

TRANSFORMING JUSTICE: THE RISE OF LEGAL CHATBOTS AND VIRTUAL ASSISTANTS

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ABSTRACT

My article pertains to the role of legal chatbots and AI assistants in transforming justice as a system. It analyses the progression of AI and AI-powered tools and how they are altering the legal system, research, service, and access to justice. The study seeks to understand the potential of said chatbots and assistants and their capability to influence judicial records and practices. The paper discusses the inherent features and skills of these tools, including their ability to provide accurate legal information around the clock, efficiently conduct legal research, and assist in the drafting and management of contracts. On the other hand, the study also analyses the challenges associated with the implementation of AI tools in the legal sector and how such tools affect the sector. This vaguely includes data privacy concerns, limitations of technology, and ethical considerations. The article also discusses the future of AI in law, including enhancements in technology and natural data processing. The paper concludes by emphasizing that AI tools can never be a replacement for human service and interaction in the legal sector but simply act as a source for enhancing legal services and making legal research more efficient.

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THE BIRTH OF LEGAL CHATBOTS

The legal profession has always been extremely manual. A simple and short legal article would require months of manual research, scanning through precedents, hopping in and out of libraries, and pushing oneself to endure studying an incredible number of hardcovers just to gain a small fraction of information. As the world grew, and the information and precedents available grew with it, the art of legal research and the ability of professionals to carry out such research declined, undoubtedly due to the unbearable struggle of manual research. In such a

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state, perhaps as a saving grace, the birth of artificial intelligence, and its integration to the legal sector occurred.¹

The initial purpose of these AI-powered tools was restricted to rudimentary tasks such as simplifying legal research and efficient document review. These tools were primarily focused on the enhancement of efficient research and the reduction of the manual workload on legal practitioners, which meant the availability of more time for attending to complex legal issues and client interactions.

The 2010s saw a quantum leap in the capability of AI-powered tools. The turn of the decade brought about more sophisticated legal research tools. The purpose of chatbots and assistants soon expanded with the introduction of new AI tools such as CaseMine, Juro, LawDroid, and of course, ChatGPT. These tools were able to perform much more intricate and complex tasks than just simple legal research and review. They were able to assist in the creation, drafting, and review of contracts.²

UNDERSTANDING LEGAL CHATBOTS AND AI ASSISTANTS

AI chatbots and assistants are equipped with the purpose of providing users with accurate legal information and assistance. The development of these chatbots and assistants has also seen a major increase in their capabilities. They are now able to directly assist with the automation and assembly of contracts, they can interact with users in natural language, and many can understand legal jargon and even adapt their responses based on the user's level of knowledge, as opposed to their previous purpose of simple legal research and review.

KEY FEATURES AND ABILITIES

Among the many abilities of AI-powered tools and chatbots, there are some that highlight the effectiveness of these tools.

- As opposed to human researchers and advisors, these tools are able to provide instant and timely responses to queries and required information no matter the time of day.
- AI assistants enable legal professionals to have free time to deal with complex issues and clients by working out basic tasks, queries, and document preparation.

¹ Harvard Law, 'The Implications of ChatGPT for Legal Services and Society' <<https://clp.law.harvard.edu/knowledge-hub/magazine/issues/generative-ai-in-the-legal-profession/the-implications-of-chatgpt-for-legal-services-and-society/>>

² Juro, 'The 7 best legal AI chatbots for 2024' <<https://juro.com/learn/legal-ai-chatbot#>>

- AI chatbots can appeal to users around the world as they have the ability to interact in multiple languages, thus breaking language barriers in the provision of legal advice.
- Responses can be tailored and customized according to the preferences, jurisdiction, and area of law as required by the users.
- Most chatbots and assistants are also linked to a vast network of legal databases allowing users to receive up-to-date information and relevant cases and statutes.³

ENHANCING EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY

In the most basic sense, by taking up rudimentary tasks such as conducting initial legal research and drafting contract summaries, chatbots free up time and allow legal professionals and lawyers to focus on more complex duties and issues, thus enhancing efficiency in the workplace. For example, a task that would have taken a professional, hours to complete due to manual research work and compiling of case laws, can now be completed in an instant by an AI assistant.

These AI tools have also had a major impact on how legal professionals interact with clients. One of the most important boons of AI chatbots is indefinitely their ability to conduct in-depth legal research within seconds after thoroughly analysing a vast network of legal databases and compiling relevant legal information, and finally presenting said information in a structured and proper manner.

TRANSFORMATION OF LEGAL RESEARCH

The impact of these tools on legal research cannot be overstated. These systems can review and analyse thousands of case laws, statutes, and precedents within fractions of seconds. They can identify different patterns and algorithms, locate connections between seemingly unrelated case laws, and even predict success based on historical data of legal arguments. This allows lawyers to speed up the research process and ensure that no vital points or precedents are missed during research.

In terms of contract management, specialised AI tools allow users to draft, automate and assemble various components of a contract much faster than the ability of human hands. These chatbots can seamlessly integrate with already existing contract automation platforms to create enhanced contracts and allow for more efficient negotiation, approval, and storage. For

³ LEX247, 'The Role of Chatbots and Virtual Assistants in Legal Services' <<https://lex247.com/blog/the-role-of-chatbots-and-virtual-assistants-in-legal-services/#strong-streamlining-client-interactions-strong>>

example, Kira Systems, an AI-powered contract analysis platform, can review thousands of contracts and other documents, extracting and analysing important provisions.

AI assistants are also playing a major role in the interaction of legal professionals with clients. Many law firms have begun the use of chatbots to answer elementary inquiries to simplify and make more efficient the process of interaction with their clients. These tools also allow clients instant hands-on access to legal information, leading to improved client satisfaction and engagement.⁴

TRANSFORMATION OF JUSTICE⁵

The existence of AI chatbots and assistance has played a crucial role in destigmatizing the “justice gap” prevalent in society. These tools have also shown the potential to democratize access to legal information and services. They help reduce the disparity between access to legal services and the need to acquire them.

Legal chatbots and AI assistants make for a user-friendly interface and provide users with ready access to legal information, accurate and immediate responses to legal queries, and educating and providing the public with legal guidance. Individuals are hence empowered by this democratization of legal information allowing them to make informed and better decisions.

For example, DoNotPay, an AI chatbot, helps its users overturn parking fines and assists refugees by educating and providing them with immigrant applications and asylum.

A major benefit of AI-powered tools has been their ability to bridge the “justice gap” existing in society. By providing basic legal information and guidance to all those who need it but do not have apparent access to it, these tools help cover the distance between needing legal services and being able to afford them. This is crucial for low-income individuals and small businesses.

AI chatbots and assistants also help reduce the cost of legal services by performing basic legal services such as providing instant access to legal information and basic legal research. This allows for legal aid to reach a wider array of audience.

⁴ TechStaunch, ‘How AI Chatbots Are Changing Legal Research for Lawyers’ <<https://techstaunch.com/blogs/ai-chatbots-for-legal-research>>

⁵ Cas Laskowski, Christopher L. Griffin, Jr. & Samuel A. Thumma, ‘ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE’ <<https://nacmnet.org/wp-content/uploads/AI-and-Access-to-Justice-Final-White-Paper.pdf>>

CHALLENGES AND CONSIDERATIONS⁶

Although many benefits are pertinent with AI-powered tools, there are as many if not more challenges and considerations that have to be kept in mind while integrating these chatbots and assistants into the legal sector.

A major area of concern is most definitely data privacy and security. In order to provide accurate information, AI chatbots often require sensitive and private legal data. These tools also have access to a huge network of legal databases and sensitive legal information from around the world. In such a state, it is paramount to ensure proper data privacy and security. Legal professionals must ensure the implementation of effective security measures which include restricting access controls, encrypting data, and practicing secure storage.

The use of AI tools in enhancing legal research requires legal professionals to think about transparency, accountability, and prevalent bias in AI systems. For instance, in case of some wrong information provided by an AI system, must the developer of the system, or the legal professional in question be held responsible? There is also evidently a lack of transparency at how these chatbots arrive at their conclusions. This can create issues in matters where the logic behind the conclusion is of as much importance as the conclusion itself.

LIMITATIONS OF CURRENT TECHNOLOGY

Although there has been a significant growth in the abilities of AI tools, they are still restricted by the limitations of human technology as it stands. They tend to struggle with complex issues that require human judgment. For instance, an AI chatbot may be able to provide a judgment for a case, but it will not be able to understand any political, emotional, or social components that may affect said judgment. When using these tools, legal professionals must bear in mind these setbacks and focus on using them as enhancers to their own experience and research.

The rapid advancements in AI tools have also left behind the updating of regulatory frameworks that make up the core of the legal sector. These frameworks require constant upgrading as and when these AI tools enhance.

⁶ consultwebs, 'AI Chatbots in the Legal Industry: Potential Risks and Benefits In 2024' <<https://www.consultwebs.com/blog/ai-chatbots-in-the-legal-industry/>>

THE FUTURE OF LEGAL AI⁷

The incessant and rapid development of these AI-powered tools has generated the possibility of bringing more sophisticated and complex capabilities, which will further transform the legal sector.

The development of AI tools has poised significant improvements in Natural Language Processing or “NLP” which will allow AI systems to better understand human interaction and will increase the system's ability to comprehend complex legal language. This will also ensure that AI systems have near-human accuracy in comprehending legal jargon.

With enhancements in chatbots, there is the potential for them to provide more proper legal advice and improved legal guidance based on extensive knowledge and analysis. AI systems will be able to more efficiently provide initial assessments for a much wider range of issues and will be able to reduce dependence on human oversight.

Advancements in AI will also offer legal professionals the ability to acquire probable outcomes of cases and analyse the most viable legal strategies based on precedents. This would heavily improve areas like litigation, allowing for more efficient and effective arguments. Enhanced AI chatbots may also be integrated with other advancing technologies in the future. This could result in the incorporation of virtual and augmented reality or “VR & AR” technologies, to create virtual legal consultations or courtrooms for training purposes.

ADAPTING TO THE AI ERA

With the advancement of AI technology and AI-powered legal tools, there is an inevitable need for legal professionals to “get with the system” and adapt to the new tools to acquire the full potential of these tools while also maintaining the “human essence” in legal practices.

The said adaptation can already be seen in various law schools and organisations. These institutions are training the new generation of legal professionals to be well-acquainted with these AI-powered tools. This includes both teaching students to use these tools and educating them on how to effectively review the AI output.

⁷ International Bar Association, ‘THE FUTURE IS NOW: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION’ <<https://www.ibanet.org/document?id=The-future-is%20now-AI-and-the-legal-profession-report>>

The integration of AI in law is also going to bring forth many new roles such as legal technologists, data analysts, and AI ethicists. It will also require legal professionals to develop the necessary skills to properly integrate law and technology.

CONCLUSION

The rise of AI chatbots and assistants marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the legal sector. These AI tools are actively transforming the functioning of the legal system, improving the efficiency of legal research and democratizing access to legal data. Although there are prominent setbacks such as data privacy issues, and restrictions of current technology, the benefits are substantial. Glancing into the future, it is evident that AI technology will play a crucial role in the legal sector. In order to improve the efficiency of law, it is important to combine the analytical power of AI tools with the critical and complex judgments and expertise of human professionals.

The development of AI is still only taking baby steps, and it is poised for many more enhancements in the future. As professionals continually adapt to the advancements in AI, it is of utmost importance that the power of AI tools is used only to enhance human research, and never as a replacement for actual human expertise and judgment.

The integration of AI in the legal sector is more about reimagining the manner in which justice is delivered and accessed, as opposed to simply being a technological advancement. Legal professionals must stay rooted in the core principles such as fairness, justice, and protection of rights. After all, the rise of legal chatbots and AI assistants is not the destruction of the legal sector as we know it but is the birth of a new era of efficient and accurate legal administration for all.