

TECH TALK

Automation Newsletter for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, District of New Mexico

February 2003



ACE 2.0 Debuts February 18 *Improved Performance/Stability Get Top Billing*

Inspired by the overwhelming success of the initial project, developers in the District of New Mexico have been laboring for months on the newest version of Advanced Court Engineering (“ACE”). ACE version 2.0 is largely functionally equivalent to the current version, but outshines the current version by being faster and more stable. We think users will also be pleased with the streamlined look and enhanced searching capabilities of ACE 2.0.

Since the release of ACE in 1997, the District of New Mexico has issued over 6,500 accounts and has made available over 125,000 electronic records. Additionally, the ACE server receives over 6,000 hits daily to view docket sheets, research court opinions, or electronically file court documents. With that kind of demand, it was inevitable that the original system would reach its limitations.

When ACE started showing signs of stress in 2000, the court began to

make plans to update the system. Things had changed quite a bit, however, since ACE was first developed in 1994. At that time, there were no other *court sponsored* “electronic filing” projects in the country. “Electronic filing” was a new paradigm: there were no guidelines for its design, and technology was changing faster than the court could keep pace with.

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Screen Shots of ACE 2.0

The screenshot shows the ACE 2.0 Home Page for the United States Bankruptcy Court - District of New Mexico. The page has a red header with the text "United States Bankruptcy Court - District of New Mexico" and "ACE Home Page". Below the header, there is a navigation bar with "Home | Help" and the date "Saturday, January 11, 2003". The main content area is divided into three columns: "Reports", "Case Management", and "Utilities". The "Reports" column lists: 341 Pending Meetings, Caption, Case Information, Case Search, Claims, Creditor Mailing List, Docket, E-Mailbox, Fee Schedule, My Cases, Opinions, and Related Cases. The "Case Management" column lists: Submit Document(s) for Filing, Open Adversary Case, and Open Bankruptcy Case. The "Utilities" column lists: E-Mail Alerts, Edit Account Information, and Validate Creditor Mailing List. At the bottom of the page, there is another "Home | Help" navigation bar and the date "Saturday, January 11, 2003". Below the screenshot, the text reads: "The ACE 2.0 Home Page - Portal to Electronic Filing and Records Access".

What's New with

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Major Changes in ACE 2.0

The first major change between the current ACE electronic filing process and ACE 2.0 is the introduction of an electronic drop box (“the BIN”) for delivery and receipt of electronically submitted documents in lieu of “instant” filing. The second major change is the Document Verification, which replaces the digital file stamp. The third major change is the way e-filed documents are now processed in the Clerk’s Office.

In current ACE, e-filed documents are automatically processed, stored in the Court’s case database, and made available for immediate review via the ACE docket report. Although e-filed documents are visible on the ACE docket report in current ACE, they are not entered on the *official* docket until “docketed” by Clerk’s Office staff in the Court’s case database. The evidence of filing in current ACE is “officially” the digit file stamp (“dfs”), accessible via a hyperlink in the ref (reference) column of the ACE docket report. ACE users review or print the dfs page as confirmation of the filing of a document.

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New Feature	Description
Case association report	Provides a list of all cases associated with an attorney.
Case information report	Provides general information about a case such as date filed, whether the case is open or closed, and trustee information.
Electronic drop box (BIN)	See article beginning this page for an overview the BIN.
Enhanced case searching	New report filters include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - search for chapter 7 asset or no asset - search based on status (discharged, conversions, last updated date) - search by judge, location or trustee
File to any case	E-filers will automatically be able to file to any case in the system without having to file a paper entry of appearance.
Go-to page ability	Docket sheets display the number of pages in the docket at the bottom of the window. The user can click on a page number to move to that page rather than having to scroll through the docket pages sequentially.
Mailing list in columns	Creditor mailing list can be displayed in 1, 2, 3, or 4 column format on the screen.
Moving through reports via Quick Links	Ability to move from one report to another (such as from the caption to the docket report to the claims register) for a given case without having to re-enter the case number.
Related cases report	Input a case number and obtain a list of all related bankruptcy cases or adversary proceedings.



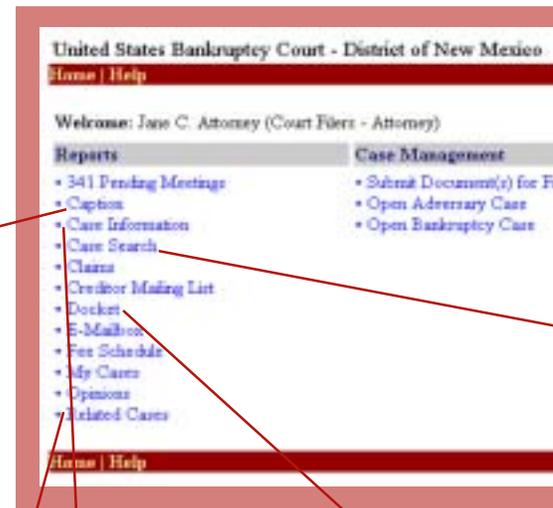
We couldn't debut a new version of ACE without a change of scenery. On February 18, 2003, the U.S. District Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, U.S. Pretrial Services Agency, U.S. Probation Office and the 10th Circuit Library will all have new web pages, accessible through a redesigned portal at www.nmcourt.fed.us. In addition to a new look that celebrates New Mexico and gives the site a uniform appearance, the new pages have been simplified so that users can easily access the information they need. Each agency has a similar navigation bar at the top of the page so that users can get to ACE and other locations quickly, no matter which agency site they are in. Each page then has unique menu items specific to the agency located down the left side.

We hope you like the new look and we want to hear what you think! Take some time to look around then click on the "Contact Us" button at the top of the navigation bar and give us your feedback.

A Change of Scenery at WWW.NMCOURT.FED.US



A Look Inside ACE 2.0



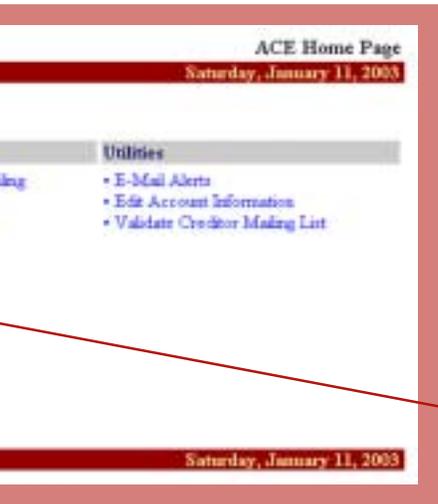
The Caption page is a summary of case information including the judge, debtor name and address, parties involved and the names, addresses and phone numbers of each attorney appearing in the case. Many people print out the caption page and staple it to the inside cover of the case file for reference and service purposes.



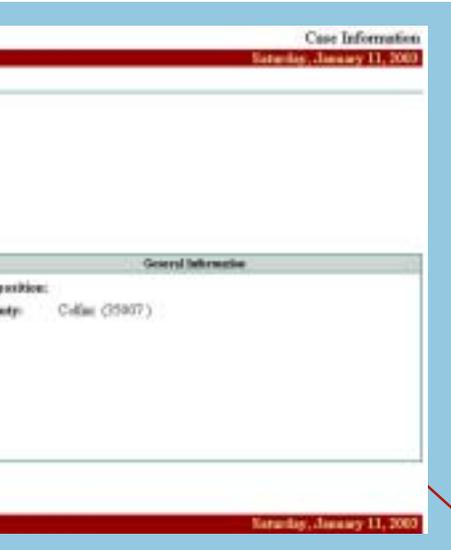
Case Information is a summary of some of the details of the case but in a more compact, tabular format. However, party or attorney information is presented.

The related cases page provides hypertext links to the docket sheets of related bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings. In ACE version 1, a link was provided to the bankruptcy docket sheet when a user viewed an adversary docket sheet. The same link was not provided in the bankruptcy docket sheet. This new report will make it easier for a user to move around through related cases without requiring extra steps.

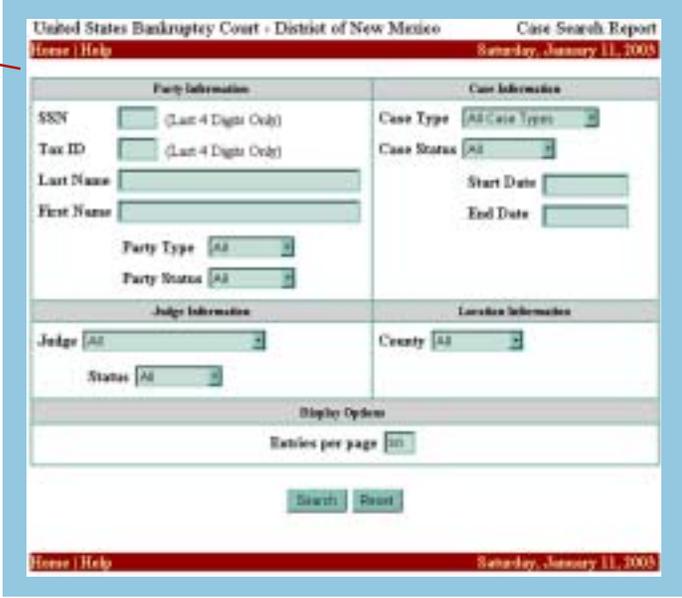




When users log on to ACE, they are presented with the ACE Home Page. The Home Page is a menu of items that are available to the user, depending on his or her role. In the example to the left, the user is an Attorney. From this Home Page, the user can access items such as Caption, Case Information, Case Search, Docket and Related Cases. This menu also provides access to other on-line services such as the Court Calendar and Court Opinions. Finally, as an attorney, this user has access to electronic filing. Below are “screen shots” of a selection of items associated with the Home Page and a brief description of each.



Case information presented in Caption report, in the Case Information report, no



The Case Search feature allows you to look up any case filed in the District of New Mexico since approximately 1991 (although there are some older case available on-line as well). Case search allows users to define search criteria by party information, judge information, case information and location information.

Of all the features available on our web site, accessing docket sheets is the one most widely used. The court has automated all cases since 1991. Through this link, users are able to access docket sheets and any documents electronically filed or scanned in a given case.



Continued from page 2

The document “description” on the ACE docket report is the same as the document description on the dfs page. In current ACE, however, the docket entry entered by the Clerk’s office overrides the document description shown on the ACE docket report at the time of filing. In fact, any changes the Clerk’s Office makes on the docket sheet override the information on the ACE docket report. The consequence of this is that there may be two different digital file stamps for the same document: the initial dfs showing document information entered by the e-filer and a second dfs showing document information entered by the Clerk’s Office at the time the document is docketed. In many instances, the initial dfs document information may be incorrect, but if the dfs has been printed, it is too late to correct the error before the information is disseminated to opposing counsel or the public.

In ACE 2.0, all documents will enter the BIN first to be reviewed and, if accepted for filing, docketed, then processed for filing, and once “filed,” made available for review on the ACE docket report. This means two important things for the e-filer: 1) the ACE docket report will not be immediately available for new cases, and a document filed to an existing case will not immediately appear on the ACE docket report, and 2) all documents appearing on the ACE docket report are filed *and* docketed. The document description will be the result of the Clerk’s Office docket entry. Errors in the document description at the time the document is submitted will be corrected before the document is filed. This means that the document verification, which replaces the digital file stamp, will accurately reflect the document filed.

Confirmation of Submission of a Document. As soon as the document is submitted, the e-filer will see a screen entitled “Electronic Document Submission Confirmation” showing the day, date, and time the document is RECEIVED by the Court. This confirmation will also show the name of the e-filer and the path and name of the files submitted. **If the document is submitted for filing to an existing case**, the confirmation will show the case name and number as well as the document description and whether or not a fee is due; **the confirmation will not show the document number** until *after* the document is docketed by the Clerk’s Office. If the document



Document Verification Screen

is accepted for filing, the FILED date and time will be the same as the RECEIVED date and time. The Clerk’s Office will strive to docket e-filed documents within one business day of receipt.

When a petition or complaint are submitted to initiate a bankruptcy case or an adversary proceeding (i.e., a new case), the **confirmation will not show the case number, judge assigned, or 341 meeting location.** The Clerk’s Office, however, will strive to review, docket, and process new cases (both bankruptcy cases and adversary proceedings) within two (2) business hours of receipt of the document in the BIN. If the petition or complaint is filed, the FILED date and time will be the same as the RECEIVED date and time. **In an emergency situation** (e.g., filing a petition to stay a foreclosure or filing a complaint to object to discharge on the deadline day), attorneys should contact the Clerk’s Office INTAKE section at 348-2500 or toll free at 866-291-6805 to request expedited document processing.

The “View Pending Submissions” Report is a new report in ACE 2.0 which acts as a window into the BIN. E-filers may check this report to see the status of documents submitted electronically for filing. For example, to see if a petition has been filed, the filer should check the View Pending Submissions report and if the petition is not on the report, perform a name search. If the petition shows up in the report, the e-filer will know that the case has not yet been processed by the Clerk’s Office. However, if the filer checks the View Pending Submissions report an hour later and the petition is no longer on the report, the filer will know the petition has been processed. To find the new case, the filer should perform a name search for the debtor. The View Pending Submissions report allows an attorney to check the BIN for *all* submissions or only for the attorney’s submissions.

Confirmation of Filing. The Clerk’s Office **will NOT provide a confirmation of filing** for any

document; e-filers will see the document on the ACE docket report (or in their ACE mailbox) once the document is filed and docketed.

To receive an e-mail that a document has been e-filed to an existing case, e-filers may want to use the E-MAIL ALERT option which allows the user to enter a specific case number and an e-mail address to receive notification that a document has been e-filed to that specific case.

To verify the filing of a new case, e-filers should perform a name search for the debtor, check the ACE mailbox, or check their “my cases” report.

Notice of Rejection of Filing. The Clerk’s Office will e-mail the e-filer when a document (including a petition or a complaint) is rejected for e-filing. The e-mail message will inform the e-filer that the USBC has rejected the submission. The e-filer must call the Clerk’s Office for more information about the document rejected for filing.

Advantages to Changes in ACE 2.0. One primary advantage for the Clerk’s Office of receiving electronically submitted documents in the BIN for review before filing and processing is the advantage of being able to reject fee due documents when the fee cannot be collected. With current ACE, a case number, judge, and 341 location are all assigned BEFORE the Clerk’s Office has collected the fee for a new case. The BIN in ACE 2.0 corrects this infraction of the Clerk’s Office internal controls procedures mandated by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts. Additionally, for new cases, having the petition reviewed in the BIN *before* filing will eliminate errors such as duplicate case filings. Currently, the Clerk’s Office must charge for a duplicate case because it is

already “filed.” With ACE 2.0, practitioners will not be charged for such mistakes because the duplicate case will be rejected for filing.

The BIN will also allow the Clerk’s Office to accept e-filing of sealed documents. The filer will be able to request that a document be sealed at the time of e-filing. The document will stop in the BIN and be held until the judge rules on the motion to seal. Sealed documents will only be visible to parties who are authorized for access.

Since the Clerk’s Office will docket all e-filed documents as part of processing them for filing, the official case record will be cleaner and neater. In current ACE, a document number is reserved by ACE before the document is docketed. This causes many problems in docketing both e-filed and paper filed documents such that the ACE docket report does not always reflect the official case docket (documents do not appear where they should, numbering errors are evident, etc.). In fact, in the current configuration, the ACE and case database programs must continually check each other’s status to ensure that the docket sheet is current and accurate. This process slows down the computer systems and is partially responsible for the instability of current ACE. The new process ensures a stable, accessible program.

As the Clerk’s Office improves its processes, the lag time between when a document is electronically submitted and when it is available as a *filed* document via the ACE docket report will be reduced. The Clerk’s Office will continue to strive for improved customer service through electronic filing as we have for all other areas of operation.

Our staff is available to help you make the transition to ACE 2.0.

Training	Sharon Kologie	505-348-2443 sharon_kologie@nmcourt.fed.us
Questions	Lana Merewether Sharon Kologie	505-348-2490 lana_merewether@nmcourt.fed.us 505-348-2443 sharon_kologie@nmcourt.fed.us
Technical Support	Information Technology Department	505-348-2480 web_it@nmcourt.fed.us
Comments/ Suggestions	Norman Meyer Sharon Kologie	505-348-2450 norman_meyer@nmcourt.fed.us 505-348-2443 sharon_kologie@nmcourt.fed.us

Sharon will be providing demonstrations of new ACE functionality during the upcoming weeks. Give her a call or check the court’s web site for a list of dates and times.

So what does all this mean for users? Improved customer service! The most important result of redesigning ACE is improved performance and stability. Why? Due to changes in the way requests are handled, users will no longer have to “wait in line” to get a response to their queries. With less of a bottleneck, response time will be reduced. Also, a more robust database employed to handle the volume of material stored on the system, system crashes due to queries of large cases will be eliminated.

Other enhancements to ACE 2.0 include:

- Streamlined interface screens for faster (and easier) access to information.

- Attractive interface screens for your reading pleasure.

- Quick links on every case report to access all other reports for that case without having to re-enter the case number

- Enhanced search and reporting options to retrieve specific information more quickly.

- Ability to file to a case without first being associated with it - eliminating the need to file an *Entry of Appearance with Intent to File Electronically*.

- Help screens for help with any query and to provide instructions at every step of the e filing process.

- “Go to” page features for faster (and easier) access within a report to any page in the report.

- Page and report information for the number of pages in a docket report

as well as the number of entries on the docket.

The court is very excited about the release of the newest version of ACE and will continue to provide the latest in court automation. The next focus for the development team will be a new case management system to replace the existing legacy systems. As technology moves forward, so will the District of New Mexico.

As always, the Bankruptcy Court Clerk’s Office is available to provide assistance through hands on training classes and via the telephone.

For demos of and training in the use of ACE 2.0, please see our web site at or e-mail Sharon Kologie at skologie@nmcourt.fed.us.



ACE Development Team (L-R): Lawrence Sepulveda, Halina Skora, Russell Fisher, Cara Slutter, Stephen Wright (seated), David Crockett, James Wilson.