

Maricopa Lawyer

Clerk's Corner

By Michael K. Jeanes, Clerk of the Superior Court

Who Needs MEEDS?

The Minute Entry Electronic Distribution System is known in our Office and throughout the pleading-filing community by its acronym, MEEDS. Minute entries are the lifeblood of the Arizona court system, documenting what happens in court and contributing to a complete court record. Some newer attorneys have always received their minute entries electronically and are accustomed to this service as a standard business practice. Most attorneys have always had paper minute entries and are accustomed to the way they look and the way they are delivered. Recently, even the delivery of minute entries has changed. By discontinuing minute entry drop boxes at the Clerk's Office, those who used to have a runner pick up their minute entries are now receiving them by mail or electronically.

Paper in the Courts

The Clerk's Office always addresses issues with paper. Historically, paper has been the vehicle with which to bring a dispute to the court. However, bottled ink, scribes, and quills have been replaced by ink cartridges, data entry, and computers. Where drafting documents was once labor intensive and required precision typing, pleadings can now be drafted, rewritten, and "spell-checked" very quickly.

The ease of drafting pleadings, coupled with the growth of Maricopa County, has resulted in the Clerk's Office filing tens of thousands of pieces of paper every business day. While the paper process is familiar, it is also labor intensive and costly. At such a high volume, Maricopa County is always mindful of the need for storage space. An attractive alternative and solution to housing paper is an electronic record.

Technology in the Courts

Not long ago I remember our staff having their typewriters replaced with word processors. Shortly after that, word processors were replaced by computers. Culture shock ensued and some people struggled with a perceived extreme and nonsensical change in business process. Can you imagine trying to take away their computers now?

Today, technology is the norm for business practices. While Maricopa County remains a leader in electronic courtrooms, e-filing, and other notable wired and wireless processes, this technology is not the extreme process it once was. Common electronic processes like online banking and bill paying, airline ticket and hotel reservations, and other computer-based purchases and processes have helped ease the transition from paper processes to electronic processes.

By the Numbers

In the Clerk's Office, the transition from paper to electronic processes is vastly improving. At the end of last calendar year, paper minute entries were issued at a ratio of nearly one-and-a-half paper minute entries for every electronic minute entry. Already this

year the ratio of paper to electronic minute entries is nearly a one-to-one split, with slightly more minute entries issued electronically than in paper. So far this fiscal year, the Clerk's Office has emailed over half-a-million minute entries electronically. As encouraging as this is, there are still tens of thousands of paper minute entries being printed, mailed, and stored each month. We strongly urge the use of electronic distribution, as the ongoing storage needs cannot be maintained indefinitely.

What you can do

Who needs MEEDS? We all do. MEEDS is one of the Office's earliest success stories with using technology to improve service; in the past three months, over 1,000 attorneys enrolled to receive minute entries by email. Enrolling in MEEDS is easy; you can download the enrollment form today from the Clerk's website at <http://www.clerkofcourt.maricopa.gov/forms.asp>. You will continue to receive paper minute entries for 30 days, in addition to the emailed minute entries. This allows you to adjust to the transition and verify the delivery of electronic minute entries is just as reliable as paper, and much faster. Please contact the Clerk's Office distribution center at 602.506.7773 for more information or with any questions on MEEDS. You can also contact nearly one of every two attorneys in Maricopa County and ask how they managed the change from paper to electronic. I think you will be impressed by their response.