

CML at the ARLA Conference

We attended the ARLA conference for the first time this year. The conference is a one-day event held in Hammersmith but this year was blighted by heavy snowfalls. Whenever CML attends exhibitions something dramatic seems to happen – either a banking crisis or the country grinds to a halt in the snow!



It was good to see our clients and friends again and we had a couple of new contacts but not as many as we had hoped; these are very uncertain times and people are understandably being very cautious with capital expenditure at present. The show organisers said that attendance was down because of the weather conditions; we'll attend again next year and see if the market has improved.



this issue

- Software Development P.1
- CML at the ARLA Conference P.1
- Student Accommodation Application P.2
- Hints and Tips P.2
- What's Coming Up? P.2
- Business Update P.3
- Chesterton Humberts P.3
- New Faces P.3
- Team Profile P.3
- Online Customer Support P.4

Software Development

By Paul McDonald



Since the autumn of last year CML's programming team has been heavily engaged with the development of a new web-based residential agency software application. The new product has been named "Radar".



Radar is a residential estate agents' front office system which serves both the Sales and Lettings disciplines in one seamless application. The application is written using .Net technology and will be accessed by users directly from a web browser (such as Internet Explorer or Firefox) meaning that the application is readily accessible from wherever an internet connection is available; this will significantly reduce system infrastructure costs for our clients.

Radar will be seamlessly linked to CML's existing back office application which offers the extensive functionality that our clients know so well. Just to make the point though; our application suite will have sufficient breadth to be able to deal with a very broad range of property disciplines from rural estate management through to residential lettings, residential sales, block management, service charge accounting and finally to commercial management.

And all that in one database; it really will offer a comprehensive solution to the multi branch multi discipline estate agent and property manager.

"This will significantly reduce system infrastructure costs for our clients"

We plan to be showing Radar to our clients in the Autumn and hopefully upgrading existing clients and implementing new systems thereafter.

What's Coming Up?

Our present focus for the development team is Radar as you've already read, nonetheless we've started to think through another significant project, namely "Landlord's Online".

We've had requests from our existing clients for system functionality which allowed their clients to have electronic access to property accounting and management information. We're all familiar with electronic banking whereby we can typically log on to a website (with the necessary security) and access information such as recent bank statements and transactions. We're thinking that "CML Landlord's Online" will offer similar functionality whereby key information is uploaded from the database to a website, probably over night, giving clients access to that data. We have in mind that recent client statements will be uploaded along with latest cash, debtor and creditor balances and details of all bank transactions since the last statement was prepared.

We'd be pleased to hear ideas from clients on this subject. If you think the outline above is off-track in any way please do make contact with Robert, Deborah or Ben and offer your words of wisdom!

Student Accommodation; Room Reservation and Payment

CML's development team has been working on a "Room Reservation and Payment" application for the student accommodation industry. The new application is wholly integrated with CML Triangle, our Property Portfolio Management and Accounting application.

One of CML's clients is a major provider of student accommodation in various University towns across Britain. One of the significant "pinch points" during the working year is the receipt of requests for accommodation from students, the subsequent allocation of those requests against the available stock and the taking of monies in respect of those room lettings. CML was asked by our client to automate as much of this process as possible to improve processing speed and efficiency thereby reducing costs.

The first phase of this project, which involved the automated matching of room requests to the available stock, was delivered last year but the second phase, the making available of a web

based room reservation and payment processing system, has just been delivered. This new application offers students the functionality of being able to navigate to our client's website and from there see the types of room available and the tariff applicable to the room. Having selected the room type the student can progress to making payment via credit card for the room deposit and also to initiate a rental stream of future payments as they fall due. For the purposes of processing credit cards it was necessary to integrate CML's application with Sage Pay (formerly Protix); the banking transaction system provider. As part of the process the tenancy agreement is automatically generated from the document pro-forma which the student can then print, sign and post to our client's administration office.

With the system now fully tested and going live we are very pleased with the new software and believe that it will have use beyond the student accommodation industry. Certainly some aspects of the new application will be considered for inclusion within the "Radar" product as discussed elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

This Issue's Hints and Tips

Did you know:

- clicking on a column-header of any of our search screens will sort the column ascending, or descending if you click again?
- you can drag columns about so that they are more convenient for you?
- you can see all your open pages on the Window menu? And flick between them?
- double clicking on the white renewal bar on a tenancy will take you to the renewal details?
- right clicking on the contact viewer will allow you to copy the address, which can be handy when entering joint landlords?
- bookmarks give you the quickest way to access your frequently used pages? How? Clicking the pin icon next to the word 'Bookmark' on the top of the screen will add your current page (tenancy, property etc.) into the list, which you can access later. If you don't want the bookmark anymore, you can just delete it by clicking on the 'tool' icon on the right-hand side of the drop-down bookmark list.

Business Update

By Robert Horsford



I wrote the last "business update" just as the banking world was dramatically collapsing around us and since that

time the broader economy has been dragged in to what is now finally being acknowledged as a recession. We all knew it was coming from midsummer last year but it took a while before the government could bring itself to use the "R" word.

Nobody who reads this newsletter will need telling that the property sector is suffering and consequently you'll not be surprised to hear that our business has been more focussed on supporting our existing clients than racing to implement new systems.

The past six months has been a period of consolidation for us but, as you have read in the development section, we've been busy developing new products which will enable our clients to reduce costs in these tough times. We've also been busy preparing for the upturn in activity which no doubt we will see in due course.

Will it be a mad rush or steady return to sustainable levels of transaction activity? I rather hope it's the latter as I believe that is better for us all over the longer term.

Chesterton Humberts

By Harry Grounds



Chesterton has been a CML client for two years now and the Company's recent acquisition of Humberts to form the new combined business of "Chesterton

Humberts" has kept the implementation team busy over the winter and early spring and will be a continuing project through to the end of the forthcoming summer. This is a good example of how CML's applications are highly functional and can cope with a very broad range of property management requirements.

Robert Bartlett, Chesterton Humbert's new CEO, asked CML to plan a system expansion project to roll CML's application software across the enlarged business. This is a broad ranging project as Chesterton Humberts is now a multi discipline firm that includes Rural Estate Management, Commercial Management, Block Management and Service Charge Accounting through to the more familiar Residential Lettings, Management and Client Accounting.

CML's applications have within them the broad capability of accommodating the varying requirements of the disciplines and this attribute was a key requirement for the Chesterton Humberts management team. The objective was one central system dealing with all of the agency's property management and accounting requirements which would deliver significant business benefits in the form of efficiency, cost containment, data transparency, data analysis and the creation of standard business operating procedures, controls and standards.

This project has been a first for CML in that our role has extended beyond that of purely implementing our systems; we've also been tasked to review and optimise Chesterton Humberts operating procedures to ensure that the business is operating at maximum efficiency and derives the absolute best benefit from the software.

Ben Russell who is leading the project said "This is a fantastic opportunity for CML to utilise our extensive knowledge of the industry. It also demonstrates the undoubted functionality and benefits of using a fully integrated software solution for lettings, property management,

New Faces

Our regular "new faces" section doesn't have any new faces this time. But then as many of our clients have been downsizing to match the reduced volume of business we've been very pleased to maintain our existing team of fourteen people.

Having built up an experienced and highly skilled team we plan to keep the team together and continue to build such that we're fighting fit and adequately resourced for when strong demand returns again for our products and services.

Team Profile



Ben Russell

Ben joined CML in December 2006, having previously worked for a multinational media organisation. Ben has project managed and implemented software systems in the UK, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, China and Thailand.

Continued P.4

In managing and implementing systems in these countries Ben has gained valuable experience of many cultures and work ethics. During this time Ben relocated to Australia for one year and was also based in Asia Pacific for two and a half years.

Ben's role as Project Manager within CML Software has seen him heavily involved in the implementations at Chesterton Humberts and Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward. During the implementations one of the key responsibilities has been to gain a detailed understanding of the client's requirements and translate these into CML's software systems, thus ensuring the software met the objectives of the clients.

Ben's time is generally split between being in the office and at client sites, especially during software implementations. More recently, Ben has become increasingly involved with the Account Management side of the business for Chesterton Humberts and Kinleigh Folkard & Hayward.

In his spare time, Ben enjoys playing golf, travelling and supporting London Irish Rugby Club. In addition to the odd pint of Guinness at the rugby, Ben has also been known to partake in the 'occasional' sailing weekend!

renewals and client accounts. I am delighted to be given the opportunity to manage this project and am excited about the benefits and efficiencies that I believe we can provide to the Chesterton Humberts Group. Having been involved in the initial Chesterton implementation, I have no doubt that the experience my colleagues and I have gained will enable us to make a significant contribution to the business of the Chesterton Humberts Group."

This new system will enable users to register their own issues, then allow them to monitor the progress as investigation / resolution takes place.

The system will be put through its paces during a trial in May 2009 with a general roll out planned for the summer.

The system has been designed to enhance the current services we offer, but nevertheless Susan and Dean, who work in first line support, will still be available via the phone, on 0845 0514657 should you need to speak to someone.

Online Customer Support

By Susan Smith

We at CML are committed to offering first class support to all our clients and strive to resolve issues in the shortest time possible. To improve our service we are currently putting the finishing touches to our web based Online Customer Support System.

The screenshot displays the 'Online Customer Support' web interface. At the top left is the CML Software logo. To the right is the text 'Online Customer Support' and contact information: '0845 051 4657', 'support@cmlsoftware.com', and 'www.cmlsoftware.com'. Below this is a heading 'Register a new support request' with a right-pointing arrow. The form contains several fields: 'Title' (text input with 'New Headed Paper'), 'Priority' (dropdown menu with 'High'), 'Database' (dropdown menu with 'Residential Lettings'), 'Product' (dropdown menu with 'Agency Accounting (APR)'), and 'Grouping' (dropdown menu with 'lettings'). A 'Description' field is a larger text area containing the text: 'We are changing our header paper. The new version has a much bigger header; can you please advise how best to update our standard letter templates in order to accommodate.' At the bottom of the form are 'Submit' and 'Cancel' buttons. A footer at the very bottom of the page reads: 'CML Software Limited. Registered in England No. 2696908. Registered office: Unit 3, Waltham Court, Milley Lane, Hare Hatch, Reading, RG10 9AA'.



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