for panel members and files them with the district Clerk's Office. We propose allowing the Presiding Judge's JA to also docket the order, make copies for the parties, print mailing labels, and mail the orders to the parties. The original order would be forwarded to the Clerk's Office."

- Taxation of Costs – IOP 7.219

"The duty of reviewing a bill of costs is currently assigned to a Clerk IV in Lansing ... We propose that a party's bill of costs be forwarded to the presiding judge on a panel. That judge's JA would be responsible for reviewing the Bill of Costs, verifying the bill, and taxing those costs allowable, and, if necessary, preparing an order of the panel as to whether to tax costs."

- The JA's proposals also indicated they believed that they could regularly assist with certain docketing duties currently performed by Clerk's Office staff. The proposal includes a caveat that it would best be done on a trial basis and rotated to those JAs whose judges are not serving as presiding judge on a Regular District Motion Docket. In addition, they believed that any assigned docketing duties should primarily focus on those pleadings filed electronically, so as to avoid the movement of hard copy pleadings.

We recommend that the Court of Appeals consider these three types of duties, as well as any others, to determine how best to make use of the available productive capacity among the JAs. It should be noted that some training would be necessary, as well as revisions to operating procedures to ensure that distributed tasks are completed accurately and consistently. This is particularly critical with docketing duties where subsequent actions are dependent upon

correct entries being made to MAPPIS. The effect of moving to a paper-on-demand approach, as described later in Section II. c. Electronic Case Files, should also be taken into account.

## II. Technology Assessment

### a. General Findings

Business process management in the Court is outstanding. Most business processes are documented and repeatable, data is available to optimize the processes and to gauge their performance. It is unusual for a court to manage its business processes so well.

In general, users are very satisfied with the technology and the applications that are available to support their work. While there is always room for improvement, Court applications fit very well with business needs and practices. There were some issues mentioned by Court staff and judges, and they are presented below. Most are already known by the IS staff and are in various stages of being addressed. Training programs for information systems are excellent, but users reported that the some of the clerical business process documentation could be improved. The responsiveness and quality of Help Desk support of technology applications in the Court is also rated very high by users.

While funds for equipment replacement are not sufficient to keep all hardware and software completely current, most staff reported that computers, printers, scanners, and other equipment are sufficient to do the job. Recently, all judges and staff members who expressed an interest have been provided second monitors, which are essential for working with electronic documents. A virtual private network (VPN) allows off-site access to the Court's network is a recent addition that has been well received by judges and supervisory staff.

Infrastructure (servers, networks, software, and support staff that are used to operate and maintain applications) is generally very good. A few issues are mentioned below. It is clear that improvements in this area will be required as the Court moves toward elimination of paper files in the Clerk's Office. Any downtime or slow response will be more problematic when the paper

files are no longer used, so server and network performance and reliability will require upgrades.

## b. MAPPIS

MAPPIS is the Court's case management application. It is web-based and is currently being migrated to an improved database environment. Structural relationships within the database also are being improved during the migration, which will better support other MAPPIS enhancements.

The MAPPIS user interface is simple and effective. Direct access to most resources that judges and staff typically use is available through this system. Some improvements are planned that will further reduce the time needed to perform tasks in MAPPIS. A financial management module is being created, as well. The development environment for MAPPIS is sound and modern.

The Court relies heavily on Microsoft Word for document generation. Hundreds of document templates currently exist. Some documents are currently created in MAPPIS and, with the system changes that are currently in progress, most document generation capability will be contained in MAPPIS, using Quickdock. This is a positive step that will improve the efficiency of clerical operations.

One concern is that there is a lot of redundant activity in MAPPIS. When a document is delivered by the post office, a "mail" entry is made in MAPPIS. The hard-copy document is then routed to the Clerk's Office, where it is docketed into the corresponding case record in MAPPIS. The "mail" entry must then be manually removed. Similar redundancy exists in docketing e-filings, which will be discussed below. We recommend that all filings be docketed only once and that all data entry be completed immediately upon receipt by the appropriate clerk.

Some minor concerns with MAPPIS functionality and infrastructure performance were mentioned by staff. They include:

- MAPPIS requires frequent rekeying of the case number when navigating to various functions within the same case.
- A history of transactions would be helpful so that, after an interruption, staff could resume working at the same place where they left off.
- MAPPIS could contain a mechanism to record feedback from judges and law clerks to central staff attorneys on the quality of their reports and proposed opinions
- Issue tracking could be implemented with MAPPIS flags that already exist.
- MAPPIS could calculate deadlines for transcripts, briefs and other pending filings. Users currently rely upon a separate date calculation application and then manually enter the result.
- The “Docs and Recs” feature is very useful for case calls and should be replicated for motion dockets.
- Network performance is sometimes a problem—poor response time, system locks up, cannot print, web page not found, etc. It is not clear how frequently such events occur.

### c. Electronic Case Files

The Michigan Court of Appeals is in the early stages of increasing the use of electronic case files and records. It was estimated that approximately 20 percent of cases utilize the electronic filing system. In addition, most paper filings are scanned into electronic format by the Clerk’s Office. Whether e-filed or scanned by staff, the images are subsequently linked to the corresponding event entry in MAPPIS. Business operations and processes cannot maximize efficiency when duplicate systems are being maintained. Upon the resolution of a few issues with integrating the e-filing system and MAPPIS, we recommend that the Court move as quickly as possible to increase the use of e-filing and to eliminate the duplicate maintenance of paper files in the Clerk’s Office. Court operations will not be cost-effective until both of these steps are taken.

Current practice requires the manual deletion of a scanned item from the queue after it is docketed and uploaded to MAPPIS. This process is redundant and should be unnecessary. Like the duplicate docketing issue mentioned above, it wastes time and introduces errors into the business processes of the Court. The scanned items should be deleted from the queue automatically after it is docketed.

We recommend that a paper-on-demand approach should be the strategy of the Court wherein any judges or attorneys who want particular documents in paper form are able to obtain them. This does not mean that the Clerk's Office must maintain all documents in duplicate forms. Where there is an electronic record, it is possible to produce paper when and where it is needed, with no intention of preserving it. It is a good strategy to provide a system in which the printing is performed by those individuals or work groups that require it, i.e., in chambers. This ensures that only necessary documents are printed and also that they are produced in the quickest, most cost-effective manner. A nearly paperless Clerk's Office will be more efficient and faster in moving work between offices and meeting the needs of the Court.

Many trial courts are currently scanning their records which, on appeal, can easily be transmitted to the Court in an electronic form. The IS Department is working to facilitate a faster and easier process to get these resources to the Court. It should be noted that while scanned images are much more efficiently processed than paper, they are not the ideal format in which these documents could be obtained. This issue will be discussed in more detail below.

The Court has identified, and the IS staff has begun exploring, using some new technologies that may aid the Court in working with electronic documents, such as tablet PCs, e-readers, and tablets like the Apple iPad<sup>®</sup> and Motorola Xoom<sup>®</sup>. These innovations will become practical for widespread use in conjunction with the paper-on demand strategy. The Court likely will be required to develop an application for the selected device to synchronize cases with those on the calendar of a particular judge or commissioner. This could work like the "Docs and Recs" function in allowing the judge or the judicial assistant to select the documents or types of documents that will be needed. A second application may be necessary to manage the cases

and documents on the device, although the “File Browser” application included with the Apple iPad© may be sufficient to perform this function.

We recommend that as the IS staff explores the various options, judges would be actively involved in defining requirements and participating in testing of these devices. The design process must include an investigation of security and confidentiality issues that might surface if a small electronic device is lost or stolen.

It is clear that the various types of electronic files are not created equal when navigating, indexing, searching, or annotating documents. Scanned documents are not ideal for an effective paper-on-demand strategy. Native PDF documents are much smaller, easier to work with, and more searchable. The process of scanning some documents will always be necessary to accommodate the *pro per* litigants and for reproducing documents that exist only in hard copy, but the Court should encourage the e-filing of native PDF documents to the maximum extent possible.

Finally, as the Court moves ahead with a timeline to require e-filing, it will be necessary to examine and update Court rules, policies, and operational procedures to support the use of these technologies.

#### d. E-filing

In 2006, electronic filing was introduced in the Court of Appeals. The e-filing application, which is provided by Tyler Technologies, has had some problems along the way, such as with service and confirmation of service, missing pages and documents, and integration with MAPPIS, but progress is being made in resolving these issues. E-filing acceptance among bar members has been good. Hence, the Court is poised to take the next steps to increase the use of e-filing.

The best approach, from an operational perspective, is to deal with the e-filed documents only once—verification, docketing, etc. The same is true for the document scanning that will necessarily continue in the future.

Beyond these steps, the Court must develop policy in areas, such as requiring joint appendices (like some federal Courts), hyperlinked exhibit indexes, and standards for bookmarking documents within a file. Also, a strategy for increasing the use of e-filing should be created, including training for attorneys, working with the bar to address their issues with e-filing, a schedule for making it mandatory, etc.

It will be difficult to achieve the full benefits of e-filing if a large proportion of the documents are coming into the Court as hard copy or in a scanned format. We recommend that the Court of Appeals establish and publish a date by which e-filing for attorneys in the state will be mandatory. This date might be several years in the future, and it might include making e-filing of certain types of cases mandatory on a progressive schedule, but it is important to let the legal community know that it is coming. They will need time to prepare.

#### e. Other Issues

In the area of infrastructure, increased reliance on electronic resources will amplify the need for dependable, high performance networks, servers, and other resources. Redundant, mirrored servers, data resources, and networks will be required as reliance upon the system becomes more prevalent. Disaster planning will require alternate hot and cold sites that can be turned on and used with very little notice.

The digest and Help Desk systems should be ported from the Linux platform to the same environment as other Court applications. This transition is low priority, since the current systems are working effectively and since they run on a standard server via VMWare. Maintenance and support of the catalog system will be easier and more efficient now that it resides on the same platform as MAPPIS.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, integration with the Michigan Supreme Court, with the state trial courts, and with attorney case management systems should be pursued along with a process to develop

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<sup>8</sup> The catalog system was rewritten in .Net and moved to the production MAPPIS system about ten months ago.

information exchange standards. Integration will reduce data entry, improve data accuracy, and reduce operational costs for everyone involved. The Court of Appeals cannot do this in isolation, but must work with the all of the other courts to do so.

## C. Summary of Recommendations

1. Periodically assess the relative workloads in each of the district offices to ensure that staffing is appropriately and efficiently distributed.
2. Simplify and streamline the transcript noticing process in conjunction with the Wayne Circuit Court.
3. Increase the utilization of e-filing, simplify and minimize the necessary scanning of documents, and move toward a “paper-on-demand” environment. Clarify the Court’s use of the e-file system to send notices, orders, and similar documents to the parties.
4. Develop a methodology for obtaining regular feedback from judges and/or law clerks regarding the quality and usefulness of reports and draft opinions generated by the attorneys in the Research Division. This should include a systematic process to ensure that some feedback is received on a regular basis for all attorneys.
5. Evaluate the number of senior research attorneys relative to research attorneys, given the mix of more difficult and more routine cases to provide better quality reports. Consider the expected increased quality and the relative costs (salaries and benefits) of the two job classes compared with their relative productivity requirements (the number of reports/draft opinions produced).
6. Consider assigning additional duties to make use of the available productive capacity among the JAs.
7. Process and docket all filings once so that data entry is completed efficiently.
8. Eliminate the duplicate maintenance of paper files in the Clerk’s Office.
9. Implement a paper-on-demand strategy wherein any judges or staff attorneys who require particular documents in paper form can print them. This ensures that only necessary documents are printed and also that they are produced in the quickest, most cost-effective manner.
10. The Court has identified some new technologies that may aid the Court in working with electronic documents. As the staff explores the various options, judges should be actively involved in defining requirements and participating in testing of these devices.

11. Establish and publish a date by which e-filing for attorneys in the state will be mandatory.
12. Develop information exchange standards and document integration with the Michigan Supreme Court, with the state trial courts, and with attorney case management systems.
13. Upgrade communication networks, servers, and other devices to ensure high performance and availability in preparation for a higher level of reliance on the electronic case files.