



# United States Courts Electronic Public Access Program

PACER Service Assessment

Findings

September 2010

# Electronic Public Access Program

Established by the Judicial Conference of the United States in 1988:

“An experimental program of electronic access for the public to court information in one or more district, bankruptcy, or appellate courts in which the experiment can be conducted at a nominal cost.”



# What is PACER

PACER is a service, which includes:

- read-only access to information residing on each court's Case Management/Electronic Case Files (CM/ECF) system including docket sheets, case documents, and reports
- a case locator to search across courts
- a service center to provide assistance to users



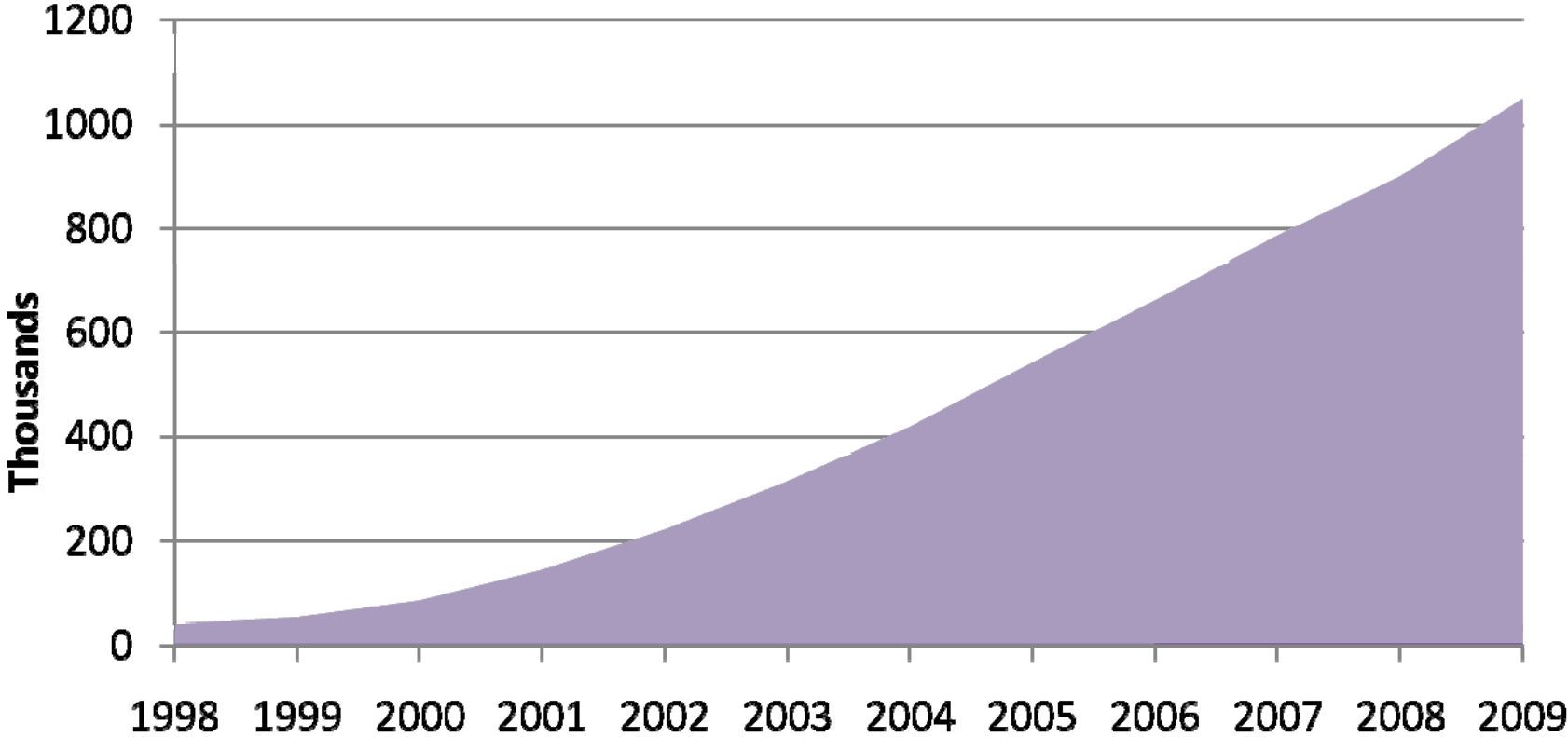
# PACER Evolution

- 1988 – 12 Courts/Electronic Bulletin Board and Dial-up Modem
- 1994 – 9,000 Registered Users
- 1998 – Internet-based System
- 2007 – Access to Dockets and Documents of All Federal Appellate, District, and Bankruptcy Courts
- 2009 – 1 Million Registered Accounts



# Account Growth

**PACER Accounts by Year**



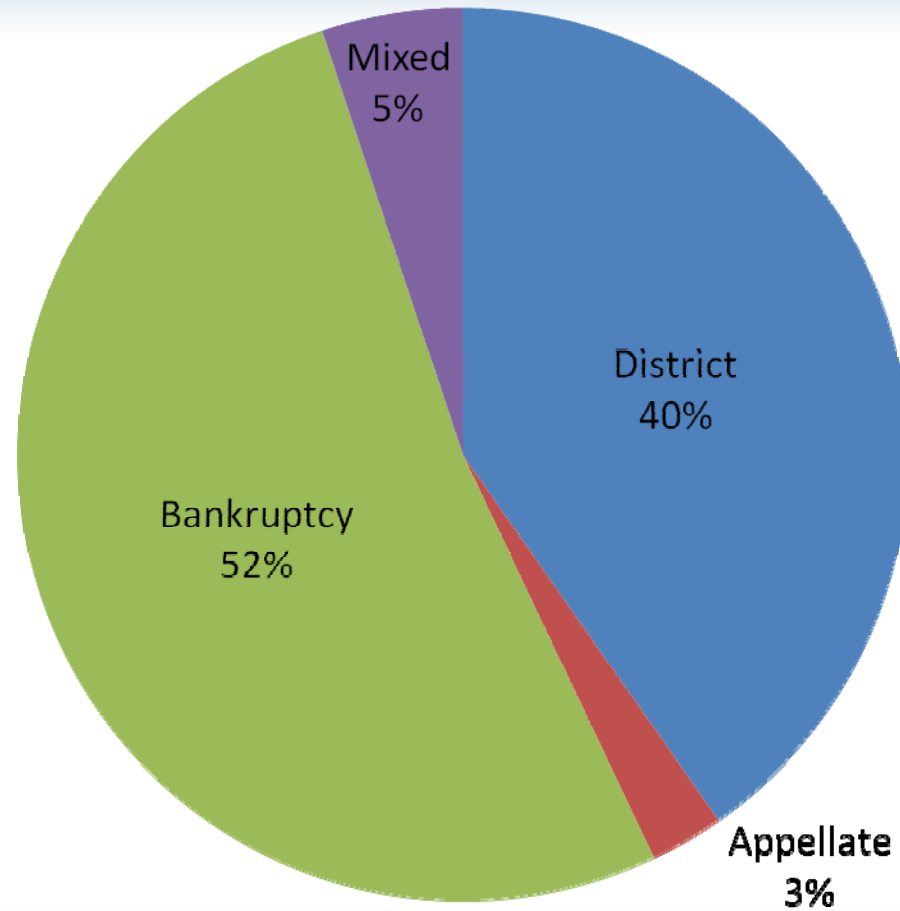
# PACER Provides Access to:

- 37 Million Cases
- 500 Million Documents (5 Million added per month)
- 880 Million Docket Entries

As of July, 2010



# Usage by Court Type



# PACER Service Center

## Registration, Billing, and User Support Services

- 2,000-3,000 New Accounts Weekly
- 5,000 E-mails Monthly
- 135,000 User Support Calls Annually



# PACER Service Assessment

- Conducted by Pacific Consulting Group, a firm specializing in helping organizations improve performance in the eyes of various stakeholder and customer groups
- Began March 2009
- Ended April 2010

# Assessment Goals

- Better Understand User Base
- Gauge User Satisfaction
- Identify Potential Enhancements and Services

# Assessment Scope

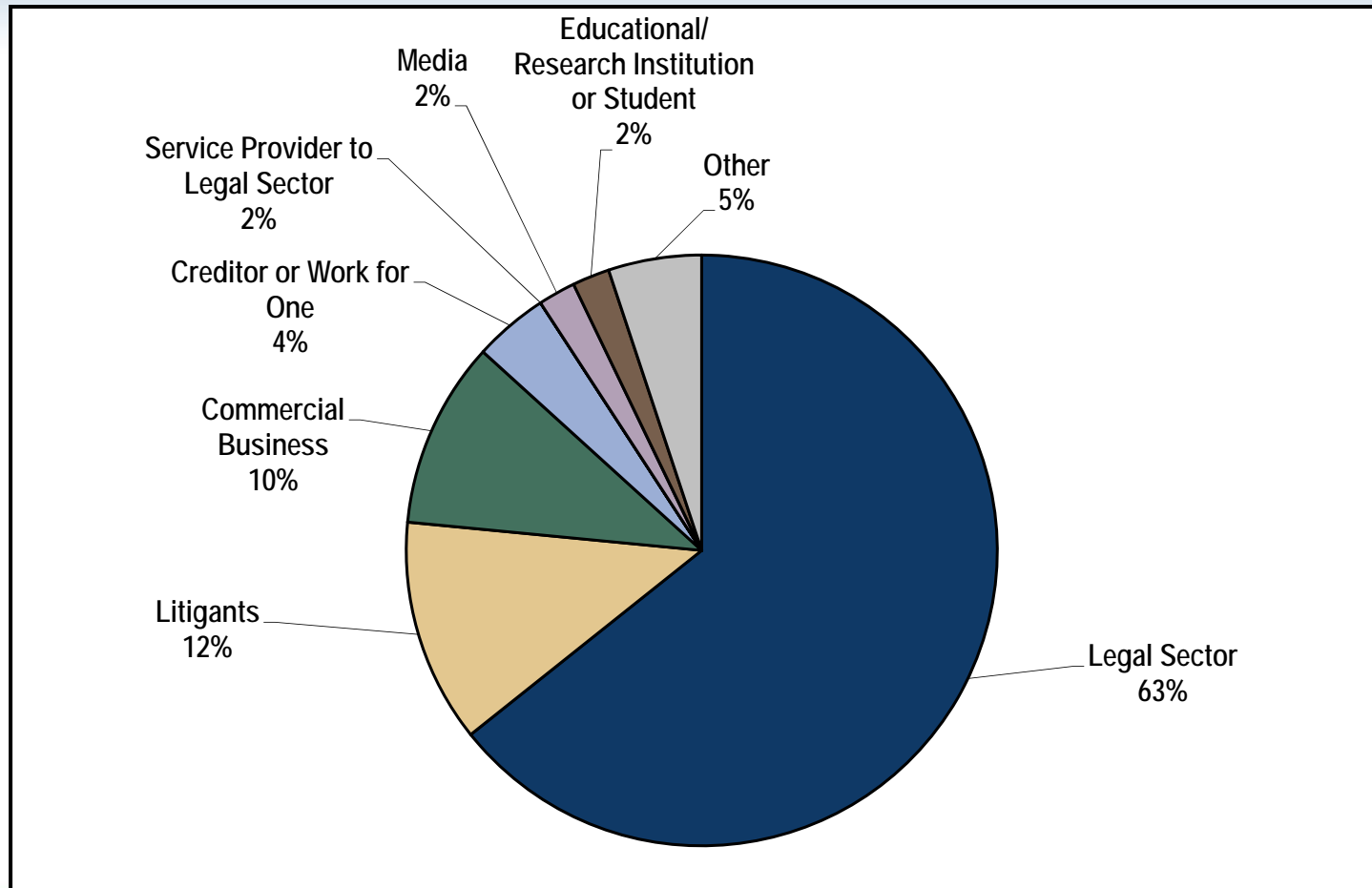
- Demographic Survey
  - 7,100 Invited (Random Sample)
  - 1,960 Completed Surveys (28%)
- Qualitative Research
  - Interviews and Focus Group Sessions with 234 Users
- Proactive PACER Satisfaction Survey
  - 1,819 Completed Surveys (Open to all Account Holders)

# Assessment Scope

- PACER User Satisfaction Survey
  - 15,200 Invited (Random Sample)
  - 3,055 Completed Surveys (20%)
- PACER Service Center Survey
  - 60,246 Invited (All Users Who Contacted the PSC)
  - 4,360 completed surveys (7%)

# Demographic Survey Results

## Who uses PACER?



# Demographic Survey Results

What do you typically use PACER for?	All Survey Respondents
Follow a Case	76%
Search across Courts (e.g. Case Locator)	41%
Obtain PACER Reports	34%
Search across Cases	26%
Other	12%

# Qualitative Research Results

## *Strengths:*

- Reliable, Stable, and Flexible
- Thorough, Complete, Authentic, and Accurate Source
- The Official Record of the U.S. Courts
- Remotely Accessible and Nearly Real Time
- Good Value at a Reasonable Cost

# Qualitative Research Results

## *Areas for Improvement:*

- User Interface
- Search Across Courts
- Consistency Across Courts
- Communication of Recent Developments
- Training



# Proactive Survey Results

Satisfaction Rating	Percent
Satisfied	86%
Neutral	5%
Dissatisfied	9%

# Proactive Survey Results

*Explain your rating:*

- “PACER is cheap, fast, and generally easy to use.”
- “For the most part, I am able to find the information I need easily and quickly. It is not difficult to learn or use.”
- “I can get court papers from all around the U.S. easily, quickly, and inexpensively.”

# Proactive Survey Results

## *Areas for Improvement:*

- “At times it is difficult to get into the system, and the descriptions down the left-hand side are not very user friendly.”
- “The criminal search option does not have sufficient identifiers. For example, there is no way to search by DOB or year of birth.”
- “I do not use PACER very often, but it seems like a rather clunky interface.”

# User Satisfaction Survey Results

Rate your overall satisfaction with PACER

5=Very Satisfied 4=Satisfied 3=Neutral 2=Dissatisfied 1=Very Dissatisfied

User Type	Average Satisfaction Rating
Legal Sector	4.0
Litigants	3.8
Commercial Business	4.0
Creditor or Work for One	4.1
Service Provider to Legal Sector	4.1
Media	3.9
Educational/Research Institution or Student	3.7
Other	4.0

# User Satisfaction Survey Results

## *Areas for Improvement*

- Communications/Training
  - Being familiar with all that PACER has to offer
  - Keeping up-to-date with changes to PACER
  - Learning how to use PACER
- Managing Logins
  - Single login for PACER and CM/ECF
  - Single login for all courts



# User Satisfaction Survey Results

## *Areas for Improvement*

- Searching
  - Across Cases
  - Across Courts
  - Getting the desired results
- Consistency across Courts
  - Information
  - Interface

# User Satisfaction Survey Results

How likely are you to use the following enhancements to PACER, if they could be provided?

<b>Scored on a scale ranging from 1 (very unlikely) to 5 (very likely)</b>	<b>4 or 5</b>
<b>Expanded Search Capabilities</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>Automatic Alert or Notification of Changes or Updates to a Case</b>	<b>69%</b>
<b>Regular Email Updates regarding "What Is New with PACER"</b>	<b>53%</b>
<b>Ability to Download Search Results in a Database Format</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>Training Video or Presentation Available about PACER</b>	<b>43%</b>

# PACER Service Center Survey Results

- Users are Very Satisfied
  - Overall Rating 4.8 of 5.0
- Strengths
  - Professionalism and Knowledge of Representatives
  - Willingness to Help
  - 97% -- Issues Fully or Partially Resolved
  - 93% -- Received Service in a Timely Manner



# Action Taken

*Based on the assessment results the Judiciary has:*

- Released the Case Locator, formerly the U.S. Party/Case Index (March 2010)
- Increased the fee waiver to \$10 per quarter (March 2010)
- Redesigned the PACER website, [pacer.gov](http://pacer.gov) (May 2010)



# Next Steps

*Based on the assessment plans are underway to:*

- Redesign the PACER invoice to make it easier to understand
- Start a communications campaign to inform users about current and new features and services
- Develop a program with the Government Printing Office and the American Association of Law Libraries to train and educate the public about PACER service

# The Future

## *Next Generation of CM/ECF*

The Judiciary is in the process of defining requirements for the next generation of CM/ECF, the application that supports PACER services, and is reaching out to the public for ideas. To participate, visit <http://www.nceb.uscourts.gov/asfrg/> and complete an on-line survey.

