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Reimagining Legal Practice: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Transforming Law Firms and Access to Justice

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ABSTRACT

In recent times, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force across multiple sectors, including the legal domain. This paper examines the evolving intersection between AI and law, providing a detailed analysis of the ways in which AI technologies are being incorporated into legal systems globally. It highlights the use of AI-driven tools in supporting legal professionals with functions such as contract drafting, due diligence, and the assessment of potential legal outcomes.

A substantial part of the study focuses on the integration of AI within the Indian legal system. It evaluates the present level of adoption, identifies key technologies currently in use, and discusses the challenges hindering broader implementation. Recognising the importance of ethical and responsible deployment, the paper also offers recommendations aimed at maintaining a balance between technological innovation and necessary legal and institutional safeguards.

Overall, the research presents a comprehensive assessment of AI's role in India's legal landscape, outlining both its potential benefits and inherent limitations. By connecting theoretical perspectives with practical applications, the paper seeks to inform policy and practice and to contribute meaningfully to the development of an AI-enabled future for the Indian legal system.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, convenience, unemployment, replacement, inconvenience, legal research, augmentation, automation, legal field.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science concerned with the creation of systems and machines capable of performing functions that traditionally require human intelligence, such as reasoning, learning, decision-making, and problem-solving. The swift progress of AI in recent years has been driven by the availability of vast data sets, enhanced computational power, and advanced algorithms. AI has found applications across diverse

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sectors, including healthcare, education, agriculture, transportation, and entertainment, where it has contributed to improved efficiency, productivity, quality, and innovation. At the same time, the deployment of AI raises serious ethical, social, and legal concerns, particularly in relation to accountability, transparency, privacy, bias, discrimination, and the preservation of human dignity.

This paper examines the interaction between artificial intelligence and the legal system. In its current form, AI can support lawyers, judges, and other legal professionals in tasks such as legal research, document review, contract drafting, dispute resolution, and outcome prediction. The use of AI in law offers notable advantages, including enhanced access to justice, reduced costs, and faster legal processes. However, it also gives rise to critical questions regarding the impact of automation on the legal profession, the reliability and accuracy of AI-generated outputs, the protection of fundamental rights and legal principles, and the regulation and oversight of AI technologies.

II. MEANING AND CONCEPT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial intelligence refers to computer-based systems capable of performing functions traditionally associated with human intelligence, including learning, reasoning, and decision-making. Such systems operate through core technologies such as machine learning, natural language processing, and predictive analytics, and are increasingly deployed across sectors to automate processes and support informed decision-making. AI is a broad concept encompassing technologies that replicate human cognitive functions, including learning, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, and language comprehension. Machine Learning (ML), a subset of AI, enables systems to identify patterns within data and generate decisions or recommendations based on those patterns.

Within law firms, AI is used to enhance legal research, automate document review, support drafting activities, and analyse large volumes of legal data. By transferring routine and repetitive tasks to technological systems, AI enables lawyers to deliver services more efficiently and with greater analytical support, leading to improved outcomes for clients and a more effective allocation of professional expertise.

A. Key Terms Relating to AI

Machine Learning (ML). A subset of AI focused on learning from data patterns, enabling systems to make predictions, decisions, and recommendations without explicit programming.

Generative AI (GenAI). Creates new content such as text, images, audio, and video, generating outputs in response to user prompts. Examples include ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini.

Natural Language Processing (NLP). Uses ML to understand, interpret, and generate human language, and forms the backbone of chatbots, translation tools, and voice-recognition systems.

Agentic AI. Capable of reasoning, planning, and executing multi-step tasks, working toward predefined objectives under human oversight and control.

Consumer-grade AI tools. Tools such as ChatGPT, publicly accessible and trained on vast internet-based data, which may rely on unverified or inaccurate information and whose outputs can include errors or hallucinations.

Professional-grade legal AI. Tools such as CoCounsel, built on curated, verified legal content and up-to-date legal databases. These solutions are designed specifically for legal tasks such as legal research, document review, and contract analysis.

In one reported instance, an attorney used ChatGPT to look for case law for a brief, and 21 of the 23 case quotations were found to be fabricated¹. The AI had confidently generated material that sounded authentic but was not. When the fabrications were revealed, the court imposed sanctions. The episode highlights both the promise and the risk of AI in the legal industry: although the technology can greatly accelerate work, if used incorrectly it can also damage careers.

Legal AI has advanced rapidly, from experimental curiosity to essential infrastructure. Adoption among legal professionals rose from 19% in 2023 to 79% in 2024², and companies with at least 20% revenue growth are reported to use automation and AI twice as frequently as stable companies. Because of its unique mix of high stakes, ethical constraints, and billable-hour economics, however, the legal profession faces implementation challenges not found in other industries. Practical engagement with law-firm AI deployments that must satisfy professional requirements and productivity goals offers a grounded understanding of what works in practice.

III. WHERE LEGAL AI DEMONSTRATES REAL VALUE

The legal profession has progressed beyond merely experimenting with artificial intelligence and has entered a phase of deliberate, strategic adoption. However, the benefits of AI are not uniform across all applications. Identifying use cases that have matured sufficiently for reliable, large-scale deployment enables law firms to allocate resources more effectively.

¹Noland v. Land of the Free, L.P., No. B331918, 2025 Cal. App. LEXIS 584 (Cal. Ct. App. Sept. 12, 2025).

²CLIO, LEGAL TRENDS REPORT (2024).

A. Document Review and eDiscovery

Document review remains the most established and commercially valuable application of legal AI. Complex litigation and regulatory investigations often involve vast volumes of documents that historically required extensive manual review by teams of contract lawyers. AI has significantly altered this cost and time structure. In one instance, a leading firm used AI to analyse over 126,000 documents for a government inquiry, achieving approximately 90% accuracy and completing the task in less than a day, far faster and with substantially fewer resources than traditional review methods.

These efficiencies are achieved through techniques such as predictive coding, which learns from initial attorney decisions to assess document relevance; junk-file analysis, which identifies non-substantive files that require only limited sampling; and privilege detection, which flags potentially privileged communications. Collectively, these tools allow firms to complete eDiscovery at significantly lower costs, often well below initial budget projections, with measurable and immediate returns on investment.

B. Legal Research with Verified Citations

The application of AI to legal research offers substantial efficiency gains but also presents notable risks. While AI can accelerate research tasks, the issue of fabricated or inaccurate citations has led to serious professional consequences. Numerous instances of AI-generated hallucinations have been recorded worldwide, prompting judicial sanctions, including substantial monetary penalties for advocates who relied on unverified outputs³.

In response, enterprise-grade legal AI platforms have incorporated citation-verification mechanisms. Tools such as CoCounsel, Lexis+ AI, and Harvey integrate generative capabilities with authenticated legal databases, ensuring that outputs are traceable to authoritative primary sources. These systems are particularly effective in summarising lengthy judgments, identifying relevant precedents across jurisdictions, analysing judicial decision-making trends, and assisting with litigation strategy. They are also used to narrow large document sets for trial or deposition preparation. Crucially, a distinction must be drawn between consumer AI tools, which lack legal-specific safeguards, and specialised professional platforms that are increasingly standard in sophisticated legal practices.

C. Contract Review and Analysis

³Mata v. Avianca, Inc., 678 F. Supp. 3d 443 (S.D.N.Y. 2023).

Contract analysis has emerged as a distinct and mature area of legal AI application, particularly suited to high-volume and repetitive work. AI tools are widely used in mergers-and-acquisitions due diligence and in-house contract management, where speed and consistency are essential. Firms report substantial reductions in review time by using AI to summarise key terms, identify missing or risky clauses, and compare contracts against established standards.

Specialised platforms support different transactional workflows. Some integrate directly with word-processing software to assist drafting and revision, while others focus on large-scale due diligence by identifying patterns and anomalies across thousands of agreements. Certain tools incorporate predefined review playbooks based on practitioner expertise, while others combine contract analysis with lifecycle-management features, such as automated alerts for renewals or risk triggers. For in-house legal teams, these technologies enable faster turnaround without compromising quality, repositioning legal departments from operational bottlenecks to strategic business partners.

D. Consumer AI Tools and Legal Research

Consumer AI technologies such as ChatGPT were not designed for legal research. Such systems do not possess mechanisms to verify whether generated citations correspond to actual judicial precedents, are not trained on authoritative legal materials, and lack access to authenticated legal databases. Their use for legal research therefore carries a substantial risk of inaccuracy, as the appearance of confidence in the output does not equate to the reliability required for legal analysis.

In *Johnson v. Dunn*, a federal court disqualified three defence counsel for filing submissions containing fabricated citations generated through ChatGPT, observing that the imposition of nominal monetary penalties no longer serves as an effective deterrent⁴. More recently, the Judicial Council of California has issued directives requiring all state courts either to prohibit the use of generative AI or to implement formal regulatory policies governing its use by the end of 2025⁵.

E. The Extent of AI Adoption

Adoption is uneven. As of 2024, roughly 31% of legal practitioners reported using generative AI on an individual basis, compared with about 21% reporting law-firm use, and a substantial

⁴Johnson v. Dunn, 792 F. Supp. 3d 1241 (N.D. Ala. 2025).

⁵Cal. R. Ct. 10.430(b) (eff. Sept. 1, 2025) (requiring courts that do not prohibit generative AI to adopt a use policy by Dec. 15, 2025).

share of firms planned to incorporate AI into their operations in the coming year⁶. Growing firms tend to use AI more often than established ones.

The relationship between AI and the legal profession is no longer theoretical. AI is already changing how law firms and in-house legal teams work, and its development continues at a rapid pace. Surveys suggest that most legal professionals expect AI to have a significant, and possibly transformative, impact on legal practice within the next five years. What were once experimental tools are now part of everyday legal work: legal-research platforms use natural language processing to summarise cases, while contract-review software relies on machine learning to identify risky or missing clauses. Across the profession, firms are also testing AI tools to assist with drafting memoranda, managing discovery, and supporting litigation analysis. These uses highlight both the potential of AI to improve legal work and the limits that still require human judgment and oversight.

F. Representative AI Tools

CoCounsel (Legal Research). An AI legal assistant that helps lawyers with research, document review, drafting, and legal analysis.

Fathom (Meeting Productivity). An AI meeting tool that records, transcribes, and summarises online meetings while highlighting key action items.

Harvey (Litigation and Analysis). A generative AI platform built for law firms to support litigation strategy, regulatory analysis, and complex data review.

Kira (Contract Analysis). An AI contract-review tool focused on extracting key information and automating large-scale contract analysis.

Lawmatics (CRM and Intake). A legal CRM and marketing platform that streamlines client intake, onboarding, and follow-up workflows.

LegalNavigator.ai (CRM and Intake). An AI-powered intake solution that automates lead qualification and initial client screening for law firms.

Lexis+ AI (Legal Research). A generative AI legal-research tool that delivers answers backed by verified, authoritative legal citations.

Luminance (Contract Analysis). An AI platform for contract negotiation, due diligence, document discovery, and risk visualisation.

⁶FED. BAR ASS'N, THE LEGAL INDUSTRY REPORT 2025.

Microsoft Copilot (General Productivity). An AI assistant within Microsoft 365 that helps with drafting, emails, document review, and data analysis.

Otter.ai (Meeting Productivity). An AI transcription service that provides real-time meeting notes and automated summaries.

Read.AI (Meeting Productivity). A meeting assistant that generates summaries, task lists, and engagement insights across communication platforms.

Spellbook (Contract Analysis). An AI contract drafting and review tool that works directly inside Microsoft Word.

While results differed across specific workflows, firms reported broadly consistent benefits from the use of AI. Routine and repetitive tasks were significantly reduced, leading to faster turnaround times, and lawyers and support staff noted improved focus once they were relieved of manual work such as documentation, billing review, and legal research. Financial benefits also became evident at an early stage, particularly in billing processes, where AI helped capture time that might otherwise have gone unrecorded. These efficiencies, however, were accompanied by important practical lessons. AI does not function as an autonomous system: expectations must be clearly defined and carefully managed, and all firms stressed the continued necessity of human supervision. AI enhanced the efficiency of tasks surrounding legal judgment, but it did not supplant the lawyer's role, with ultimate control remaining firmly with legal professionals. Some improvements were realised quickly, while others required ongoing refinement; the most successful implementations established clear performance benchmarks and monitored progress using both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

IV. LESSONS EMERGING FROM LAW-FIRM ADOPTION OF AI

Law firms that have successfully implemented artificial intelligence share a common understanding: AI serves as an assistive instrument and not as a replacement for human legal judgment. Practical experience has revealed the following guiding principles.

Training and supervision are indispensable. AI systems operate effectively only when users are adequately trained to deploy them, critically evaluate their outputs, and integrate them within established professional workflows.

The risk of inaccurate or fabricated output persists. Despite improvements in reliability, robust review and verification mechanisms remain necessary to detect and correct erroneous or misleading outputs.

Ethical, regulatory, and privacy obligations must remain paramount. Firms are required to exercise due diligence in the selection and deployment of AI tools, maintain clarity regarding the collection, storage, and use of data, and implement internal safeguards to ensure compliance with professional duties, including confidentiality, data protection, and privacy norms.

V. BENEFITS OF AI FOR FIRMS

A. Faster and More Effective Legal Research

AI significantly reduces the time lawyers spend reviewing case law, statutes, and secondary materials. Advanced research platforms can deliver targeted and relevant results within seconds, enabling legal teams to respond swiftly in urgent or high-value matters without compromising accuracy. Beyond traditional keyword searches, many AI tools now rely on semantic analysis, allowing them to identify relevant authorities even where terminology differs. This reduces the risk of overlooking important precedents and assists lawyers in identifying innovative arguments. Features such as citation mapping and contextual summaries further enhance the depth and efficiency of legal research.

B. Improved Efficiency in Document Review

Document review, particularly in the context of eDiscovery and regulatory compliance, has long been one of the most resource-intensive aspects of legal practice. AI systems can now analyse and classify large volumes of documents within a short time, work that previously required extensive manual effort. Early identification of relevant and privileged material helps streamline discovery and mitigate delays. Over time, these systems improve in accuracy by learning from attorney inputs. This iterative refinement enhances consistency in document classification, strengthens defensibility in litigation, and increases client confidence in the review process.

C. More Streamlined Contract Drafting and Analysis

AI has also transformed contract lifecycle management. During drafting, AI-enabled tools assist through the use of intelligent templates, clause libraries, and contextual suggestions drawn from prior agreements. This is particularly valuable in high-volume transactional settings, such as mergers and acquisitions, real-estate transactions, and vendor contracting. In reviewing contracts, AI tools identify missing provisions, non-standard clauses, and potentially adverse terms, reducing the need for exhaustive manual review. They also facilitate version comparison and change tracking, supporting more efficient negotiations and reducing overall legal risk.

D. Enhanced Billing Accuracy and Cost Control

AI-driven billing systems assist law firms in improving billing accuracy, accelerating payment cycles, and managing costs. These tools can detect inconsistencies between time entries and client billing guidelines before invoices are issued, thereby reducing disputes and write-offs. Automated task categorisation further promotes transparency and compliance with client requirements. Analytical capabilities also enable firms to forecast revenue, monitor utilisation rates, and identify inefficiencies. When combined with predictive insights, these tools support more informed pricing strategies, better resource allocation, and sustainable profitability.

E. Proactive Risk and Compliance Management

Increasingly, law firms are expected to identify and address legal risks at an early stage. AI tools facilitate continuous monitoring of regulatory developments, judicial decisions, and client-related data to highlight potential areas of exposure, enabling firms to provide timely, preventative legal advice. In client onboarding and due-diligence processes, AI enhances both the speed and the depth of review. By analysing corporate records, sanctions databases, and litigation histories, these systems help identify red flags efficiently and support compliance with Know Your Client and related regulatory obligations, thereby safeguarding both client interests and institutional integrity.

VI. CHALLENGES FACED BY FIRMS IN THE ADOPTION OF AI

A. Legacy Infrastructure and Data Fragmentation

Many law firms continue to operate on outdated or siloed technology systems, limiting access to the consistent and reliable data required for effective AI deployment. Divergent data formats across case management, billing, and document platforms impede integration and automation. In the absence of standardised, high-quality data, AI outputs often fail to deliver meaningful or dependable results. Addressing these challenges requires not only financial investment and technical planning, but coordinated engagement among information-technology teams, legal operations, and firm leadership. Firms that overlook foundational data issues risk AI underperformance, thereby undermining broader digital-transformation efforts.

B. Accuracy and Hallucination Risks

Generative AI systems are susceptible to hallucination, producing outputs that appear plausible but are factually incorrect or entirely fabricated. In the legal domain, where precision is essential, such hallucinations may manifest as false citations, misapplied precedents, or flawed legal analysis, with potentially serious consequences for client interests and professional

credibility. To mitigate these risks, firms must implement robust human-in-the-loop review mechanisms and establish clear protocols for validating AI-generated content. Without defined accountability and verification processes, reliance on AI may lead to breaches of ethical duties and increased exposure to professional liability.

C. Regulatory, Ethical, and Professional Constraints

Legal practice is governed by stringent professional standards, confidentiality obligations, and jurisdiction-specific regulatory requirements. The use of AI must align with these duties, particularly with respect to client-data protection, privacy, and the obligation of technological competence. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action or reputational harm. As AI tools evolve, law firms must continuously review and update internal policies, compliance frameworks, and training programmes to ensure adherence to applicable ethical and regulatory expectations.

D. Change Management and Internal Resistance

The introduction of AI often necessitates significant organisational and cultural change, particularly in firms with entrenched practices and hierarchical structures. Lawyers may be sceptical of AI accuracy or apprehensive about the impact of automation on professional judgment and role security. Operational staff may likewise resist the adoption of new systems or alterations to established workflows.

VII. INTEGRATION OF AI IN INDIA'S JUDICIARY AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Artificial intelligence is significantly altering India's judiciary and law enforcement by enhancing decision-making, efficiency, and accessibility. By integrating AI into legal research, case management, judicial proceedings, and law enforcement, India is streamlining operations, reducing delays, and improving access to justice.

India is also adopting AI in law and justice. For example, the Supreme Court of India uses the AI-assisted SUPACE platform⁷ and has placed greater emphasis on the use of AI across the justice system. The judiciary has long struggled with difficulties such as case backlogs, language barriers, and the need for digital modernisation. AI-powered technologies now being used to automate administrative tasks, support crime prevention, and enhance case monitoring include machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), optical character recognition (OCR), and predictive analytics. Initiatives such as the eCourts Project Phase III,

⁷SUPREME COURT OF INDIA, SUPREME COURT PORTAL FOR ASSISTANCE IN COURT EFFICIENCY (SUPACE) (launched Apr. 2021).

AI-assisted legal translation, predictive policing, and AI-driven legal chatbots are all contributing to the transformation of the legal landscape⁸. Adoption of AI faces challenges, particularly in the areas of data security, ethical governance, and legal adaptation, but its potential to enhance India's legal system is considerable.

VIII. KEY AI APPLICATIONS IN ECOURTS

Automated case management. AI-enabled systems are increasingly used for intelligent scheduling, prioritisation of cases, and systematic reduction of judicial backlogs. By employing predictive analytics to anticipate delays and adjournments, these tools facilitate efficient allocation of judicial resources, thereby promoting timely disposal of cases.

AI in legal research and documentation. Sophisticated AI-based platforms support judges and legal professionals by simplifying legal research, pinpointing relevant judicial precedents, and generating concise summaries of judgments. This not only accelerates the research process but also improves the accuracy, consistency, and overall quality of legal documentation.

AI-assisted filing and court procedures. The adoption of Optical Character Recognition (OCR) and Natural Language Processing (NLP) has significantly transformed document digitisation in courts. These technologies enable automated filing of legal documents, leading to faster processing, improved efficiency, and a substantial reduction in manual errors.

AI for user assistance and chatbots. AI-powered virtual legal assistants and chatbots are designed to assist litigants by providing real-time updates on case status, procedural instructions, and important legal notifications. This continuous digital assistance enhances the accessibility and usability of the judicial system, particularly for individuals with limited familiarity with legal processes.

AI for predictive analysis of case outcomes. AI-based analytical models examine past judgments and extensive case data to generate predictive assessments regarding likely case outcomes and associated risks. Such insights support judicial officers in making well-informed decisions and in formulating effective litigation strategies, thereby fostering a more proactive and data-driven judicial system.

⁸DEP'T OF JUSTICE, MINISTRY OF LAW & JUSTICE, GOV'T OF INDIA, ECOURTS PROJECT PHASE III (2023-2027) (allocating ₹53.57 crore for AI and blockchain initiatives); *see also* Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software (SUVAS) (2019) (AI-assisted legal translation).

IX. KEY AI APPLICATIONS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

A. Predictive Policing

AI-based systems examine crime trends, behavioural patterns, and identified high-risk locations to enable law-enforcement agencies to undertake preventive and proactive policing measures.

B. AI for Surveillance and Investigation

AI supports surveillance and investigation through the deployment of automated drones for monitoring crime scenes and tracking suspects; the use of facial-recognition technologies integrated with national criminal-record databases; and the application of AI-enabled forensic tools for analysing physical evidence and digital crime footprints.

C. AI in FIR Filing and Judicial Proceedings

AI-powered speech-to-text technologies facilitate the real-time registration of First Information Reports and accurate case documentation. AI tools are also increasingly used to support the analysis of witness statements and the evaluation of evidentiary material during judicial proceedings.

D. Data-Driven Crime Tracking and Intelligence Systems

AI strengthens the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) by enabling advanced data analysis and intelligence generation. Seamless integration with e-Prisons and e-Forensics databases further enhances coordination and information sharing across the criminal-justice system.
