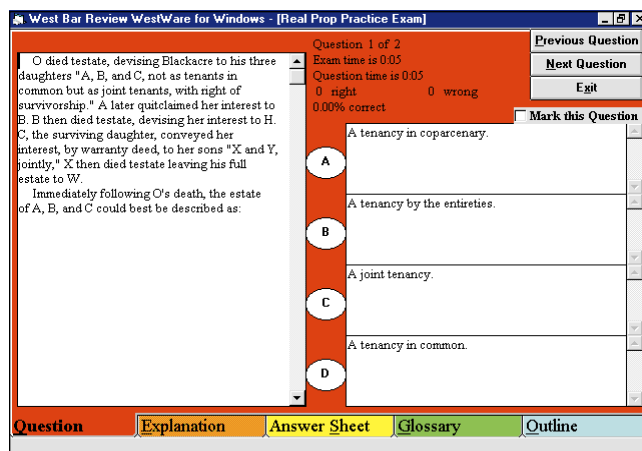# App does bar review company justice

A VB program developed by a third-year law student could be the ticket to passing the multistate bar exam, which is the multiple choice section comprising one-third of each individual state's bar exam. While the essay portions of the test vary, this multiple choice section is the same for all states. The program, officially known as the West Bar Review WestWare MBE, simulates this section of the exam and includes extensive analysis on practice exams. It has nearly 1,500 questions, six law dictionaries, and 200-page-per-subject outlines.

Students can tell the program which categories they want to work on—crimes, contracts, torts, constitutional law, evidence, and real property. The app also keeps track of how much time you spend per question. "This is important, because you have 1.8 minutes per question," says developer Tom Taulli, a student at Whittier School of Law in Los Angeles, California. West Publishing, based in Eagan, Minnesota, hired Taulli to develop the program as an incentive to sign students up for its bar review courses. When students make a $250 down payment for the $1,500 course, West gives them the computer program.

According to the developer, the students' favorite feature is the outline link: "When you go to a question, it will not only go to the outline, it will go to that *part* of the outline that's specific to the question you're looking at." Taulli's biggest challenge, however, dealt with compound questions. "The test will say to use this fact pattern for the next three questions. Because the program randomizes the questions, these particular questions have to be in order because they build upon themselves," explains Taulli.

The VB3 program has 5,397 lines of code, 14 forms, one module, and a 300K EXE, and it uses an Access database to hold the questions. The developer used Tab/Pro to get Windows 95-style tabs, TrueGrid to view data as right and wrong, Formula One to put a large amount of data into a VB text box, and Wise Installation System for a "foolproof" installation.

Taulli recommends taking a business approach to programming. "Learn about negotiation. Get an attorney who specializes in these types of contracts. One or two hours could cost you $400, but it could save you thousands," says Taulli.—*Amy Little*

You can reach Tom Taulli by e-mail at info@talan.com.

NPR app grabs files from the 'Net

N ational Public Radio's Record Central facilities in Washington, D.C., receive audio files that are transmitted from all over the world in a variety of ways, including modem lines, ISDN lines, satellite, fiberoptic links, and remote video trucks with audio subcarriers. But the quality of these files varies widely. Audio coming in over an ISDN line, for example, can be plagued by crispness or hissing sounds that don't meet NPR's standards.

Because NPR is committed to broadcasting high-quality audio, it decided to establish its own File Transfer Protocol (FTP) site by which reporters can file their news stories in WAV format. Rich Rarey, technical director for NPR's "All Things Considered," set up the site and built a VB3 front end that lets Record Central technicians audition and play audio files to prepare them for broadcasting.

It was essential that the application, called the RC Audio Player, be easy to use. "The Record Central facilities are *very* busy, bringing in audio by various analog and digital circuits from all over the world," Rarey says. "Any app that slows a technician because of poor design or performance is unacceptable."

Rarey used Microsoft Office and Netscape to provide easy access to the FTP site. The technician clicks on an "FTP" icon on the Office toolbar to start Netscape, which has been given the site address on the command line. When Netscape connects to the site, the technician clicks on a file name to load the RC Audio Player.

The RC Audio Player, whose EXE is a mere 24K, has five primary features: Play, Stop, Audition, Recue, and Help. The Audition feature plays the first 10 seconds of the file to allow the technician to set dubbing levels. The app then waits in silence for about four seconds to allow the technician to start the analog recorder, then plays the file from the beginning. "I added this feature because one computer is serving three facilities, and there is no provision to remotely start playback" once the technician returns to his or her facility, Rarey says. Rarey plans to incorporate a low-level wave player to allow the user to play "slightly" corrupted WAV files, and an AIFF file player that converts Mac audio files to WAV format.

Having been a QuickBasic programmer, Rarey wrote the RC Audio Player using VB because it's "very comfortable, very familiar, and very *fast*." All things considered, the simple app serves its users well.—*Nina Goldschlager*

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