Dory Reiling
Technology for Justice
How Information Technology can support Judicial Reform
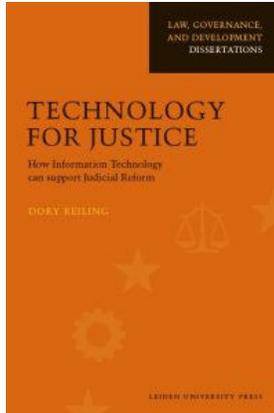
Technology for Justice examines impacts of information technology on the administration of justice. It contributes to knowledge of information and IT in court processes. World wide, court users complain about long delays, lack of access to justice and court corruption. This study examines how IT can help remedy these complaints. It is relevant for courts and court reform, for the IT industry and for legal aid.

Its methodology for each of the complaints is as follows: After an overview of existing knowledge, it examines actual court practice, drawing on a broad variety of sources: comparative studies, statistics, case law and jurisprudence, studies on IT use and on court usage. The study uses a matrix visualizing court case loads, disposition times and groups of court users, relevant for targeting IT development. It then draws conclusions on information use, and corresponding IT needs.

Its main conclusions:

•   Office technology, while improving accuracy, has mainly supported the courts' paper processes. Automated case registration systems, however, have revolutionized thinking about case management. This shift has significantly reduced court disposition times.

•   Internet technology's potential for increasing access to legal information, predicted by Richard Susskind in 1996, holds promise for self-help with settlement and support for court access.

•   Introducing IT can be an incentive to reducing corruption by improving court processes. Increased transparency induced by the Internet can be a factor in reducing court corruption.

The study concludes by examining how new IT developments will impact courts, and how governance and processes for judiciaries will require major changes to make those impacts work to improve the administration of justice.

Dory Reiling, judge at the Amsterdam first instance court, was formerly the IT policy officer for the Dutch judiciary and a senior World Bank judicial reform expert. Her previous publications include Doing Justice with IT (2006) and Justice Sector Assessments Handbook (2007).

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