Opinion



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EASY BREEZY CASE PREP, OR SO YOU SAY

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Artificial Intelligence is fundamentally changing the legal landscape. This is relevant to anyone hoping to go into law, or anyone who lives in a society that needs lawyers — and that is you, my friend.

When judges interpret a law a certain way, that sets a precedent. The legal system serves as a way for conflict to be resolved peacefully. If we didn't have it, our method of conflict resolution would be much less thorough. The court declares that evidence is needed, arguments are well reasoned and effective cross examination of witnesses takes place.

In short, here is how the judicial process works. You need to know this to understand the role AI plays in the big picture. To start with, the case is filed. In trial, each side presents evidence. The trial proceeds and both sides rest their cases. The jury deliberates on what the verdict should be. Sometimes, cases go to a higher court if a party thinks an error occurred. The process ensures that individuals are protected, that laws are applied consistently, that our values as a society can evolve and that the public trusts our justice system. These cases can lead to legislative reforms that spark a shift in moral standards. When one landmark case goes out, its effects ripple like a skipping stone chucked out to other countries, encouraging them to use that choice as a blueprint for their future ones.

Now, AI is being used for a huge portion of the case preparation that goes into the basis for this entire process. Thomson Reuters' 2026 AI in Professional Services Report identifies legal research as the leading generative AI use case among the legal industry. Document review followed at 74%, document summarization at 73% and memo drafting at 59%. It is becoming the new bedrock for judicial preparation and it needs oversight.

AI can do things that people cannot. It can do the grunt work, essentially, and this is what it does best. Imagine you're a freshly hired summer associate. You're doing hundreds of hours of cross-referencing. Your eyes are incredibly tired, and those of AI? Theirs simply aren't. This isn't because AI is better than you; it's just because it works in a completely different way. AI has the ability to spot those inconsistencies and hidden connections that are harder to spot at the end of the day. This information is especially useful at the beginning of a case when new information is available that you don't want to miss. If you miss it, your adversary might not, and they'll have an advantage over your client because they were able to prepare with all the relevant facts at hand, right off the bat. But this can go badly.

Lawyers are already getting knocks for using AI and letting its hallucinations slip through. This June, the US Court of Appeals sanctioned two attorneys whose briefs contained imaginary cases, wrongly cited quotes and insanely twisted representations of cases being used to support the case. Guess who did it? Yeah, AI. You know why? Because AI can sound completely valid without being sound at all, and vice versa. Those two things are different. It can sound completely logical but turn out to be false, or it could be completely illogical and just sound true. If you don't know what the latter sounds like, turn on a modern political debate. If these errors slip through, it undermines the trust along with every other purpose that our judicial system stands for.

Despite the risks of using AI, we all know that with more knowledge comes more power. Because AI can process so much information, when you feed it literally every single ruling and decision that a judge has ever made, it's able to analyze that judge's tone. With this information, it edits the argument to be more irresistible to the judge. This helps attorneys strategize their moves in litigation. If they are able to use AI to see how long a judge took to decide a certain kind of motion, all the way to what kind of arguments the judge usually says yes to, that gives the legal team a huge advantage. If you can get into the head of a judge, you can understand how to work with them better. To make things even more interesting, this is technically a science, because firms are experimenting and gathering more data on which approaches work the best. This field is called judicial analytics. It is a growing market where firms are using empirical data from court records. In 2015, legal tech journalist Bob Ambrogi predicted that judicial analytics would be the biggest new thing, because legal research would evolve beyond case research and onto analyzing judges. Turns out, he is looking to be right!

Now you know an overview of how AI is impacting research in the field as a whole, and how judicial analytics fits into the grand scheme of this process. I've given you a teaser, and we'll dive into this topic in greater detail in part two. I'll explore the ethics of judicial analytics, the new technologies it is being implemented in, how it has been used thus far and my predictions for how it will continue to change the industry! Keep your eyes peeled!



Student works on academic paper. Lawyers and law students have needed to adapt to the changing landscape with AI. PHOTO COURTESY OF WIKIMEDIA COMMONS