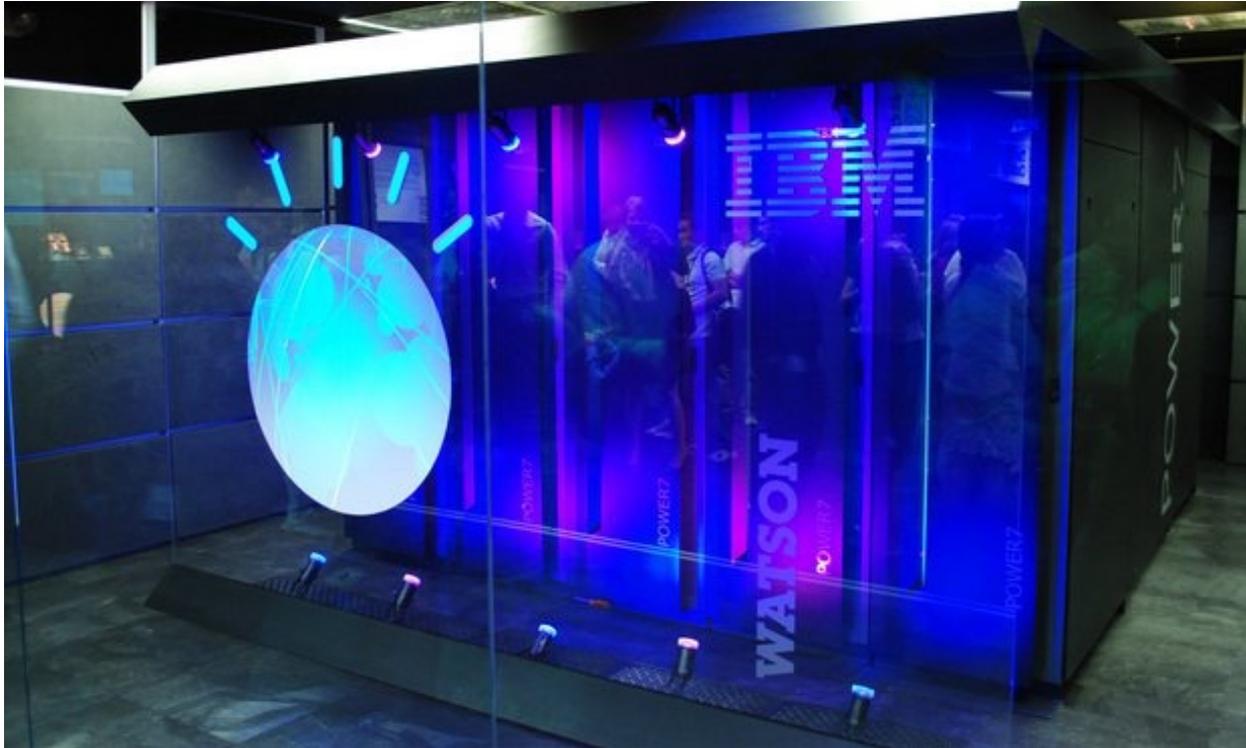# The Artificially Intelligent Future of Law

BY IAN LOPEZ | law.com
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IBM Watson

Many lawyers and technologists often discuss artificial intelligence (AI) technology as being the future of legal technology. If you ask IBM Global Business's Shawnna Hoffman, however, you'll get a very different answer. AI, she recently told Legaltech News, is something that her and her colleagues "live every day."

In fact, Hoffman took it a step further, predicting, "We really are at the cusp of something that is radically going to change the legal community."

This is the message Hoffman hopes to convey at "AI: Best Practices on the Challenges and Opportunities Within the Field & How It Can Benefit People and Society," the Feb. 2 keynote for the Legaltech portion of ALM's Legalweek event. Here, Hoffman and IBM colleague Brian Kuhn, Watson Cognitive Solutions sales leader and strategy consultant, will discuss some of the ways in which IBM's Watson, the cognitive computing platform famous for winning "Jeopardy!", could change the way lawyers view and use technology, as well as illustrate some of the ways Watson is already being used in other industries.

In legal technology circles, Hoffman (formerly Childress) is perhaps best known as a co-founder of the professional organization Women in eDiscovery and as author of the book "eDiscovery Plain & Simple." A self-described pioneer of e-discovery whose work in the industry goes back to the late 1990s, she said many of the same pain points she's witnessed in e-discovery "over the past decades" are similar to those we're seeing today with electronically-stored information (ESI). This is further exacerbated by increasing data volumes as well as their lack of structure.

With cognitive computing, however, Hoffman said she sees a new opportunity for a lawyer to make his or her practice "so much better," and while certain machine learning technologies have already found their way into the e-discovery workflow, the sort of cognitive computing empowered by Watson is "so much bigger than that."

Now, Watson is a widely-known technology, perhaps most synonymous with the term artificial intelligence. Those in-the-know when it comes to legal technology are likely aware that IBM is in partnership with a variety of organizations to utilize Watson, too. Among those are Thomson Reuters, which in October 2015 announced its intentions to apply Watson in its own technology deployment, and LexisNexis, for powering its Lexis Search Advantage. Also utilizing the IBM technology for legal research was ROSS Intelligence, which initially focused on bankruptcy law but is currently being developed for other practice areas as well as business intelligence.

Yet many legal technologies in the past year alone have been (perhaps liberally) touting the AI moniker. And often, these respective technologies each focus (but may be capable of more than) on one specific task—so while say one technology can review millions of contracts in a matter of minutes, it couldn't organize data from the documents and apply that data for purposes outside of review.

"While looking at a contract, there are standard clauses, terms and structure that a lot of different AI software can pick up," said Kuhn. "But what a lot of that other software won't pick up is information that might be missed to due to (needing a) rich understanding of the (contract's) language."

In other words, Watson basically reads the document similarly to how a human would—understanding things like nuances and parts of speech, for instance.

"Basically, we're outsourcing the ability to read," Kuhn added. "We've created a tool that can meaningfully read." When it comes to law, Kuhn said there's no one particular legal task or product for which Watson serves as a substitute. Instead, Kuhn described it as having a "constellation of capabilities" applicable to a variety of use cases, such as analyzing and interpreting large swaths of data and using the acquired knowledge to determine the cost of a matter. Or, from the business of law perspective, a firm could employ such technology to analyze data from cases throughout its history and determine what worked and failed in the past, then applying such knowledge to future cases or business operations.

Hoffman described Watson as eventually serving as a sort of "right hand" for the attorney's "day-to-day" existence. One way this could play out would be if an attorney is typing out an invoice on a client. In this instance, Watson could provide recommendations for what to add or address based on knowledge accrued from previous invoices.

This sort of ability is learned by Watson, and Watson learns much in the way a human would—through teaching. To train Watson, however, Kuhn advised having more than one subject matter expert take time with the tool. For as Kuhn put it, "Cognitive tools are trained rather than programmed. And they absorb the biases of those that train them."

Kuhn added there are firms and legal departments currently using Watson and training it for their own purposes, but IBM cannot disclose their identities.

As legal continues to evolve and catch up to other, more technologically-advanced industries, such as finance, new tools for various portions of the workflow will inevitably arise, and many will also likely tout the slogan "AI" as part of a marketing strategy. Yet when it comes to the ability to learn and apply machine learning to actually augmenting the work of the lawyer and the value of a practice, if IBM's right in its predictions, Watson may be leading the way.

The full list of Legalweek speakers, the agenda and a link to registration can be found on **legalweekshow.com**.