

Immigration Law TODAY

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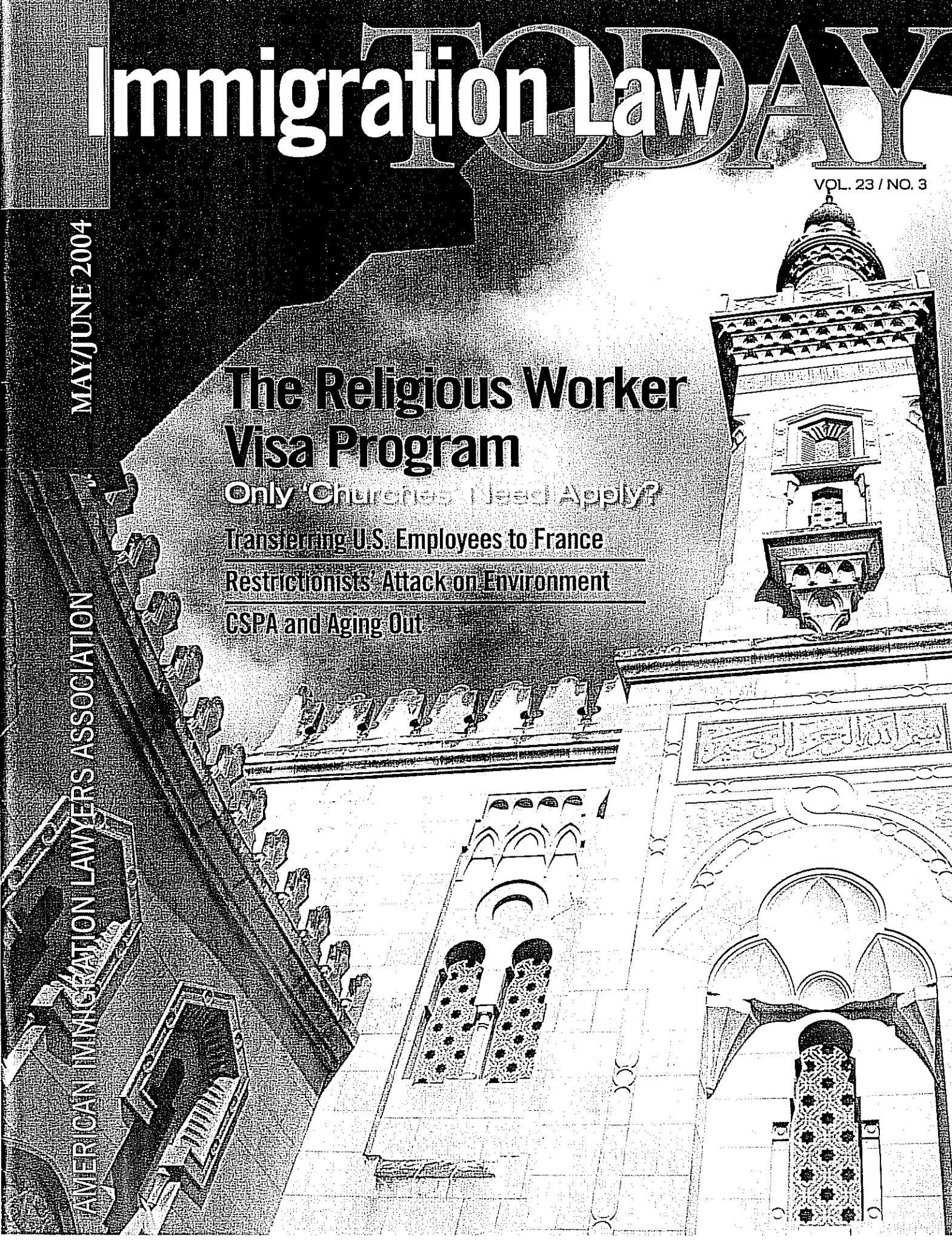
The Religious Worker Visa Program

Only 'Churches' Need Apply?

Transferring U.S. Employees to France

Restrictionists' Attack on Environment

CSPA and Aging Out



The Personal Digital Assistant (PDA): Six Ways It Can Change Your Life ... In an Instant!

MY FAVORITE GADGET INSPIRED ME to focus this issue's column on personal digital assistants (PDAs). I grew tired of lugging a heavy laptop, handheld computer, and a cell phone everywhere I went. I happen to use an Audiovox Thera Pocket PC Phone that has largely replaced all three devices when I am out and about.

The point of this column is not to plug my Thera or any particular PDA or operating system (such as Palm, Pocket PC, or BlackBerry). There are many excellent products on the market and avid defenders of each of the major operating systems. Rather, I want to give you a flavor of how PDAs can be used on a daily basis and how mine has changed my life for the better, personally and professionally. I think most people are surprised when they see just how many useful applications there are on PDAs.

PDA phone flashes at the appointed time prompting me to turn on the device to see what the current event is.

And because my PDA phone replicates my Outlook address book, I can pop up pre-addressed e-mails. I have my e-mail account set up so that I can read and respond to e-mail messages on any of my computers—at the office, at home, and on my PDA. Our office uses Microsoft's Exchange Server software and I can log into a Virtual Private Network (VPN), which ensures that the e-mail messages and mailboxes on the server are replicated on any computer I am using. The e-mail features on Pocket Outlook are not nearly as numerous as on its desktop counterpart. But it will allow you to reply to messages, forward them, insert and open attachments, and insert signature blocks.

If you are mainly interested in using your device for basic contact and calendar management and need a strong e-mail feature, you might also look at the BlackBerry. The advantage of the BlackBerry over the Palm and Pocket PC devices is that it is in "always on" mode and receives e-mail messages throughout the day without having to log onto the Internet.

1 **Size**
First, a few words about the device I am using. It is about three inches by six inches and under one-half-inch thick. The screen is about two inches wide and three inches tall. It has seven buttons on the bottom. One operates like a mouse, four launch basic applications on the device, and two are the call and disconnect buttons for the phone (the phone keypad shows up on the computer screen). The device is fairly similar in design to Palm and Pocket PC phones sold by other manufacturers.

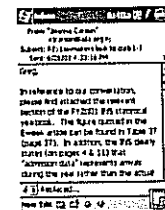
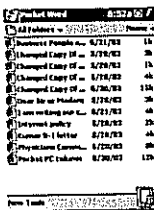
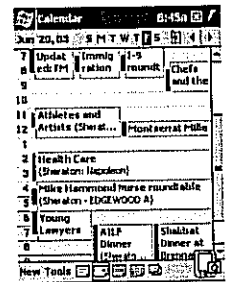
2 **Hardware**
There are additional pieces of hardware to consider buying for your PDAs and PDA phones. One is a lightweight keyboard. Many are foldable and small enough to fit into a shirt pocket. They also typically weigh less than a deck of cards. Aside from foldable keyboards, some keyboards are designed just for the thumbs and snap onto the bottom of your PDA.

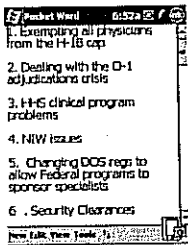
Most PDAs also contain a slot for a storage card that is about the size of a postage stamp and the weight of a penny. I use a 256 megabyte (MB) card in my PDA phone that can store, for example, thousands of pages of documents or dozens of hours of audio recording. That little card gives me all the storage space I typically need.

3 **Software and Operating Program**
My PDA phone uses Microsoft's Pocket PC operating system. Not surprisingly, the system has several applications that replicate those in the MS Office Suite. There are pocket versions of MS Word, Excel, Outlook, Access, and Internet Explorer. I have many software programs on my PDA that largely replicate what I have on my desktop computer. And most of the applications automatically synchronize or "talk" with their desktop counterparts. The Palm products also integrate well with Outlook as well as the major Microsoft applications. Palm users might want to take a look at software called "Documents to Go" to handle MS Office documents.

> Time Management and E-mailing

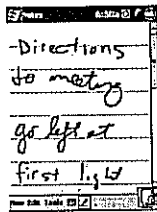
I use Microsoft Outlook's calendaring and address book features on my PDA phone more than any other applications. First and foremost, I can view and update my calendar. The calendar can be viewed in day, week, month, or annual mode. And when I set up a reminder, a light on the top of the



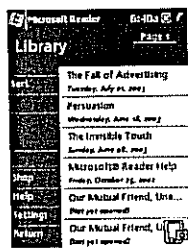


centering text, adding bullet points, and much more. Pocket Word allows you to set margins, use the find and replace functions, and run spell check as well. There are many options not available in Pocket Word that are available in regular MSWord. But it does have most of the major features.

Pocket PC's Notes application comes standard and is one of the cooler applications available. You can type documents but you can also enter words in two other ways: (1) You can set up a letter recognizer feature and write letters on the bottom of your screen. Notes recognizes the letters and converts them to text, which can be seen at the top of the screen; or (2) You can convert your entire screen to a notepad and simply write with your stylus like you would with a pen and paper. I use that feature every time I have to jot down a quick note.



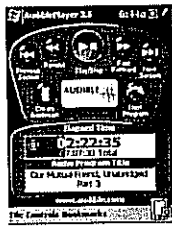
➤ Audio and Visual Features



I read and listen to books on my PDA. Thousands of text-books can be downloaded off the Internet and read on a PDA. I use Microsoft Reader to read books I download from Web sites like www.Amazon.com. There are also thousands of free books available for downloading, e.g., classics with expired copyrights. Palm also has an excellent reader product and publishers often produce books in formats that are readable on both Palm and Pocket PC devices.

I use my PDA phone to listen to audio books, most of which I have downloaded from www.Audible.com on free player software. I listen to the books over a speaker phone when I am in the car, but when I don't want everyone around to hear, I just plug in the earpiece that I use for the phone feature. As of this writing, I am listening to

a 42-hour narration of Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*. The entire recording fit easily on the little storage card mentioned above. Currently, I have about 10 books stored on that card. Audible.com produces players that will work on Pocket PCs, Palm devices, and desktop and laptop computers.

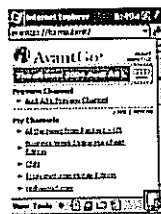


➤ Viewing Scanned Documents

From time to time, someone in my office will want to send me a fax or a scanned document. I normally have the person convert the document to a .pdf using Adobe Acrobat (a procedure that is quite simple and takes just a minute) and then e-mail it to me. I can then view the document in Acrobat's Pocket PC viewer. Commercial services, such as www.efax.com, can provide you with a fax number that can route any faxed document directly to your e-mail account. Acrobat also makes a reader for Palm devices.

➤ Downloading News, Magazines

My PDA phone contains software that makes it easy for me to keep up with what's going on in the world. I use software from Avantgo, which automatically downloads newspapers and magazines. I can dial up to Verizon's high-speed network, and, in less



than two minutes, download the full text of about 20 newspapers. I also have Avantgo set to automatically update every few minutes when my PDA phone is sitting on the cradle attached to my computer. My version of Avantgo integrates with the pocket version of Microsoft's Internet Explorer Web browser. Avantgo also integrates with Palm devices.



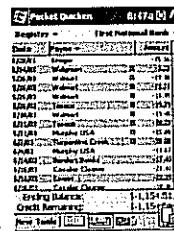
➤ Web Browsing

Internet Explorer can be used on a PDA for regular Web browsing. Because my PDA phone has wireless modem

capability that dials up to the high speed network of my cell phone provider, I can just type in a regular Web site address and view that page. However, unlike the news channels on Avantgo, many Web sites are not so easy to view on such a small screen. The Palm Webpro Browser works similarly to the Pocket Internet Explorer.

➤ Budgeting Time, Money on the Go

One of my favorite applications on my PDA phone is Pocket Quicken, the PDA version of the popular financial software. Like its desktop counterpart, I can view all of my accounts and enter transactions. I have become accustomed to tracking every single penny I spend and can see at any given time the status of my monthly budget. Pocket Quicken synchronizes automatically with the desktop version of Quicken every time I place my PDA phone on its cradle. Pocket Quicken is available in a Palm and Pocket PC version.



I also have Pocket Expensable software on my Pocket PC that is designed to keep track of travel expenses. Whenever I return to the office, I print out an expense report and submit it to our bookkeeping staff for reimbursement.

Even ACT! can be used on PDA systems now to track information on clients and referral sources. ACT! has both a Palm and a Pocket PC version that allow the program's data to synchronize with the desktop version of the software.

➤ Live Chat

All Pocket PCs come with a pocket version of MS Messenger, Microsoft's chat program. To chat live, of course, your PDA needs to be connected to the Internet. There are times when chatting comes in handy—for instance, if I don't want to speak on the phone and only want to pop a question to someone in the office, or if I am in court and a cell phone call is out of the question, I can send a live message to office staff. This



Many of the newer PDAs incorporate features like built-in cameras and MP3 players; some of the devices also can become video cameras.

feature is quite helpful. The Palm devices have similar software available including Quick Chat, IR Chat, and VeriChat.

4 Telephone
My Thera, like most PDA phones, is somewhat larger than the typical cell phone. But it still easily fits into my shirt pocket. The typical PDA phone's software integrates with Outlook or the Palm address book allowing the user to click on a phone number in the address book and dial that number. And when I receive an incoming call, if the caller's number is in my address book, that caller's identification will be viewable as well. You can purchase an earpiece that plugs into your device for use with the phone feature. For my particular device, without the earpiece, it operates as a speakerphone. Some newer devices operate more like traditional phones.

5 Voice Recorder
My PDA phone, as well as most new PDAs, can serve as an audio recorder. I don't typically dictate, but for those who do, this feature can be useful.

6 New Technology
On the Horizon
Last but not least, I anticipate even more desktop programs to be designed for PDA use. For example, in the next year or two, we might see pocket versions of immigration case management software as well as various immigration research products. Also, I anticipate replacing my 256 MB storage card with a new combination storage/wireless network card that will allow me to access the Internet on a wireless network (like the ones available at Starbucks locations or at many hotels). Then downloading data will be possible

without using cell phone minutes and at much faster speeds.

PDA Specifications

Before you purchase any electronic device, always do your homework. When purchasing a PDA, there are several factors one must consider:

Price: PDAs typically range from \$100 to \$800. The prices vary depending on the features offered and the reputation of the manufacturer. Generally speaking, Pocket PC prices run a little higher than their Palm counterparts, but no more than \$100 or so. The cheaper devices typically have slower processors, monochrome screens, less storage space, and few or no slots for storage cards or expansion slots. Higher end phones might be lighter in weight and come equipped with more colorful screens and a rechargeable →

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internal battery. Check out Web sites like www.cnet.com and www.zdnet.com for reviews of many of the leading products.

Installed RAM: Handhelds/PDAs store their images electronically like the files on a hard drive of a computer. PDAs range from less than 1 MB to 64 MB. Pocket PC devices typically have more memory, though higher end Palm products now can compete in this area. More storage space means being able to store more information and run more applications. And most handhelds/PDAs are equipped with expansion capability, which allows you to add memory later. Options for expanding memory are Compact Flash, Memory Stick, MultiMedia Card, PC Card, Secure Digital, SmartMedia, or Springboard.

Memory prices have dropped dramatically. You can now, for example, buy a 256 MB SD card for less than \$75. Just to give you an idea of how much storage space that gives you, I can store about 60 hours of audio books on my 256 MB storage card. Cards as small as a postage stamp with as much as 2 gigabytes (GB) of memory are now available.

Screen Resolution and Display Type: The higher the resolution, the sharper the image. Because all displays on

handhelds/PDAs are relatively small, the better the resolution, the easier it is on the eyes. Handheld/PDA screens come with color or monochrome screen displays. Color screens offer more detail but will drain the battery faster.

Operating System Type: The operating systems mentioned below are the ones that are found in the majority of existing PDAs. Each operating system has distinct advantages and disadvantages in speed, stability, and compatibility:

► **Blackberry**—A text-based operating system primarily used in wireless messaging devices. It offers the fundamentals such as a calendar and address book. Think of it as a beeper with e-mail. Blackberries are well known for their small built-in keyboards. Some have phones built in as well. The big drawbacks are the low-resolution screens and limited software offerings.

► **Palm**—A graphics-based operating system that is now also available on several phones. It is compatible with many different types of software, including calendars and e-mail. Palm software offerings are still the most plentiful and the devices tend to be less expensive than the Pocket PCs.

► **Pocket PC**—A graphical-based operating system that runs on a variety of devices offered by several manufacturers. It also is available in several phones. The key advantage for the Pocket PC is its close resemblance to the Windows desktop operating system. Software offerings are also increasing quickly.

Battery Life: PDAs run on either lithium-ion rechargeable batteries or single-use batteries. Built in rechargeable batteries are generally considered more convenient and all but the lowest end devices now typically have them. A rechargeable PDA must be recharged after only a few days of continuous use (however, this amounts to about twice a week for most people), but single use batteries will need to be changed every month or two. Some devices' rechargeable batteries last longer than others, and devices with built in phones or wireless capability tend to drain their batteries faster. However, the cradles on which the PDAs sit also recharge the device.

Data Entry Method: There are a number of ways information can be entered and manipulated in a handheld/PDA: (1) using a touch screen/stylus pen; (2) using a keyboard—some are built in, others are foldable plug-ins; or (3) using handwriting recognition software—which allows for handwriting to be converted into text.

Synchronization Method: This refers to the various ways you can link your handheld/PDA to your PC in order to share information between the two. The PDA and your computer can "talk" to each other and the information on the two should be identical after this conversation. This process is called "syncing." You can sync up using a serial or USB cable, docking station, infrared port, wireless card, or a PC card slot.

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Multimedia Capabilities: Many of the newer PDAs incorporate features like built-in cameras and MP3 players; some of the devices also can become video cameras. The cameras vary quite a bit in picture quality. Some come with just a low one-third megapixel resolution, while others, like the \$800 Sony Clie, come with a resolution of 2 megapixels. Some manufacturers also sell plug-in devices that can turn a PDA into a camera, video recorder, radio, television remote control, or even a satellite global positioning system.

Wireless Capabilities: Some PDAs come with a capability called "Bluetooth" that allows a device to connect wirelessly with other devices like printers or modems. Most PDAs also have infrared ports that allow two PDAs to "beam" information like business cards to each other. And some of the newer devices have "WiFi" capability that allow them to connect to a high speed Internet connection wirelessly in

"hotspots" at coffee shops, airports, and other public places.

Sharing Your PDA Prowess

I am sure many of you already use Palm and Pocket PC devices. I would love to hear about other uses you may have for your PDAs. Let me know by e-mailing me at ILT@aila.org.

On a final note, in a recent column, I listed our favorite research Web sites. I inadvertently excluded the LexisNexis immigration law Web site. It is www.lexisnexis.com/practiceareas/immigration, and it is definitely worth a visit. □

Greg Siskind is the author of the ABA's book, *The Lawyer's Guide to Marketing on the Internet*, and a partner in the firm of Siskind, Susser Haas & Devine. **David Jones** is an associate in the firm's Memphis office and its resident technology guru.

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