

Commercial Awareness Newsletter *Coventry University Law Society*

Part two of the 'Preliminary Series'



LEGAL TECH: WHAT THE HECK?

Legal tech: two buzz words that send *shivers* down students' spines. We're questioned about it in our applications, bombarded with articles on it on LinkedIn, but what even is it? This week's article takes a look at the law from a technological perspective, dissecting the basics of legal tech, looking into the use of robots for education in law alongside some legal tech trends to look out for in the (perhaps near?) future.

The basics: what is legal tech?

In essence, legal technology, commonly known as 'legal tech' or 'lawtech', refers to the use of technology and software ultimately to provide legal services. In a general sense, it signifies the concept of using technology to solve legal problems. For solicitors, barristers, legal professionals and even students this is essentially a mindset, allowing them the space to creatively problem solve.

For students, having a good grasp of updates and forecasts within legal tech will not only make you stand out from other candidates at any stage of an application, but will equip you well for a commercial setting. The reason firms ask the classic "what will law firms look like in 10 years?" question is simply because the main challenge law firms will face is technology. It is constantly developing and changing, which is one of the only inevitabilities of the future of law.

How students can stay in the legal tech loop:

Follow [#legaltech](#) on Twitter and LinkedIn

Twitter is a platform we're all likely to be familiar with and, as well as being a place to let out one's thoughts about the EU lecture, is a great way to learn about the developments within legal tech. This way, you can learn about the most recent innovations and strategies within legal technology, while starting to pick up and follow your own interests within this sector.

As a personal example: I've been following updates within 'Legal AI (Artificial Intelligence)' on both LinkedIn and Twitter for a few weeks now, and I've come across some fascinating reports on how the future of AI predicts the ability of machines to learn tasks previously done by lawyers, such as search for concepts, identify changes in tone of email communications and even draft letters.

Join the [UK LegalTech Association \(UKLTA\)](#)

The UK LegalTech Association is a community where legal professionals, technology providers and consumers of legal services can come together in order to help shape the future of legal services delivery collaboratively. The association offers demo days, collaborative groups and legal technology education. For both students and trainee solicitors, annual membership is equivalent to roughly

three Tesco meal deals (£10).

Attend a legal tech conference

As legal technology continues to develop, there are subsequently more conferences surrounding developments and updates in the field. Conferences are a great opportunity to network, gain expert knowledge and may even develop your insight into the world of legal tech.

One which could be of potential interest to students is *The University of Law LawTech Fair*, a free event in London designed to bring legal technology providers with students and junior lawyers.

Legal tech careers

Clifford Chance, a multinational magic circle firm, has recently launched IGNITE which offers training contracts for applicants with an 'aptitude of tech' a route to qualify as lawyers. Definitely a programme to consider for those interested in exploring how technology can problem solve in the legal sector.





Robots and the Law:

Alan East

Coventry University's very own Alan East is largely involved in pioneering work within legal tech, by evolving legal education through technology as pursued through dual robotics. This is aimed at transforming teaching and learning – both at home and internationally.

How do the robots feature in higher education?

Alan uses them to enhance student experience, allowing students to interact more freely with students from overseas universities. In turn, this creates global graduates which enables students to develop intercultural and comparative legal competences.



Alan and a robot

So...how does it all work?

Firstly, an internet link is sent from the mobile robotic presence (MRP) to a student who then controls the robot by clicking the link and connecting to the web through a computer, tablet or phone. Through the use of the MRP's visual and audio abilities, students are able to fully interact with the environment and are able to move around almost entirely* unrestricted.

Coventry University and Stellenbosch students in action

In 2017, Coventry Law School/Central England Law Centre advocacy programme involved 24 students who assisted members of the public appealing against the refusal to grant their employment support allowance. Students interviewed clients, gave legal advice and represented them at tribunal. Linked into the programme using MRP technology, two Stellenbosch students paired up with two Coventry students. Over the course of 4 weeks, the students worked together facilitated by the use of a virtual learning environment, Open Moodle and the MRP technology.

The MRP insight

Students on the advocacy programme were able to use the MRP in a wide array of activities. During week one, the Coventry students took their Stellenbosch partners on a tour of the university. During the second week, the

Stellenbosch students used the MRP technology to observe their partners from Coventry interview clients on other cases, enabling the students from the South African university to be "present" in the interview while playing an active role in the meeting.

*Robot caveats

Despite their success, the robots do face some of their own issues. The reliability of connection depends on the WiFi strength from both sides which is crucial in maintaining a strong link.

Additionally, the robots are not *entirely* mobile; human intervention is required in assisting them to negotiate stairs or changes in floor level where there is no ramp.

What do the students think?

"Using the robots during my time in South Africa was truly interesting because, despite being thousands of miles away, we were still able to control them and move around the office back in Coventry. It was also really good to be able to speak to staff and students through them. In the future, they will play a big part in terms of education: allowing for a more collaborative and comparative experience, allowing students to connect with different institutions around the world. In practise, it'll have a similar effect by allowing industry partners around the world to collaborate and explore similar initiatives."

Shaun Appleton, Coventry University Advocacy Clinic participant

Students are really pleased to see a Coventry University Academic pushing the limits of legal education and embracing innovative technology. Cutting edge research Alan!



2019 FORECAST IN LEGAL TECH

Legal tech is here to stay, that's a given. But where and how is it forecasted to develop in 2019?

VIRTUAL COURTROOMS

Courts are expensive for the most part: not just for the individuals attending but for government, too. As they are essential institutions, courts cannot be eliminated altogether: however virtual courts may bring a balance. This would also be more accessible for the public, being able to have 'your day at court' from the comfort of your own home. In the UK, the CCSR is primarily paving the way for online courts.



LEGAL CHATBOTS TO GET MORE INTELLIGENT

Legal chatbots, such as DivorceBot, helping parties through separation, and DoNotPay, helping fight parking tickets, are just two of the many bots available which offer complex legal advice. Advances in Natural Language Processing is what is due to advance, through developments in reading and understanding information in a plain language. As it is fairly new in the legal sphere, however, it does require significant developments however once established they may be used in place of the costlier human lawyer.



EMERGENCE OF A COMMON DATA MODEL

The Common Data Model (CDM) simplifies data management and app development by unifying data into forms so that can be used in many applications. Accounting firm KPMG is working closely with Microsoft to create a CDM for professional services, focusing initially on legal services that are finance related such as Anti-Bribery.



THIS WEEK'S FURTHER READING
RECOMMENDATIONS:

**5 things students need to know
about lawtech** Article legalcheek.com

**LawTech: Time for a cybernetic legal
ethics?** Blog post lawyerwatch.blog

Should justice move online? Podcast
Law in Action by BBC Radio 4, Spotify

FROM THE LEADERS OF LEGAL TECH

'In 2019, one thing we will see is legal AI being used to alleviate social pressures, by reducing legal fees, facilitating an uptake in pro bono work and relieving pressures on the over-stretched criminal justice system, for example.' Emily Foges, CEO, Luminance

'In 2019 we will see client legal ops teams making a really big impact.' Shruti Ajitsaria, Head of Fuse, Allen & Overy