

Robots in Law: How Artificial Intelligence is Transforming Legal Services

Executive Summary

Although 2016 has been the breakthrough year for artificial intelligence (AI) in legal services in terms of market awareness and significant take-up, legal AI represents evolution rather than revolution. Since the first 'robot lawyers' started receiving mainstream press coverage, many law firms, other legal service providers and law colleges are being asked what they are doing about AI.

Robots in Law is designed to provide a starting point in the form of an independent primer for anyone looking to get up to speed on AI in legal services.

The book is organised in four sections. The first three present an overview, and some analysis, of the current legal AI landscape. Part I: legal AI – beyond the hype; Part II: Putting AI to work; and Part III: AI giving back – return on investment. The final section, Part IV: Looking ahead, includes contributions from AI experts with connections to the legal space, on the prospects for legal AI in the short-term future. Along with the emergence of New Law and the global lawtech start-up phenomenon, AI is part of a new dynamic in legal technology. It is here now, and it is here to stay. The question now is whether AI will find its place as a de facto facilitator of legal services delivery, or whether the shift in the value chain that it undoubtedly brings will transform the legal business model.

Part I: Legal AI – beyond the hype

Chapter 1 – defining legal AI

Since AI has been applied successfully to legal practice, and has received a lot of media attention, nearly every new legal technology offering seems to be styling itself as legal AI and multiple vendors and consultants are offering 'thought leadership' which includes various definitions of what AI means for legal services. Chapter 1 cuts through the hype to identify the capabilities which differentiate legal AI from other legal technology tools and services, including automated workflows and document production, federated search and big data analytics. It touches on some key considerations in developing legal AI, including ethical and compliance issues.

Chapter 2 – From BI to AI

Legal AI is more than applying mathematical forecasting techniques, including sophisticated algorithms, to real-time data. Chapter 2 looks at the evolution from business intelligence (BI) to artificial intelligence (AI) and how mainstream technology offerings provided a jumping off point for legal AI, notably the progression from intelligent search, contract automation and collaboration platforms to natural language processing and scalable machine learning, and continue to underpin AI's integration into law firms' technology architecture.

Part II: Putting AI to work

Chapter 3 – Virtual legal assistants

The first robots in law were the virtual assistants that support legal research. These are narrow, or applied AI as they are applied to particular legal specialisms, processes and challenges. Chapter 3 presents practical examples of AI-powered virtual assistants currently in use, including RAVN deployed at Berwin Leighton Paisner, ROSS at BakerHostetler and Kira Systems at Clifford Chance.

Chapter 4 – ‘Driverless’ law: Legal AI platforms

The combination of commoditisation of legal services and liberalised legal services markets produced self-service law like Rocket Lawyer and Legal Zoom. These were based on automated workflows, where you enter details into forms to produce a tailored version of a standard legal document. Chapter 4 looks at the development of ‘AI as a service’ by RAVN, Luminance and Leverton as well as the potential for broadening AI within the business. We look at the extent to which clients are driving AI adoption in legal and how sophisticated legal AI platforms such as Riverview Law’s Kim – an intelligent platform for in-house legal services – helps corporate legal departments manage multiple processes.

Chapter 5 – AI first – service as software

AI first for legal? Chapter 5 explores the concept of service as software as embodied by Viv – Siri co-creator Dag Kittlaus’s virtual assistant that generates software in response to real-time natural language queries. Although legal AI has some way to go in that regard, the logical next step for legal AI trailblazers is building bespoke AI-powered applications that differentiate their services from their peers and competitors. This entails building on a versatile AI platform. We look at examples ranging from customer-facing applications built on the Neota Logic platform to firms with their own in-house developers creating tailored AI-powered services.

Part III: AI giving back – return on investment

Chapter 6 – AI and lawtech start-ups

Legal AI is being accelerated by strong global investors. This includes law firms - for example, Dentons NextLaw Labs invested in ROSS Intelligence – but the landscape is shifting. Chapter 6 looks at legal AI investment and the opportunities and challenges of the lawtech start-up economy.

Chapter 7 – AI for good

Chapter 7 looks at how AI is broadening access to justice. Europe’s first LawTech hackathon produced AI triage tools that help community law centres get more done. How far can AI go in driving access to justice in the face of reduced public funding?

AI is making legal services more accessible and affordable, chipping away at legal business in a way that could reshape the industry.

Chapter 8 – AI challenges

Chapter 8 examines the key AI challenges for legal services providers. These include recognising legal AI’s limitations and identifying practical challenges including cost and operational factors. We examine cultural issues around roles and work styles in law firms that may present barriers to adoption – at least for now.

Part IV: Looking ahead – but not too far!

Chapter 9 – Robot lawyers: a new chapter in legal IT

Legal AI has been described as the beginning of a new chapter in legal IT. It will surely replace some roles and create others. It is already altering legal technology purchasing patterns and it could transform the legal services model. The final chapter includes commentary from well-known legal and technology futurists Chrissie Lightfoot and Rohit Talwar and Robert Wooliams from AI Business, on the effect of AI-powered legal services on the mid-21st century legal services industry and where legal AI is going next!