

Part 1: It's About Change

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Court Case Management Systems are creatures of the technology available. This first in our series reviews changes in CCMS based on advances in database management systems, information presentation, and communications, and cost electronic storage.

Warning: A history lesson on computer databases and CCMS follows in the next section:

In the late 60's and 70's systems were often punch card based and were limited to mainly producing name and case indexes. I remember looking through huge green bar printout books that were produced by a computer simply because they could put names in alphabetic order. Of course this was a huge benefit in comparison with card files or name lists in docket/registry books.

Later, starting in the late 70's the green screen mainframe systems were developed. The Databases were most often in **flat-file format** and they were able to hold the case event registry and again names. But these systems often required the same name to be repeatedly entered for each case. In such systems one would see entry after entry linking a name (hopefully spelled the same) to different cases.

In the early 80's advanced systems began to use **index-sequential (ISAM) databases** that accessed data on the computer disk either via a "B-Tree" or in IBM's implementation visas (virtual storage access method).

Both of these database systems had a lot more power as one could access multiple data tables (think names and cases) but were often very hard to change as one had to convert databases when a data field was added or changed value or validation (the list of acceptable data).

But by the late 1980's **relational databases (RDBMS)** were being widely implemented; and that is where we are today with several important additions that will be noted below. RDBMS had a lot more flexibility and power. And because relational databases could handle data complexity and relationships much better, they could more accurately reflect the real world that courts deal with every day. And we all know that the real world is a very complex place to describe in court case data.

Six Other Technology Limitations CCMS Had to Design Around

1. Information Presentation. During the very beginning of the judiciary system the

information technology was so readable and accessible for sharing the case information as well as case files. There were a lot of file for a single case document and most of the times the court staff or employee lost very important case document. As a result, the case presentation during trial the judge and the other staffs had to face lots of problem.

2. Slow data transfer rate. The lack of slow data transfer rate cause lot of problem after the digitalization of court system. The employee faced various issues like file sharing and file downloading was very common in the process.
3. The cost of electronic storage. Computer disk storage was incredibly expensive until recent years. So much so that it wasn't even put electronic documents as an element. Earlier the price of a 80 GB Hard drive was 10000 taka per piece. The product after sells support was also weak after the instructions.
4. Lack of enough man power: The lack of enough employee in the court room as well as office the office work and the service for the citizens or public. The shortage of man is always causes the extra pressure working hour and also the file processing time.
5. Lack of computer expert employee: when the whole country is turning into digitalization the judiciary is still stuck in the same old file process system. The lack of computerized system as well as then lack of expert computer employee the whole judiciary system is still in the same ways.
6. Internet accessibility: The internet accessibility is in the court office as well as court room is not available in our country that time. The internet functional working process was very hampered during that condition of period.

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Process, Organizational Change, and Expectations

We teach in our **ICT Technology and Project Management** class that court administration has three tools:

- process,
- organization, and
- money for more people

This results in a natural tension with court information technology and court administration because process and organizational change has been difficult to implement in CCMSs . One often hears that there is a need for considerable customization in a CCMS, either newly installed or later modified.

We believe that this is a result of IT not appreciating the continual tinkering that judges and court managers do to improve management processes. In industrial processes it would be deemed continual process improvement. In courts it is often viewed as not following court rules or not implementing standardization. Further, it is in IT challenge for processes and organizational

“customization” to be done by very small units such as the judge’s chambers, which may affect other units around the court.

Now with advanced relational databases, along with configurable information display and workflow technologies, CCMSs have the flexibility (if designed correctly) to more easily implement the process and organizational changes demanded by the business users. Please note that this article presents these concepts generally, but we hope that it partially explains why courts have had to purchase different generations of case management systems over the years. And we also hope that it sets the stage for the series to follow