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A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME---- A Review of Ringtail Casebook

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Who would have thought that a program named “Ringtail Casebook” (“Ringtail”) would actually prove a serious application for litigation support? Oh well, they say never judge a book by its cover..... or a software program by its name! I wonder if the name has something to do with the fact that the company is Australian?

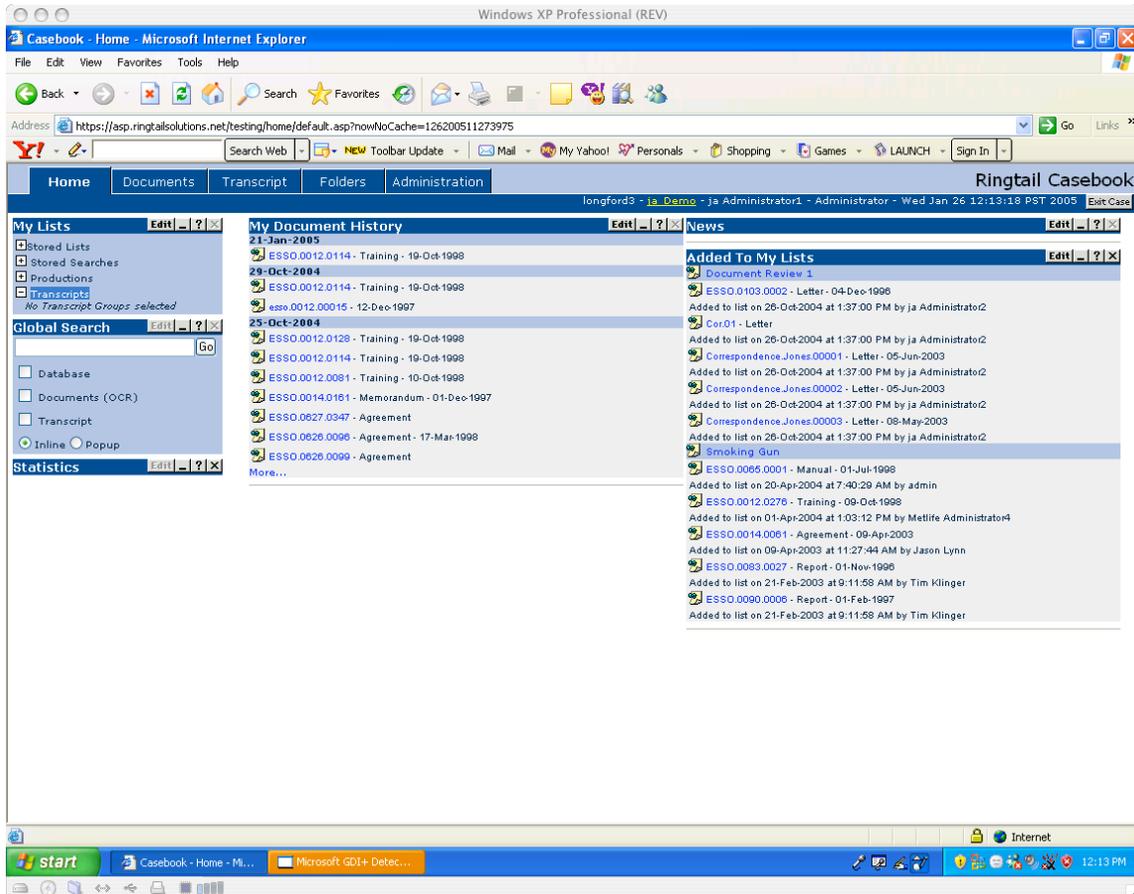
Ringtail turns out to be a high-powered and full-featured database capable of dealing with information, document images and transcripts developed in the course of a litigation matter. Although designed primarily for litigation, the program’s ability to manage large quantities of information would come in handy in a variety of circumstances. For example, you could use the software to control large quantities of due diligence information developed in the context of a corporate merger or a real property transaction. Ringtail offers a good solution for dealing with the increasing quantities of information that we will see as a result of the growing implementation electronic discovery procedures.

The flexibility built into the program allows customization of cases while setting them up as well as post-set up modification of the structure. You can even add fields to a database without reprogramming. This enables the user to modify the program to set it up to track and store the information required for the attorney’s project in the form desired. Ringtail also allows the creation of templates for cases so that you can set up cases easily and consistently once you have the template.

One of Ringtail’s best features is that it allows you to cross index through the use of hypertext links. As a result, you can locate a series of documents/transcripts/etc. containing a particular piece of information or a

specified reference. You can then quickly move from a reference in a summary or report to the original text through a hypertext link.

Work Page Showing New Documents and Document History

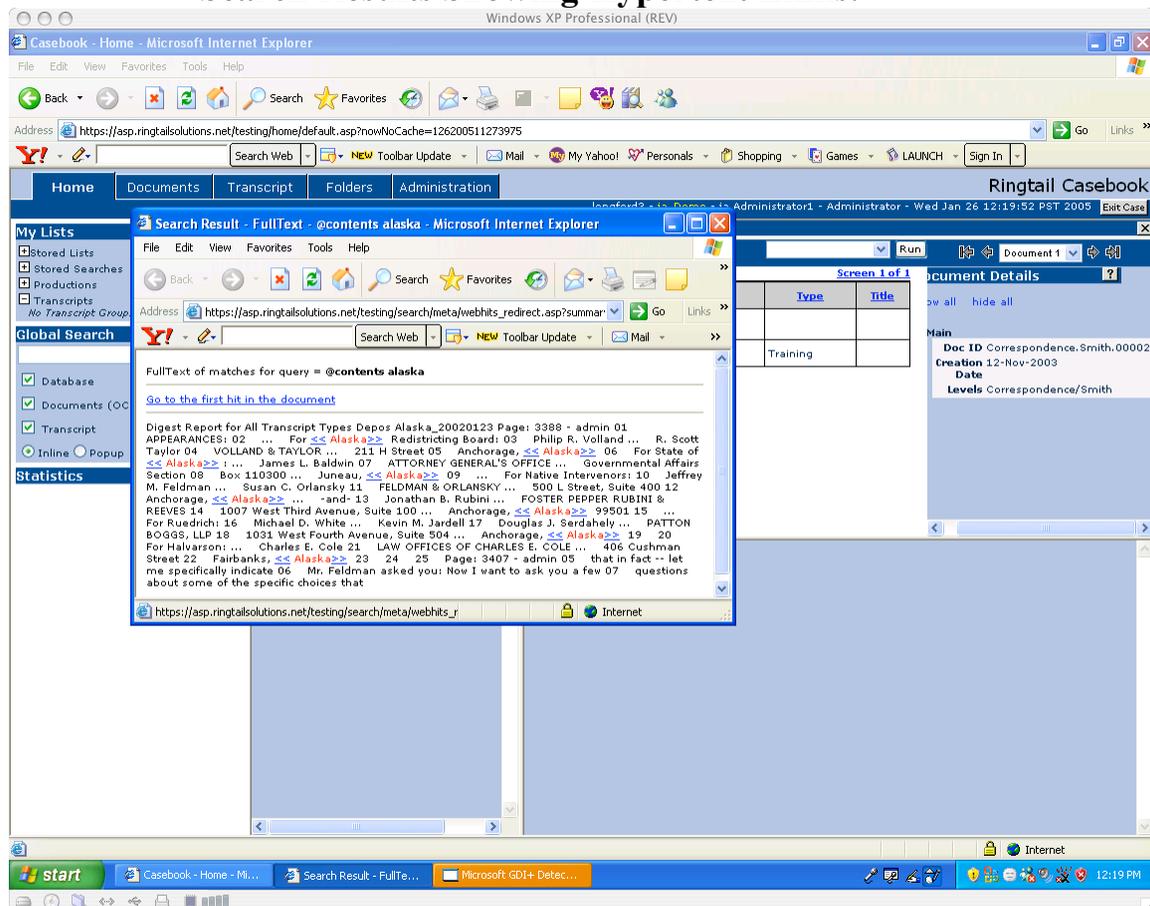


Ringtail facilitates collaboration. It will prepare lists of documents or issues to your specifications. Other attorneys in or out of the firm, legal assistants, clients, house counsel, expert witnesses and others approved by the administrator can share access to those lists and the underlying documents and transcripts. Hypertext Links can take you directly to the transcript or document image.

Ringtail was prepared based on the assumption that more than one person might review and would want to annotate a transcript. Accordingly, each reviewer can use a different color to mark notes or highlights in the transcript.

Another nice feature is the ability to save searches that you have completed so that you (or others appropriately authorized) can access them at a later time without having to go to the trouble of running them again.

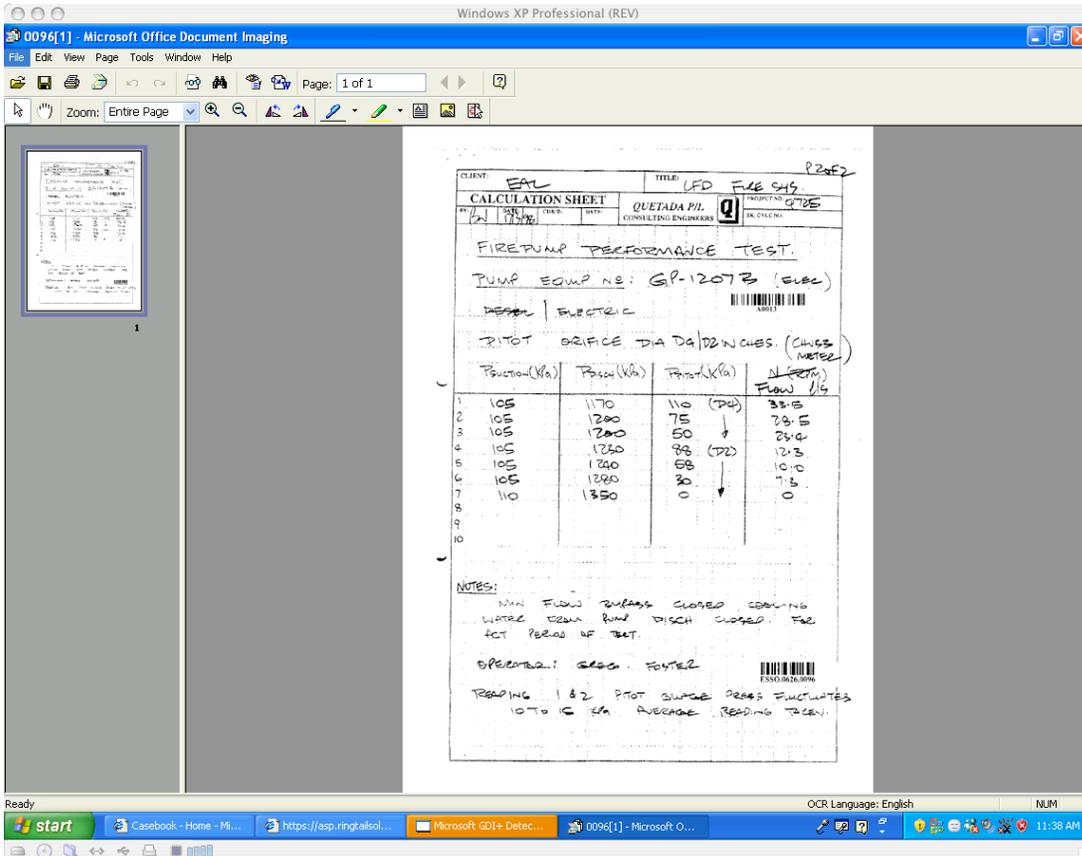
Search Results Showing Hypertext Links.



Ringtail is an exceptionally powerful program and could substantially assist in the effective and efficient preparation of litigation and other matters. Unfortunately, Ringtail is not for everyone. Those from smaller firms and with weaker financial resources will likely find the program prohibitively expensive. Ringtail has designed its stand-alone version as an enterprise level solution (and directed it towards those law firms that are at least medium sized entities). Small firms probably should not consider the stand-alone program as Ringtail Solutions says that the smallest configuration they will sell it in is ten licenses. Most firms of five or fewer attorneys will find the stand-alone version prohibitively expensive, except in exceptional circumstances. Although Ringtail Solutions agreed to give me pricing information while I wrote this review, they would only give it to me in exchange for my agreement not to disclose the pricing in this review. I can

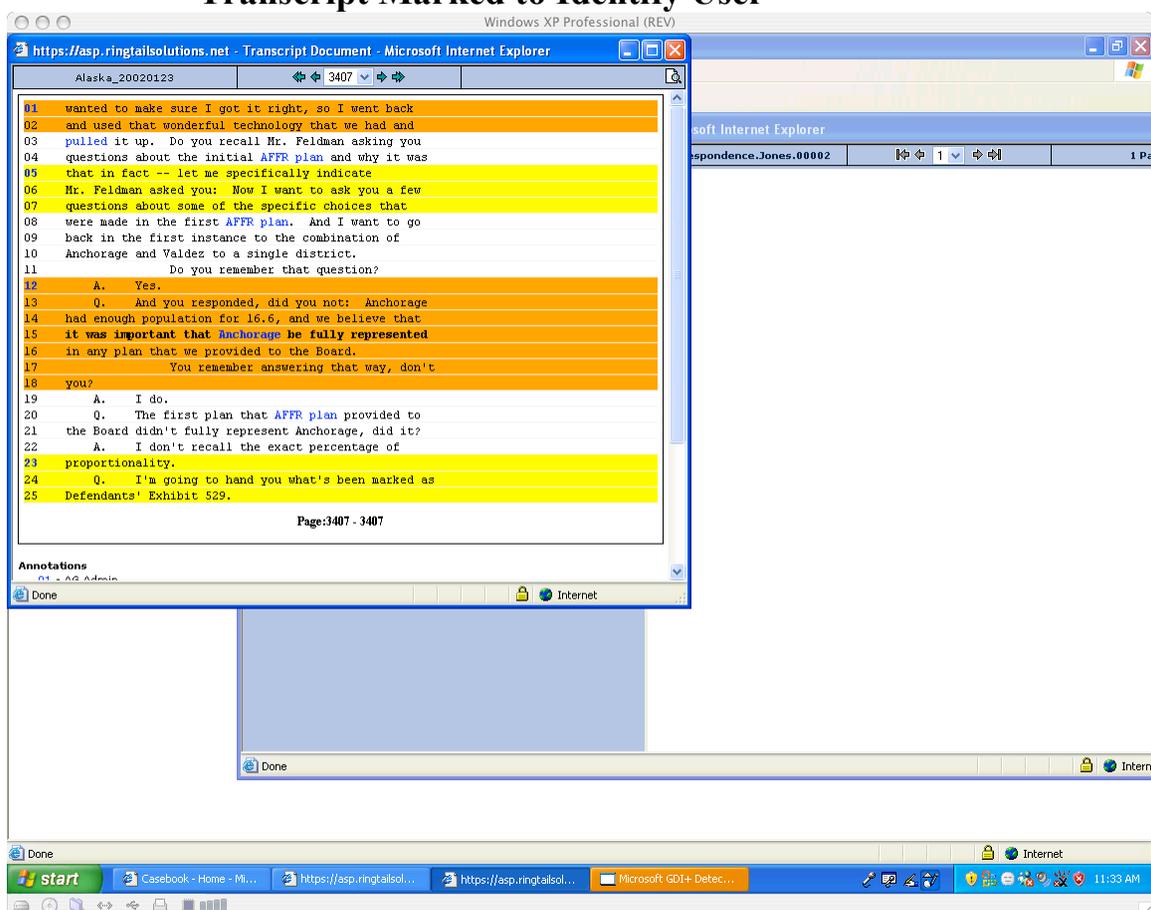
only talk about it in general terms. This may be a case where the old saying applies--- “If you have to ask what it costs, you probably can’t afford it”.

Document Image



In addition to the stand-alone program, you can acquire Ringtail in an ASP format. The ASP version costs considerably less than the stand-alone version. It also does not come with the ten-license minimum attached to the stand-alone version. The advantage of the ASP version is the ready access from anywhere in the world through the Internet browser to the working papers and to the underlying documents and transcripts. The reduced cost of the ASP version makes it a better choice for most sole practitioners, small and medium sized firms. BUT, the ASP version requires that you have Internet Access available when you want to use it. Accordingly, you cannot use the program while in court, unless the court has Internet access available or you have a wireless access card for your computer.

Transcript Marked to Identify User



By way of qualification, I looked at the current iteration of Ringtail in an ASP configuration. I had a discussion about the comparison between the ASP and the stand-alone versions. I reviewed literature discussing both, but I have not had the opportunity to actually see and work with the stand-alone version of the program. Additionally, Ringtail currently has what has been described as a major new version looming large on the horizon as it is planned for an imminent release. Unfortunately, Ringtail could not make even a beta copy of the new program available to Law Office Computing for this review, so I cannot comment on the changes in the new version. If you are thinking about acquiring Ringtail, you will probably want to wait until the release of the new version, unless your work load places you in a “must have it now situation”. Even if the new version comes at little or no extra cost over the current version, it will likely require some retraining to master.

Since its release is imminent, it makes better sense to wait for the new version.

In Summation:

The good news about Ringtail:

- (1) The program has virtually every feature you could want with respect to controlling the documents and transcripts during the preparatory stages of litigation;
- (2) The program has a powerful and efficient search engine;
- (3) Although the learning curve is relatively steep, once you learn how to use the program it responds quickly with the information you seek.
- (4) You can run it entirely on your own system OR you can use a web-based version that runs as an ASP through your Internet browser
- (5) Ringtail is very flexible, allowing the user (or an IT administrator) to set it up to provide a variety of information in different formats.
- (6) Ringtail has different levels of security so that you can afford restricted access as appropriate to co-counsel, clients, insurers, and others.
- (7) You can access the program and your data remotely both in the stand-alone version (assuming you have set your office network up for remote access) and the ASP version (which you access through the Internet from anywhere you have Internet access.
- (8) The program only works on Windows. But Mac users are not out of luck; the ASP version works fine through virtual PC.

The bad news about Ringtail:

- (1) The cost of the stand-alone program makes it an unlikely acquisition for small and many medium sized firms.
- (2) While the ASP version costs significantly less, it still comes in on the pricey side. Additionally, the ASP version requires Internet access to use. Accordingly, when you are out of your office (for example, when you are in court), you must have Internet access available to you if you are going to use the program.

THE VERDICT:

Ringtail offers considerable power to the litigator and other attorneys who have to manage and address large amounts of information. The stand-alone

version makes sense in a large, well staffed firm with a good IT department. It will prove too expensive in terms of acquisition cost and overhead for a small firm in most cases. The ASP version suits a small firm setting better, but requires Internet access at all times as the software and your data reside on servers outside of your control. There are other, less costly options, for small firms that will probably prove a better value to small firm users. Under any circumstances, if you want this program, you should probably wait for the release of the new version.