Designing and implementing e-justice systems: an information systems approach to regional trial court case docket management in northern Mindanao, Philippines

Benzar Glen Grepon

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Abstract

Computer-based information systems for case management are still at an early stage of adoption in many trial courts in the Philippines. In most cases, information system implemented is the case docket using the official record book on which cases are written and inventory of cases and reports are generated. This is a standalone system that often face data processing, data security and case management challenges. However, there are examples of Information systems in overcoming these pitfalls and producing innovative solutions that surpass data management practices in in many trial courts in the country. One such case is the Regional Trial Court Branch 23 of Cagayan de Oro City in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. A project named Web-based Case Docket Information System (WCDIS) has been designed and developed for the court branch. This system uses a framework known as System Development Life Cycle (SDLC) which is a guide for the design and development. This paper also discusses the key system functionalities and the implementation methodology, including both the benefits and shortcomings of this approach, with the goal of applying lessons learned for future installations. Foremost among the successes of this project is its ability to increase efficiency and reliability in completing court transactions.

INTRODUCTION
Judicial Courts in the Philippines are at an early stages of development for computer-based case management and case transactions. Information Technology plays a vital role in the judicial system since it is useful on areas of text creation, storage and retrieval, Improvement on access to Law, Recordings of Court Proceedings, Case Management and producing data for Administrative purposes, continuing education and communications (Ntende, 2005). There are actions from the government wherein there are integrations of IT in the courts, one example is the eCourt program, an initiative to increase court efficiency and transparency by reducing court staff’s administrative workload and providing lawyers the litigants easy access to case information (American Bar Association, 2013). In the lower courts such as the RTC Branch 23 and other court branches in the city of Cagayan de Oro eCourt has not been integrated to its operation. The court still uses a book “case docket” that contains summary the basic information about a litigation, bankruptcy, or other type of court case.

In an article written by the Inquirer.net of Inquirer Mindanao dated January 31, 2015, “Two persons were killed—a court employee and a security guard—following the five