Jobs of the Future … and the Present
What Will Happen in Legal Professions?

July 2024

Opportunity for Higher Education: ★★★★★
Size of U.S. Market: 1.3 million+

Legal professions are expected to be greatly impacted by advances in automation and artificial intelligence (AI), along with other new technologies. The process of gathering information is expected to change for both practicing lawyers and their support staff. It is reasonable to believe that AI systems will gather information more efficiently than human professionals have in the past. This shift will necessitate changes to the business model of law practices, which typically charge based on labor hours. With the introduction of AI efficiencies, billing and revenue generation will likely be impacted and thus have to change in the future.

Currently, AI systems are not entirely reliable, and the legal system demands high standards of accuracy. It is also likely that new occupations will arise as a result of these technologies, particularly in information-rich areas. AI and other new technologies will also present opportunities and challenges related to ethics, policy creation, and new legal frameworks, potentially leading to more legal disputes.

Ultimately, many futurists and leaders in the legal and consulting fields anticipate job reductions in various areas, including potentially among lawyers, legal assistants, and court reporters.[1] In the short term, it is expected that the roles of legal assistants, aides, and paralegals may be downsized, though these professionals will still be needed to review AI contributions to cases.

This report focused on five representative legal professions:

SOC	Description
23-2011	Paralegals and Legal Assistants
23-1011	Lawyers
23-1023	Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates
27-3092	Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners
23-1022	Arbitrators, Mediators, and Conciliators

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[1] https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/the-future-of-professionals-how-ai-is-reshaping-legal-work/

Key takeaways for this sector:

–   Adoption of AI will likely create new opportunities for litigation because of its uneven
    reliability and the lack of clear precedent for use of AI-generated outputs in professional
    and legal contexts.

–   It is unlikely that demand for lawyers will decline in the short term due in part to the
    strategic, nuanced thinking required. However, some have suggested that entry-level
    information gathering and preparation tasks may be more efficient through AI, thus
    reducing the tasks traditionally assigned to junior assistants and paralegals.[2]

Figure 1 displays the top posted job titles for the select legal occupations from April 2010 to April
2024 in the United States. These titles reflect the blend of both civic and business contexts in
which legal professionals operate, indicating that changes to these occupations will impact both
the public and private sectors.

Figure 1: Top Posted Job Titles for Select Occupations in the United States

Job Title	Total/Unique (Apr 2010 - Apr 2024)	Posting Intensity	Median Posting Duration
Paralegals	468,141 / 183,708	3 : 1	17 days
Legal Assistants	379,627 / 138,491	3 : 1	22 days
Litigation Paralegals	221,706 / 86,877	3 : 1	12 days
Attorneys	183,856 / 74,557	2 : 1	8 days
Litigation Attorneys	190,017 / 70,622	3 : 1	4 days
Associate Attorneys	211,207 / 56,395	4 : 1	27 days
Paralegals/Legal Assistants	151,669 / 55,698	3 : 1	24 days
Corporate Attorneys	101,138 / 41,061	2 : 1	3 days
Corporate Paralegals	86,639 / 37,838	2 : 1	10 days
Corporate Counsels	86,495 / 36,223	2 : 1	11 days

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[2] https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/technology/how-is-ai-changing-the-legal-
profession/#:~:text=AI%20is%20disrupting%20the%20litigation,and%20writing%20tasks%20more%20efficient.

Anticipated Labor Changes for 2034

The following is expected to occur:

– It will be critical for legal practitioners to stay current with emerging technologies, which become increasingly essential in legal research, compliance, and e-discovery. With growing adoption of technology, data security will also become a key concern for legal professionals.

– Legal professionals with skills in AI, machine learning, and other advanced technologies will be in higher demand. This shift will necessitate ongoing education and training to ensure that legal practitioners can effectively leverage these tools in their practice.

– The adoption of AI in the legal field will bring about new ethical and regulatory challenges. Legal professionals will need to stay informed about evolving laws and ethical standards, ensuring compliance and addressing potential legal disputes arising from AI usage.

– New or evolving jobs could include:
   o Data and information engineer or analyst
   o Legal technologist or office automation specialist
   o AI manager or integration analyst
   o Technology and data compliance analyst

Table 1 highlights the anticipated growth in select occupations within the legal field over the next decade. These occupations account for over 1.3 million jobs in 2024, and the combined workforce is projected to grow 9.4% by 2034.

Table 1: Current and Forecasted Data for Select Legal Occupations in the United States

Occupation	Total Jobs		2024 to 2034 Change		Median Annual Earnings
	2024	2034	# Change	% Change	
Paralegals and Legal Assistants	375,452	409,049	33,597	8.9%	$60,659
Lawyers	928,884	1,019,712	90,828	9.8%	$140,707
Judges, Magistrate Judges, and Magistrates	27,204	28,828	1,625	6.0%	$148,878
Court Reporters and Simultaneous Captioners	23,418	24,569	1,151	4.9%	$63,506
Arbitrators, Mediators, & Conciliators	9,699	10,885	1,186	12.2%	$70,962
Total	1,364,657	1,493,043	128,387	9.4%	

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Figure 2 displays the in-demand skills for the select legal occupations, using job postings from April 2010 to April 2024. This illustrates the demand for knowledge and skills that span the full litigation process, from discovery and research to pleadings and hearings. The top 10 list also includes competency in niche specialties within legal work, like mergers and acquisitions, and intellectual property. Based on a review of job postings, "marketing" mostly refers to the need for skills providing legal advice related to clients' marketing activities (content creation, social media, etc.). It sometimes also refers to the need for legal professionals to market their own firm's services (e.g. attending community events, promoting services, drafting public-facing white papers, etc.).

Figure 2: In-demand Specialized Skills for Select Legal Occupations
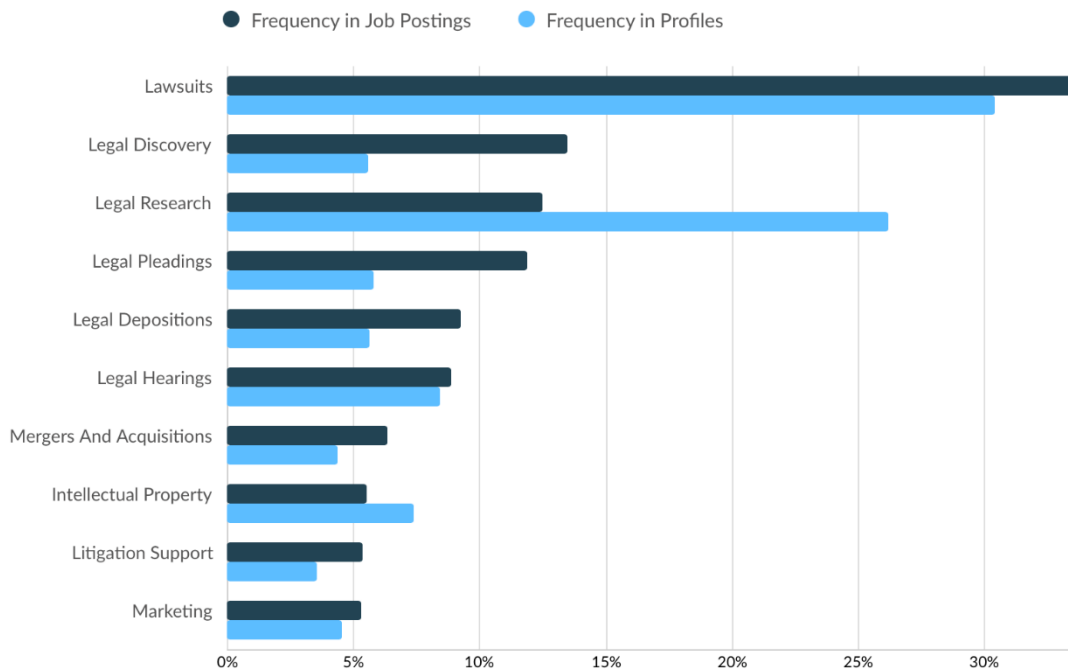

Figure 3 on the following page displays the projected two-year growth of the top 10 in-demand specialized skills above. Many of the skills for these roles are "growing" or "rapidly growing" relative to overall skill demand in the rest of the labor market.

Figure 3: Projected Growth for Specialized Skills in Select Legal Occupations

Skills	Postings	% of Total Postings	Profiles	% of Total Profiles	Projected Skill Growth	Skill Growth Relative to Market
Lawsuits	853,167	33%	344,214	30%	+27.7%	Rapidly Growing
Legal Discovery	343,110	13%	63,060	6%	+11.9%	Growing
Legal Research	318,785	13%	296,289	26%	+6.7%	Stable
Legal Pleadings	303,511	12%	65,692	6%	+9.1%	Growing
Legal Depositions	236,151	9%	63,679	6%	+11.3%	Growing
Legal Hearings	226,740	9%	95,413	8%	+16.6%	Growing
Mergers And Acquisitions	161,809	6%	49,317	4%	+6.6%	Stable
Intellectual Property	140,698	6%	83,694	7%	+11.9%	Growing
Litigation Support	137,491	5%	40,503	4%	+4.2%	Lagging
Marketing	135,427	5%	51,750	5%	+23.0%	Rapidly Growing

Special Focus on Emerging Skills

Using job postings data, recent trends can be analyzed to identify the fastest growing and top emerging skills and qualifications for the five select legal occupations. By comparing job postings from the past 365 days to those from the preceding 365 days, (i.e. comparing the past year to the previous year), it was found that both artificial intelligence and machine learning made it into the top 10 list. (Note: This list has been filtered to include only skills with at least 50 postings nationwide in May 2024).

Table 2: Top 10 Emerging Skills and Qualifications in Select Legal Occupations

Skill or Qualification	May 2024 Unique Postings	Latest 365 Days Unique Postings % Change
Property Laws	193	119.1%
Legal Document Management	53	118.2%
Artificial Intelligence	208	100.9%
DevOps	68	92.9%
Document Review	538	92.3%
Privacy Impact Assessments	55	66.1%
Business Support Systems	56	63.6%
Machine Learning	100	60.1%
Wrongful Death Claim	77	59.1%
Document Management Systems	645	58.0%

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Anticipated Educational Impact

Lightcast and UPCEA anticipate that educational changes could take the form of the following:

- **AI and automation tools will provide learners and professionals with opportunities to grow and acquire new skills and credentials.** Higher education institutions will need to integrate AI and automation tools into their curriculum to ensure that future legal assistants, paralegals, attorneys, judges, and magistrates, are proficient in using these technologies and understand their implications for the legal field.

- **Law practice management will undergo major changes as a result of new technologies,** necessitating that law and legal studies programs incorporate training on new business and financial models. This will prepare future legal professionals to manage these technological advancements, ensuring they can navigate and thrive in an evolving legal landscape.

- **While some tasks will be done more efficiently through AI, legal assistants and paralegals that remain in the field will require new skills.** Higher education institutions should teach these professionals how to effectively engage with AI tools, input relevant data, and assess AI-generated outputs. Additionally, education on scenario testing and evaluating AI-driven outcomes will be crucial for these roles.

- **Lawyers are most likely to be the least threatened with the loss of employment as compared to other professions.** However, to remain competitive and leverage the benefits of AI, law schools and higher education institutions must incorporate training that enhances lawyers' skills in human interaction, planning, strategizing, negotiation, and the use of AI. This will ensure that future lawyers are not only informed and productive but also able to effectively compete in a technology-enhanced legal market.

Institutional Spotlights

As legal professions adapt to technological changes, some institutions have already begun to implement innovative curriculum to prepare graduates for the future of work in this field. Here are some examples:

- **University of Wisconsin, Madison** – The University of Wisconsin, Madison has been recognized as a leader in law school innovation by focusing on emerging technologies in their new courses, advanced legal research and legal technology. The school has led

efforts by offering free seminars exploring the ethical and legal challenges posed by large language models (LLMs) and their applications.

- **Stanford Law School -** Stanford's CodeX program, a partnership between the Law School and the Department of Computer Science, focuses on the development and application of technology to improve legal services. This interdisciplinary approach prepares students to work at the intersection of law and technology. CodeX's emphasis is on the research and development of computational law, the branch of legal informatics concerned with creating systems and technologies that can automate aspects of legal reasoning and processes.

- **Georgetown University** – Georgetown University offers a comprehensive law degree that includes a wide variety of courses related to AI. These include courses on using and analyzing the efficacy of legal writing with generative AI and utilizing the emerging technology to produce desirable and effective client-facing solutions.

- **Chicago-Kent Law School at the Illinois Institute of Technology** – The Chicago-Kent Law School supports a J.D. certificate in Legal Innovation and Technology. Students who participate in this certificate examine the intersections of law and STEM, including emerging technologies such as generative AI. The core curriculum requires legal analytics, legal project management, legal tech, justice and technology, and practice + professionalism. Electives topics include AI, blockchain, and programing.

Next Month's Occupational Focus

- Marketing

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About Lightcast

Lightcast provides trusted global labor market data, analytics, and expert guidance that empowers higher education, employers, and communities to make informed decisions and navigate the increasingly complex world of work. With a database of more than one billion job postings and career profiles, Lightcast provides robust data, clear analysis, and expert guidance on skills, jobs, and opportunities.

Lightcast is active in more than 30 countries and has offices in the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Italy, New Zealand, and India. The company is backed by global private equity leader KKR. For more, visit lightcast.io.

About UPCEA

UPCEA is the online and professional education association. Our members continuously reinvent higher education, positively impacting millions of lives. We proudly lead and support them through cutting edge research, professional development, networking and mentorship, conferences and seminars, and stakeholder advocacy. Our collaborative, entrepreneurial community brings together decision makers and influencers in education, industry, research, and policy interested in improving educational access and outcomes. Learn more about us at UPCEA.edu and follow us online @UPCEA.

About the Authors

Emily West has nearly two decades of experience in higher education and is the Market Research Analyst at UPCEA. She is UPCEA's expert on labor force statistics and skills research. She can be reached at:

Emily West
UPCEA
Market Research Analyst
Email: ewest@upcea.edu
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/emily-west-7b3084143/

Remie Verougstraete is a senior writer and strategist at Lightcast. His work focuses on leveraging labor market insight to close the gap between education and work. He can be reached at:

Remie Verougstraete
Lightcast
Sr. Writer & Strategist
Email: Remie.Verougstraete@lightcast.io
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/remie-verougstraete/