Artificial Intelligence & the Future of Law Libraries

Southeast Roundtable Report

Hosted by
Georgia State University
College of Law
Atlanta, Georgia
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Please see Appendix A for full list of Roundtable participants

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Introduction

On Friday, March 1, 2024, a group of legal experts and legal information professionals gathered at the Georgia State College of Law in Atlanta, Georgia, for the fourth in a series of six regional roundtable discussions on Artificial Intelligence & the Future of Law Libraries. This project was prompted by the far-reaching impacts – known and still unknown – of artificial intelligence (AI) on the legal information landscape.

The event focused on three critical areas: services, staffing, and space, examining both virtuous cycles (positive outcomes) and vicious cycles (negative consequences) associated with AI adoption. Participants of each of the six regional roundtables will draft a report, like this one, and then participants will collaboratively generate a white paper synthesizing all the findings and providing recommendations for law libraries as we progress into the age of AI.

This report outlines the primary themes discussed at the conference, organized into key sections reflecting the structure of the discussions. The insights presented here will serve as a foundation for strategic planning and action as law libraries navigate the rapidly changing landscape shaped by AI technology.

The group that gathered at the Southeastern Roundtable in Atlanta, Georgia, was a mix of experienced academic, government, and law firm librarians, law faculty, and library and information science faculty. In order to facilitate meaningful conversations and sharing of ideas, the group was small, about 30 people, all of whom committed to spending the entire day in dialogue with one another about the opportunities and challenges libraries and librarians face with the infusion of artificial intelligence into the legal information infrastructure.

Cas Laskowski, Associate Librarian and Head of Research, Data & Instruction at the University of Arizona Daniel F. Cracchiolo Law Library, who is trained in scenario-building methodology,[1] moderated the discussions on three consecutive themes: services, space, and staffing. Notes from each table at each session were rigorously recorded, anonymously compiled, and form the basis of this report. The Roundtable operated under

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[1] Scenario-building methodology is a moderation technique whereby the moderator leads participants, who are organized into small groups, in vicious and virtuous cycles of thinking about, visualizing, and articulating mistakes we cannot afford to make (vicious) and opportunities we cannot afford to miss (virtuous). In these Roundtables, the sessions were dedicated to law library collections, services, space, and/or staffing.

the [Chatham House Rule](#), as does this report, to provide the safest environment possible for open and honest dialogue.

Key Takeaways

1. Proactive AI adoption is critical. Law libraries must actively integrate AI into their operations while maintaining a human-centered approach to services and staffing. This ensures that libraries remain vital to their institutions.
2. AI poses both risks of job redundancy and potential for new roles that emphasize advanced skills. While automation may reduce certain positions, it opens the door to more strategic, technology-focused roles.
3. AI offers the ability to enhance access to justice and improve service efficiency within libraries by automating rote tasks and allowing staff more time for meaningful work. However, libraries must guard against over-reliance on AI, which could lead to impersonalized services, lower user satisfaction, and the faulty conclusion that AI is an equal substitute for traditional, human-driven library services.
4. AI-driven shifts in information access could reduce the size of physical collections. Well-planned, flexible spaces can support collaboration, learning, digital engagement, and innovation, enhancing the role of libraries as community hubs.
5. Continuous professional development is essential. Librarians need ongoing education and training to stay ahead of AI trends and develop the skills necessary for advanced roles, ensuring they can offer high-level expertise that complements AI tools.

Opportunities Afforded by AI

Despite the challenges, AI offers several key opportunities for law libraries.

Enhanced Access to Justice

AI-driven tools can provide valuable support to self-represented litigants by helping them navigate legal processes and access vital information, improving overall access to justice. AI is viewed as a potential tool to help self-represented litigants by guiding them through legal processes such as form filling and initial case preparations. Higher-level chatbots or AI-driven interview tools could reduce the perceived need for human interaction, making legal services more accessible to individuals without legal representation. The use of AI can democratize access to legal resources, allowing broader

public access to law without relying solely on human intermediaries, which is critical for A2J initiatives.

Innovative Services

AI enables the development of new services, such as personalized research assistance, real-time legal updates, and automated document analysis, enriching the library's offerings.

Libraries are embracing AI to lead innovation and position themselves as leaders in integrating technology. There is a strong belief that AI will enhance efficiency, allowing libraries to provide higher-quality services.

Libraries are focusing on using AI to automate repetitive tasks like document formatting, freeing up time for more complex, value-added work like research and analysis.

Libraries are seen as stable institutions that are well-positioned to house and integrate AI innovations. There is excitement about using AI to improve internal processes, like space management and predictive analytics, and to expand the scope of services, especially for interdisciplinary research.

AI has the potential to innovate how library spaces are used, including the integration of more collaborative, AI-supported environments. The use of AI for data collection, such as tracking which books are used, is another area of innovation.

Increased Value through Expertise

AI is considered a tool that complements human expertise rather than replacing it. These tools allow librarians to curate and analyze data, becoming indispensable partners to faculty, students, and the legal community.

Librarians are positioned as key figures in developing and teaching AI literacy. This includes taking ownership of AI systems and using AI to enhance their services rather than letting vendors dominate the narrative. Librarians can build their AI expertise and provide critical leadership in incorporating AI into law libraries and educational environments.

Librarians can use their expertise to become leaders in AI adoption, training, and implementation. Opportunities for developing and demonstrating expertise include creating AI-driven research tools, teaching prompt engineering, and partnering with different university departments. Building and communicating expertise is essential for positioning libraries as indispensable in the AI era.

Collaboration and Community

AI can facilitate greater collaboration between librarians, faculty, and students by offering data-driven insights and tools that enhance research and learning experiences. Libraries should be seen as hubs for interdisciplinary collaboration, particularly in spaces designed to foster cross-departmental partnerships. This could involve AI-driven projects that integrate legal research with other fields.

Collaboration between different libraries, such as between a university library and an academic law library or between libraries at different organizations to share resources, knowledge, and technology tools could help mitigate challenges like staffing shortages and limited budgets.

Partnerships within an organization, particularly between libraries and other departments like IT, help integrate AI and ensure that libraries remain key resources for both students and faculty.

Crowdsourcing knowledge through platforms like email lists, webinars, and conferences is a way to build collective expertise. Sharing resources and insights on AI among the library community is a crucial opportunity to develop the profession's reputation for expertise in selecting, implementing, managing, and using AI tools.

Open Access to Information

Open access can democratize access to information, ensuring that legal resources are more freely available to the public. AI can play a pivotal role in facilitating this by providing access to legal resources without traditional paywalls or restrictions. Ideally, AI may help libraries transition to a model that is less reliant on vendors, promoting an open-source ecosystem where information is freely shared and accessible, broadening public access to legal resources.

Librarians can advocate for open access to raw data. With proper management, libraries could lead in the development and usage of open-source AI models, reducing dependence

on external vendors. This would make it easier for patrons to access high-quality information without additional barriers.

Space Optimization

AI can help law libraries optimize their physical and virtual spaces by providing data on how users engage with resources, allowing libraries to adapt their spaces to meet evolving needs. Examples include using AI for scheduling systems, collecting data on the movement of materials, and tracking occupancy through Wi-Fi data. These technologies could help libraries anticipate peak usage times, making it easier to adapt spaces based on real-time needs.

Building physical and virtual spaces that encourage community interaction and collaboration is essential to maintaining the library's relevance and fostering a sense of community among patrons. Phased renovations would spread the cost of altering spaces over a period of time while accomplishing this goal. Renovations can remove less-utilized materials or furniture and transform those areas into student- and faculty-friendly, collaborative work areas to increase the utility of those spaces.

Another focus should be on designing spaces that cater to a variety of student needs. These can include collaborative study areas with whiteboards and monitors, as well as more insulated and quieter spaces for individual work. The idea is to create versatile environments that accommodate multiple study styles.

To enhance the library's relevance in the digital age, there should be an emphasis on upgrading infrastructure to support technology use. This includes installing soundproof rooms, improving Wi-Fi access, adding more electrical outlets and converters, and creating spaces with advanced technology.

Challenges of AI Adoption and Implementation

The rapid development of AI technology has brought about several challenges for law libraries.

Staff Resistance and Skill Gaps

Some librarians and library staff may be resistant to embracing new technologies, such as AI. This resistance could be due to a preference for traditional methods or discomfort

with the rapid pace of technological change. Lack of adaptation can lead to missed opportunities, particularly in AI integration, which may result in libraries losing relevance in the broader institutional framework. Librarians and library staff may feel overwhelmed by the expectation to stay current on the latest AI tools and research methodologies, which can further contribute to resistance.

The risks of not developing and maintaining expertise, including the potential for the library's role to be minimized as AI becomes more prominent. Librarians and library staff must accept that AI is already upon us and integrated into many tools we utilize for legal research. Should resistance to understanding these tools persist, other groups will take ownership, and librarians risk being seen as resistant to advancements. This could happen if librarians fail to advocate for and demonstrate their expertise or engage with AI and legal technology training and integration. The need for ongoing education, adaptation, and collaboration is crucial to avoid being sidelined. Library leaders are encouraged to focus on closing skill gaps through continuous learning and seeking out training opportunities in AI literacy, prompt engineering, and other cutting-edge technologies.

Academic law librarianship is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified candidates, especially for positions requiring both J.D. and M.L.S. or equivalent degrees. Attracting new talent proficient in AI and legal technology could be difficult and will almost certainly require higher salaries, creativity in crafting job descriptions, and flexibility with remote work arrangements.

Over-reliance on AI

There is a risk that stakeholders, including students and faculty, will rely too heavily on AI tools without understanding their limitations, leading to issues of misinformation and overconfidence in AI-generated content. There is concern that students, legal professionals, and faculty may overestimate the capabilities of AI, assuming that AI-generated answers are always correct. Users might not fully understand AI's limitations, which could lead to errors in legal research or decision-making based on incomplete or incorrect data. This overconfidence can result in a failure to engage in critical thinking or deeper research techniques, relying too much on AI to provide the final answers.

Presently, AI cannot replace human expertise in evaluating the complexities of legal information but should be viewed as a tool for initial research or task automation. Over-reliance on AI could lead to incomplete or shallow research outcomes. If AI tools are seen as a replacement for traditional methods, legal education and library services might reduce or eliminate research training, which could lead to significant gaps in students'

research skills. We should strive for a balanced approach where AI complements human expertise rather than replaces it.

Another concern is that AI may fuel a sense of misguided independence among users, making them feel they no longer need guidance from librarians or other legal experts. This could reduce the use of human services, even though users might not be fully equipped to verify or critically analyze AI outputs. Teaching students and legal professionals how to assess AI-generated content properly is very important.

While AI can help reduce some access to justice barriers, there's fear that it may undermine the human aspect of legal service, which is crucial for more complex cases. Poorly designed AI systems could mislead users, particularly if users do not fully understand the limitations of AI-generated information. This could exacerbate existing equity issues by offering unequal or flawed access to justice.

In summary, while AI offers powerful tools, concerns about over-reliance on AI, stressing that human oversight, critical thinking, and expert guidance are essential to mitigate the risks of depending too much on technology.

Resource Constraints

Implementing AI tools often requires significant investment in technology, staff training, and infrastructure, which may strain already limited budgets.

One of the significant challenges is hiring new talent with the necessary AI and technology skills. Attracting skilled individuals often requires competitive salaries, which can be challenging to offer due to budget constraints. This is a critical issue as libraries strive to evolve and remain relevant in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

Budgetary limitations also affect the ability of current staff to upskill. Without sufficient funding, opportunities for training in new technologies, like AI, are limited. This gap in development can hinder the ability of librarians to stay current with emerging tools and trends, impacting their effectiveness and the services they provide.

Implementing advanced technology solutions, such as AI-driven tools or enhanced digital spaces, often requires significant investment. Libraries may face constraints in acquiring the necessary resources to integrate these technologies. Without proper funding, libraries risk falling behind in providing cutting-edge services.

While the vision of open access is appealing, there are concerns about the practical challenges of achieving it. Without sufficient funding, training, and expertise, transitioning to a vendor–less, open–source model could be difficult. Additionally, the issue of maintaining open access to legal information while keeping up with the latest technological innovations is seen as a critical challenge.

In summary, budget and resource constraints significantly impact libraries' ability to hire skilled staff, invest in training, and implement new technologies, requiring them to adopt strategic approaches to optimize their services within financial limitations.

Data Privacy and Security

Legal institutions must address privacy and security when implementing new technologies, like AI, especially as legal information systems may become more open and accessible. Ensuring these tools are secure and protect user data is part of the broader conversation about responsible AI adoption. AI introduces concerns about data privacy, both user data and when sensitive legal information is involved. Law libraries must ensure robust data protection practices to maintain user trust.

Security issues arise in the context of adopting AI for legal research. There is an implicit understanding that libraries and educational institutions must be aware of the security risks posed by AI tools, particularly when integrated with systems that handle personal or sensitive legal information. Libraries must ensure that AI tools comply with data protection standards and do not compromise user privacy.

AI tools, especially those used in legal research, could pose privacy risks if they access or handle sensitive information. Law libraries should be particularly cautious about how AI is integrated, ensuring data privacy is maintained to protect student and client information.

Needs: Identified Needs Arising from Roundtable Discussions

A reflection of the opportunities and challenges of AI adoption naturally leads to a discussion of law library and law librarian needs to remain relevant to our respective institutions. Needs include both resources and strategies together with leadership, commitment, and creativity. This section expands upon the naturally occurring "must haves" articulated in the preceding sections in addition to emerging needs.

Professional Development Programs

Law libraries must prioritize professional development to advance AI literacy and interdisciplinary skills among staff. This includes expanding hiring practices to attract candidates with diverse technological expertise, equipping the library to manage and implement future innovations effectively. AI integration allows library staff to lead in adopting new technologies; however, upskilling will be crucial. Establishing certification programs and "train the trainer" initiatives would help library staff become proficient AI users and skilled educators, ultimately enhancing the library's support role within legal education.

Hybrid Space

Adapting library spaces to meet the needs of today's students is another essential step. Libraries should develop flexible, multi-purpose spaces that accommodate both collaborative technology labs and quiet study zones, reflecting the hybrid nature of modern research and learning environments. Data-driven advocacy for the role of physical library spaces will be vital in demonstrating their value in student learning and research. This means using AI tools to analyze space usage and adjust layouts to enhance accessibility and maximize utility.

Redefine Education Role

To maintain relevance in AI-driven legal education, libraries must actively redefine their role in teaching and guiding AI use. By positioning themselves as knowledgeable, ethical guides in AI tool use, libraries become essential to the educational mission, helping students understand AI's capabilities and limitations. This approach adds value to traditional library services and reinforces the library's role as a vital contributor to the academic landscape.

Strategic Planning

Long-term strategic planning that incorporates AI and staff development is vital. Without a proactive approach, law libraries risk falling behind as technology advances. Plans should encompass AI integration, continuous staff training, and the modernization of services to ensure that libraries remain relevant and effective in supporting their institutions.

<div align="center">**Funding**</div>

Securing funding for AI tools and training is a foundational need for implementing these changes. Law libraries must advocate for budget allocations and external resources, demonstrating how AI technologies can transform library services, improve learning outcomes, and elevate the institution's profile.

<div align="center">**Digital Consortia**</div>

Finally, collaboration among institutions can alleviate the financial burden of AI integration for smaller libraries. By sharing AI resources and best practices, digital consortia enable libraries to remain competitive, offer robust services, and extend their technological capabilities, ultimately supporting a more equitable academic landscape.

Seeds: Interesting ideas for potential implementation

One of the benefits of creative conversations, such as this Roundtable, is that they give us time and space to examine "what is" and imagine "what might be," thus formulating seeds of ideas that we can further explore and expand. It is not the goal of this section to create a roadmap for how to bring these ideas to fruition or to judge their merit. Instead, this section will capture those seeds, together with the reader's curiosity, so that as the project moves into the next phase, we might find that some of these seeds grow into actionable next steps.

<div align="center">**Invest in AI Training**</div>

Support staff and librarians in acquiring new skills to manage AI tools effectively. AI training presents an opportunity for librarians to upskill and lead in the field, ensuring that they remain relevant by becoming experts in AI technologies. This could include embedding AI education into law school curriculums and legal training.

<div align="center">**Promote Collaborative Development**</div>

Fostering partnerships to develop open-source AI tools is a vital pathway to sustainable innovation in legal libraries. By collaborating with internal and external stakeholders—like law schools, data scientists, and technology providers—libraries can contribute to a resource ecosystem that prioritizes access and reduces dependency on costly, proprietary solutions. This initiative could also focus on creating shared AI models

designed specifically for legal research, law schools, and legal scholarship, making these tools adaptable for varied educational environments and beneficial to smaller institutions that may struggle with financial constraints.

Enhance User Experience with AI

Integrating predictive analytics into library services opens a new realm of personalized support for students, faculty, and the wider community. AI could streamline routine queries, document searches, and citations, allowing librarians to dedicate more time to advanced legal research support and user guidance. In the long term, these developments could transform the user experience by offering on-demand resources, automated assistance, and adaptive learning tools tailored to individual learning styles or research topics. Such changes modernize the library's service model and position it as a proactive, technology-enhanced learning environment.

AI Leadership and Innovation

Positioning libraries as hubs for AI leadership, experimentation, and critical evaluation helps strengthen the library's role as a technology leader in legal education. Libraries can introduce workshops, AI boot camps, and forums for understanding AI applications in law, helping users become proficient in skills like prompt engineering and ethical AI use. Additionally, librarians can emphasize the importance of critically assessing AI outputs, particularly given AI's limitations and the nuanced interpretation required in legal contexts. Such initiatives will ensure that library staff and users alike are not only consumers of AI technology but active participants in its development and ethical use.

Hybrid Spaces

As the role of library spaces evolves, libraries can implement a flexible, hybrid model that balances physical and digital demands. This includes expanding collaborative spaces and tech labs alongside traditional study areas and creating an inclusive environment that meets diverse user needs. AI-driven space management, such as predictive tools for anticipating peak usage times, can further improve accessibility and convenience. Additionally, libraries might leverage data to reconfigure layouts based on real-time user feedback, ensuring the library space remains responsive and valuable to its community.

Create a Culture of Experimentation and Innovation

A commitment to continuous improvement and experimentation is central to the library's future success. Libraries can empower staff to explore new technologies, allocate time

for professional development, and establish internal innovation labs for prototyping emerging ideas. This approach will help law libraries remain adaptive, ensuring they not only keep pace with technological changes but also actively shape their direction. Emphasizing such a growth mindset positions the library as a forward-thinking resource, continuously evolving to meet the changing needs of legal education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conference discussions made it clear that law libraries face significant challenges in maintaining their relevance in a rapidly evolving technological and institutional landscape. Without concerted efforts to adapt services, rethink staffing, and advocate for space, law libraries risk being sidelined or even phased out.

However, law libraries can survive and thrive in the future with the right strategies—focusing on AI integration, professional development, and reimagining library spaces. The time to act is now, ensuring that libraries continue to be a cornerstone of legal education and research in the years to come.

The discussions across all three themes—services, staffing, and space—reinforce the idea that law libraries must embrace technology proactively to thrive in the age of AI. Law libraries can secure their place as essential partners in legal education and research through strategic investments in AI tools, professional development, and adaptive spaces.

Key recommendations include:

- **Strategic AI Planning**: Integrate AI adoption into the library's strategic plan, ensuring alignment with institutional goals.
- **Collaboration and Partnerships**: Foster partnerships within the university and across the legal profession to **leverage resources and expertise**.
- **Continuous Innovation**: Create a culture of experimentation and innovation, encouraging staff to **explore new ideas and technologies**.

By focusing on **virtuous cycles**, libraries can align their services, staffing, and space with the evolving needs of the legal community, ensuring that they remain **relevant and impactful** for years to come.

The future of law libraries in the age of AI presents both significant challenges and vast opportunities. By proactively engaging with AI technologies, investing in staff

development, and reimagining physical spaces, law libraries can continue to play a central role in legal education and practice.

Appendix A – Southeastern Roundtable Participants, March 1, 2024

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