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## Legal futures round-up

PAR YVES FAGUY 4 juillet 2018

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Summer heat be damned. Time for a quick round-up of notable trends and developments and views that highlight innovation in the legal industry.

Out of Quebec is news that the Cyberjustice Laboratory at Université de Montréal is embarking on a major international research project, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, on AI and justice. Over the next six years, 45 researchers will study how AI can help improve access to justice. Leading the project is Professor Karim Benyekhlef, the director of the Laboratory. "At first, I think AI is going to be used for low-intensity disputes," says Benyekhlef. "It's useful for users of the justice system who want to get an idea of whether they have a case that's worth pursuing or not."

Speaking of which, Thomson Reuters does a deep dive into the alternative legal service providers market. Three spoiler takeaways: The decision by law firms to use an ALSP is no longer just about cost; they want specialized expertise. They're coming around to viewing ALSPs as collaborators of sorts, not just the competition. And AI will continue to fuel the trend.

In case there was any doubt, UK insurance firm Weightmans recently began partnering with the University of Liverpool and Toronto-based software company Kira Systems to develop a new AI tool that can identify arguments for settling cases.

So perhaps it is time to consider the broader impact of technology, specifically as it pertains to the use of algorithms and decisions taken "by self-learning systems impervious to examination or challenge." That's what the Law Society of England & Wales will be investigating in the coming months. Leading the effort is its new President **Christina Blacklaws**.

Back in February, Mark A. Cohen wrote about the rise of legal tech incubators and was practically lyrical in his praise of Allen & Overy's Fuse. Perhaps he was on to something. Facebook has announced that it has hired the team behind Fuse start-up Bloomsbury AI to help combat fake news.

The Accord Project, whose mission it is to encourage widespread adoption of smart legal contracts, has announced a whole bunch of partnerships with international law firms, namely Baker McKenzie, CMS, Macfarlanes, and Mishcon de Reya. IBM has also joined the effort.

DLA Piper is using predictive analysis to support its marketing and business development efforts, and it appears to be working quite nicely.

And here's a wide-ranging roundtable discussion coming from the in-house crowd on the impact of technology in their practice, courtesy of Jennifer Brown.

It was just a matter of time, but Deloitte has now joined the other members of the Big Four in securing its ABS license for legal services.

On the "legal education" front, here's some interesting news from Riverview Law, which announced last month the launch of its "Legal Re-Train Programme." The ABS law firm describes it as a two-year program that takes "from a wide variety of specialisms including family law, PI, litigation, industrial disease and employment, and re-trains them as commercial contracts lawyers." In a thread on Twitter, Jordan Furlong has this to say about the move: "Law firms are going to train their own lawyers, not everyone else's, from now on. They did the legal profession a huge favour for decades by "breaking in" unskilled law school grads unready to serve clients. But they are increasingly done with that."