

A SOAPy inCounter

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In the last issue of the CTB we wrote about the new inCounter E-filing system that was created to demonstrate the use of open source software and other new technologies. One of those new technologies is called SOAP. SOAP stands for Simple Object Access Protocol and according to our favorite website on the subject, can also stand for Services Oriented Access Protocol.

Isn't that a lot of techno-speak? Well yes, but because this is the *Court "Technology" Bulletin*, we will attempt to explain further. SOAP is a standard that provide simply formatted messages to allow computers to exchange data with one another. SOAP can use many Internet communications services such as HTTP (this is how your browser talks from your computer to the web server), SMTP & POP3 (this is what E-mail uses), TCP, and FTP (this is how you download programs over the Internet such as updates to your computer).

Why are we using SOAP? Because SOAP allows separate systems to connect and exchange information easily and, in the near future courts will want to automatically connect their E-filing systems with other systems. These others systems may be developed by law enforcement to electronically transmit complaints or commercial and law office automation systems developed to support large civil litigations. Another example could be to electronically connect the court's E-filing system to a website designed to assist self-represented litigants in filing small claims or even simple marriage dissolution cases. Since the data needed by the courts for filing is already captured in these other systems, SOAP allows that data to be electronically submitted to the court along with the documents in a standard way.

For the technical staff, inCounter demonstrates the SOAP message as an electronic wrapper around the functional parameters; LegalXML defined data, and PDF/Text document. Think of it as an electronic envelope.

Our favorite SOAP website (and the source of the SOAP software we used with inCounter) is contained at: www.soaplite.com We particularly like the Cookbook section. If you would like to read more, the following link within SoapLite has connections to many SOAP documentation and tutorial resources: www.soaplite.com/#Links

So if you didn't understand this article, our recommendation is to take your favorite "techie" to lunch. They might be able to help. Or at the least they will be happier since they will be fed. In the next issue we will discuss Open Source Software, the pluses and minuses.