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Singapore Offers Clues on the Future of Courtroom Technology

A look at how the integrated courtroom and related technologies have evolved in the city-nation.

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After the United States recently saw the deployment of [the first integrated electronic courtrooms on its soil](#), many were left wondering about what shape future courtroom litigation will take. For answers, one may only need to look to the city-nation of Singapore, which has already far surpassed the U.S. in its embrace and deployment of such technology.

Charlie Harrel, international development director and senior legal consultant at Opus 2 International, notes that Singapore has been on the front lines of integrating technology into courtroom experiences for decades.

In 1997, for example, the country implemented the Singapore Electronic Filing System, which became mandatory shortly after for all court proceedings and has since updated its system to incorporate more dynamic court forms in lieu of less agile .pdf files.

With the support of the Singapore Academy of Law and the Law Society of Singapore, the country's legal community has also moved to fully embrace the use of novel technologies in litigation.

In 2014, the country had its first case "that made paperless trials a reality," Harrel said. He explained that Supreme Court's trial of [Global Yellow Pages Ltd v Promedia Directories Pte Ltd](#) was novel in its use of technologies (including Opus 2's own software) that "received positive media coverage for the cost savings—estimated at \$40,000—it enabled during the trial, and the efficiency of digitizing 170,000 pages of court documents."

The case was shortly followed by yet another Supreme Court trial, [Management Corporation Strata Title Plan No 3322 v Mer Vue Developments Pte Ltd](#), which Harrel noted was a "document-intensive case" that made use of "real-time transcription and electronic presentation of evidence services."

To manage even more of these cases, Singapore's Supreme Court has taken the lead in building and deploying five "high-tech hearing rooms," Harrel said, which handle varying types of cases and "offer the latest AV and telepresence technology."

Beyond the Supreme Court, other arbitration centers in the country are also looking to help expand access to litigation technologies for more litigation parties and trials.

Opus 2 International, for example, recently announced a partnership with Singapore's technology-compatible arbitration center Maxwell Chambers, through which the center's clients will receive special rates for Opus 2 technologies for use in their arbitration proceedings, as well as access to the company's Opus 2 Magnum cloud platform.

In a statement announcing the partnership, Opus 2 noted that its courtroom technologies, such as its transcription services, will be integrated into Maxwell Chamber's facilities. Harrel explained that the partnership grew from April 2015, when "Opus 2 deployed Magnum services in Maxwell Chambers for the first time on an international arbitration," which was shortly followed by another "paper hearing using Magnum" in May and June 2015.

Litigation and courtroom tools, however, are not the only technology that Singapore is leveraging in its legal system. [The Strait Times](#), for example, recently noted that a Singapore court has allowed the use of mobile instant messaging service Whatsapp to notify a defendant of a civil suit. While novel, it is not entirely unprecedented—the newspaper also said the country's High Court allowed a plaintiff to serve papers to an Australia-based defendant via email in May 2016.

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