

 [Click to Print](#) or Select 'Print' in your browser menu to print this document.

Page printed from: [Legaltech News](#)

Machine Learning of Tomorrow: 4 Emerging Legal Tech Arenas for AI

Sure you know AI, but do you know where it applies in, say, patents? Here's where AI will continue to push legal technology this year.

Ian Lopez, Law Technology News

January 6, 2017

You've likely read somewhere that 2017 will be a year for legal technology. While this sentiment and ones like it are often expressed at the beginning of a new year, 2017 does in fact look ripe for transformative disruption. This is in part due to the wide breadth of technologies that fall under the umbrella of "artificial intelligence," and the even wider breadth of legal technologies to which AI can be applied.

Here are four arenas in which AI is already and will continue advancing legal technology capabilities.

1. Legal Research

This is the area in which AI as a buzzword really took off in 2016. Part clever marketing and part implications for legal services, AI as an emerging concept was originally imprinted onto our minds by ROSS Intelligence, a legal research platform built atop IBM's famous Watson cognitive computing system. Starting with a focus in bankruptcy law, ROSS Intelligence has since partnered with a number of law firms ranging in size. The company is also currently working with law firm partners on a knowledge management system.

AI as it pertains to legal research works by basically automating a large fraction of the grunt work that goes into conducting the research (e.g., finding the documents, looking for relevant portions) and provides a user with the documents they may be looking for in minutes. Further, by relying on machine learning—a process by which a machine is able to learn and adapt its processes based on human review of its work—there's no need for having many researchers on hand, which in theory could reduce legal services fees.

2. Contract Review

While contract attorneys [don't yet have to worry](#) about losing their jobs to a machine, contract technology, while not yet able to handle the entire contract creation or review, there are some interesting technologies automating much of the work that revolves around contracts.

At present, AI technology is able to scan contracts and decipher meaning behind the text, as well as flag any discrepancies that might require a human set of eyes. This technology can scan millions of documents in a fraction of the time it would take humans (think hours as opposed to days or weeks). For those just beginning a career as a contract attorney, this may also mean some change. As Ron Dolin, senior research fellow at Harvard Law's Center on the Legal Profession and former Google employee, [told CNBC](#), "The first-year associate as cash cow to partnership is breaking."

3. Internet of Things

By 2020, Gartner estimates that there will be about 21 billion devices that are web enabled and able to communicate with other devices. Known as the Internet of Things (IoT), this mass of devices will generate data in a volume that we at present have no way to surmount, meaning an array of challenges for e-discovery, data security, data privacy, and investigations.

This may be where machine learning comes in. Thomas Barnett, special counsel specializing in e-discovery and data science at Paul Hastings, told Legaltech News, "The future of our making sense of the almost incomprehensible amounts of data that we're bombarded with," partially relies on machine learning.

He noted that when building a case, a firm could use machine learning to scan a large data set generated by IoT devices, with little knowledge as to what information within is useful, then rapidly find desired information "without having to spend thousands of hours of humans pouring over masses of irrelevant, nonresponsive material."

4. Patents

When it comes to patents, AI may signal more challenges than benefits. Consider this scenario: Enterprise cybersecurity technology built on machine learning algorithm is scanning company technologies looking for security vulnerabilities to fix. In doing so, it finds a problem and creates a solution. Now, if the company wants to patent this new solution, there's a problem—who owns the technology? Can a machine patent a technology?

As AI has carved a home for itself in legal technology in 2016, 2017 may be the year in which the technology really takes off and begins changing the way law is practiced. While the technology is not quite at a point to start replacing jobs en masse, the rate of progress indicates that massive change may be underway in the not-too-distant future.

Copyright 2017. ALM Media Properties, LLC. All rights reserved.