



John T. Berry

# Technology—The Modern Age Jeckyl and Hyde

Technology is one of the best examples of a love-hate relationship that I can think of. Now, some might argue that there is nothing to hate; technology is not the problem, they would say. If there is any problem, clearly it is in how technology is used—thus blaming the user.

I will leave that debate for others, but I come to you this month mostly to talk with you about how technology is working to your benefit and ours at the State Bar of Michigan. Most recently, we offered for the first time Internet voting to our members. Approximately 30 percent of voting members used this option. We are told this is a very high percentage for first-time usage. The feedback we received has been very positive. It is reported as being faster, easier, and best of all, fail-safe.

The way the voting system is set up makes it nearly impossible to mess up, save for one exception (which I will mention in a minute). It will

not allow you to vote for too many candidates. It will not allow you to forget to enter your membership number.

Basically, all the reasons our auditors had for invalidating paper ballots no longer exist. How important is that? This year, no Internet votes were invalidated—but 168 paper ballots were. That could make a difference in the outcome of races, and our goal is to do whatever we can to make sure every vote counts. After all, as you may recall, I did

move to Michigan from Florida. Lest that concern any of you, we have no chads in our paper or Internet voting options.

So what is that one exception we can't make fool-proof? Who you vote for! That is in your able hands, and I encourage each of you to familiarize yourself with the candidates each year and help move this bar in the direction you want it to go.

I am also excited to let you know that early in the fall we will be unveiling a wonderful new e-Commerce service, which will allow you to register for meetings, pay your dues, change your address, and purchase bar materials and books from our storefront—all online. And while you're online, we will be able to update you on information of use to you.

Technology at its best. As for my cell phone and wireless computer that make me accessible almost 24/7—that is the area I need to work on! They help me serve you better—obviously a good thing—but taken to the extreme, not a good thing to help me balance my life.

I guess, like you, I will benefit from the expert advice soon to be made available at our Practice Management Resource Center (Law Office Management Training) on how to best use technology to our benefit and not to our detriment. As outlined in my recent Viewpoints column, that new service will also be available soon. ♦

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