

The Federal Lawyer In Cyberia

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More Ideas You Can Use Now

Once again, your intrepid guide to all things Cyberian has located software and Web sites that are worthy of your consideration.

Augmenting My Global Positioning System with Google™ Maps

Last week, I had to meet a new client in another town. I figured the site of the meeting was about an hour's drive from my office. I have a global positioning system (GPS) in my car, but I correctly anticipated that the driving conditions would be challenging, so I turned to one of my new favorite Web-based applications before leaving my office just to heighten my comfort level.



That application is Google Maps (www.googlemaps.com). It was not the mapping per se that I was after, but two other things.

First of all, Google's routing gave me a mileage estimate and a driving time estimate (68 minutes) that allowed me to know just when I needed to leave my office if I expected to arrive on time. And I was able to get that information well before I got into my car and turned on my trusty GPS.

I added a substantial margin of time to the Google estimate, because I knew I would be encountering the seasonal low-hanging fog that prevails for much of the winter in California's central valley. (In a disclaimer undoubtedly drafted by the Google legal department, the time estimate was followed by this caveat: "These directions are for planning purposes only. You may find that construction projects, traffic, weather, or other events may cause conditions to differ from the map results, and you should plan your route accordingly.") Right! In this instance, I doubled the estimated driving time and arrived at my destination right on time.

The second Google Maps feature that I tapped into was the "Street View" function, which gave me a "clear day" driver's-eye horizontal view of each critical turn and junction. I was also able to see, in color, exactly what the facade of the building looked like. Remarkable! I could see, for example, that there was a large parking area in front of the building, ensuring that parking upon arrival would not be difficult.

With great confidence, I made the trip into very unfamiliar territory. Google Maps augmented my GPS and was of inestimable assistance. When the new client smiled and said, "I wasn't sure you'd find us in the fog," I was able to respond truthfully, "No problem."

What's more, Google Maps is a free service.

Moving Large Files with Ease Instantly

In my practice, I am sometimes presented with a need to send photographs, video files, or just much larger-than-average text files. At other times, I want to send something and be able to verify that it was received. If you've wrestled with the difficulties of getting high-volume files to their destination and have found that setting up what is known as an "FTP" (File Transfer Protocol) server may be daunting, or if you have wished you could send something via the Internet akin to certified mail, return receipt requested, you might want to visit YouSendIt (www.yousendit.com).

With YouSendIt, a user can send and receive files up to two gigabytes each, can send a cluster of files at once, and can have file delivery tracking and what YouSendIt calls "Secure Delivery." All this is free, up to a defined monthly limit.

If you need greater file sending and receiving capabilities and want to augment your subscription with tracking capabilities, you can subscribe to YouSendIt Pro for a very nominal fee. The professional version (YouSendIt Pro) allows heavier users to send multiple two-gigabyte files securely to as many as 500 recipients and get a total of 40 gigabytes of download bandwidth every month. This version also offers an easy-to-use FTP replacement (called "Dropbox") so that you can receive large important files from clients or from opposing counsel on demand. Moreover, with YouSendIt Pro, you have the added bonus of being able to track file delivery, allowing you to know that your files have been received and downloaded.

Larger firms can opt for the ultimate YouSendIt version, which deploys this service to all lawyers or to all employees across a large site or department. Branded Dropboxes can be set up for incoming files without the cost and overhead generally associated with maintaining FTP servers and e-mail infrastructures that are filled with large attachments.

YouSendIt has a useful adjunct product known as SiteDrop (which is available only as an add-on in the paid subscription versions of YouSendIt). SiteDrop gives firms that have a Web site an easy way to enable clients to send the firm large and important files without leaving the Web site. With SiteDrop, you simply embed the YouSendIt file-upload functionality into your Web site with some simple HTML code provided during the step-by-step set-up process. From that point on, your firm controls the entire client experience—both before and after the upload. And because



SiteDrop is embedded directly in your Web site, the branding is 100 percent your own.

As the folks at YouSendIt emphatically point out, “This easy-to-integrate solution means never again needing to use your FTP—or explain it to others!” Exclamation point, indeed! If you’ve ever struggled with the problem of how to get larger files instantly from your clients who are not computer-savvy, you will nod your head, agreeing that an exclamation point is fully warranted. SiteDrop enables your firm to receive files instantly right on your Web site. There’s no need to wait for someone to burn a disk and ship it overnight.

When a client sends a large file via your Web site’s link to SiteDrop, you get an e-mail informing you of that fact and directing you to download what has been sent. Obviously, this capability could make a substantial difference in certain circumstances—either in a litigation or transactional practice.

Getting What’s Yours Using a Cyberian Tool

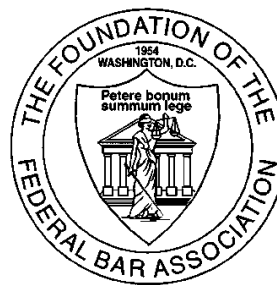
If you are not otherwise aware of it, there is a very interesting site out there that connects with the appropriate offices in many states and Canadian provinces and publishes lists of people who have money currently being held for them—including funds in inactive bank accounts, contents of safe deposit boxes, stocks, mutual funds, bonds, dividends, uncashed checks, unclaimed wages, proceeds of insurance policies, certificates of deposit, trust funds, utility deposits, and untapped escrow accounts. In other words, MissingMoney.com is, for most of us, a one-stop shopping database of governmental unclaimed property records. Take a look at www.MissingMoney.com and see if your state is included in the database and if any such funds are being held for you. Not all states are in the database yet. (My home state, California, is not.) However, most states are included, and MissingMoney.com provides links to the databases in the appropriate offices in the states that are not yet included.

When I checked the site’s link, I discovered that the state of California is holding a three-figure sum that belongs to me and my adult son—certainly enough to buy Mike Jr. and me a nice dinner somewhere. Check it out.

Conclusion

If you find you’re owed an outrageously large sum, a small check sent to me, care of the Federal Bar Association, would help fund my recently depleted retirement account. Meanwhile, see you again next month in Cyberia. **TFL**

Michael J. Tonsing practices law in San Francisco. He is a member of the FBA editorial board and has served on the Executive Committee of Law Practice Management and Technology Section of the State Bar of California. He also mentors less-experienced litigators by serving as a “second chair” to their trials (www.Your-Second-Chair.com). He can be reached at mtonsing@lawyer.com.



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