We’ve seen the future—at least the near future—of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and we’re here to tell you that Siri and Alexa don’t want your jobs, nor can they do them. That goes for law librarians and lawyers, alike. So, we can all breathe a collective sigh of relief.

If you think that’s good news, we have better news: AI will soon be working for you. Think of it as the assistant you’ve always thought you deserved—except this assistant doesn’t want any of the credit and just helps you look good and impress your lawyers and clients. It will handle the repetitive, mundane, and boring parts of your job and free you up to deal with higher-level work that is more interesting and worthy of your time and effort.

Why All the Worry About AI Stealing Jobs?
There are several reasons why people are worried out about losing their jobs to AI. Most of them are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the discipline of AI and of a conflation of two concepts: artificial general intelligence (AGI) and artificial narrow intelligence (ANI). Examples of ANI (also called “weak AI”) abound, and some are quite impressive—from the virtual assistant on your smartphone or home device (Siri, Alexa, etc.) to the technologies that enable self-driving cars and shopping recommendations, to some of the emerging software tools that promote the more efficient practice of law. These examples, and every other AI that you have ever encountered in real life, are ANI.
Artificial general intelligence (AGI, or “strong AI”) is the stuff of science fiction. Whether it’s HAL 9000 in 2001: A Space Odyssey, T-800 in The Terminator, Samantha, the sensitive, but heart-breaking, self-aware operating system in Her, or Ava, the beautiful humanoid in Ex Machina, we have long dreamed about machines that are just like us, but smarter and more capable. They know everything and can solve all our problems. Spoiler alert for every AI movie ever: it doesn’t turn out so well for the analog among us.

If those fictional characters aren’t scary enough, real-life technology luminaries such as Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have warned of the possibility that AI could destroy us and “spell the end of the human race.” (Read more on the topic at bit.ly/JA19BBC.) Of course, if that happens, our jobs will be the least of our worries. In a less dystopian future, AGI (embodied in a robot or not) would comply with Isaac Asimov’s Three Laws of Robotics, especially the first: “A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.” (Learn more about robotics at bit.ly/JA19robotics.)

The good news is that we have some time because AGI doesn’t exist yet—and we’re likely far from it. “AI is currently very, very stupid,” said Andrew Moore, head of Google Cloud Artificial Intelligence. (Read Moore’s interview at bit.ly/JA19CNet.) While experts disagree on timing, the average estimate among leading researchers and practitioners in the field is that there is a 50 percent chance we will achieve AGI by 2099. (Learn more about AGI at bit.ly/JA19verge.)

A Brief History of Losing Our Jobs in Law Firms
This should be brief. That’s because we haven’t lost our jobs. In fact, there are more jobs in the legal industry today than ever before. Think about typical law firms of 50 years ago. They were relatively small compared to today’s firms, and the roles were limited. There were lawyers, librarians, secretaries, and not much else. There were no marketing departments, IT departments, business development teams, professional development programs, knowledge management professionals, or innovation councils. Today, there are more people working in law firms and in more diverse roles.

That’s not to say that there have not been job losses in the legal industry. Those of us who suffered through the economic crisis of 2007-2009 (The Great Recession) know that all too well. But that’s part of the point: technology and AI are not stealing our jobs, the broader economy is the real culprit. It’s estimated that 18,000 lawyer jobs were lost in The Great Recession—that’s just among in-house law departments and in Am Law 200 firms. Brace yourself, a recent article in The American Lawyer suggests that an impending recession could mean 10,000 lawyers will soon be out of work. (Read the article at bit.ly/JA19AL.)

To the contrary, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that “employment of lawyers is projected to grow 8 percent from 2016 to 2026, about as fast as the average for all occupations.” It does warn that some tasks that have traditionally been performed by lawyers, such as document review, will likely be transitioned to paralegals and legal assistants. The same holds true for support staff, such as law librarians.

Adoption of AI in the Legal Industry
Compared to other industries, adoption of AI in legal has been slow, and frankly, sometimes remarkable. Various electronic discovery review tools have incorporated some AI technologies for several years. There are also good examples of legal research platforms that have effectively incorporated AI, such as Lexis, Westlaw, and Casetext. Some other offerings are “more sizzle than steak,” taking liberties with the definition of AI, presumably to benefit from the marketing hype cycle.

A promising new application of artificial intelligence in the legal industry is LegalMation, a litigation automation tool that creates draft answers with affirmative defenses, discovery requests, and discovery objections and responses. Like all good knowledge management tools, the application helps to increase quality, consistency, and efficiency of work product. (Learn more about LegalMation at bit.ly/JA19LegalMation.)

After extensive testing with practicing lawyers, Ogletree Deakins became an early adopter of the technology. In fact, the firm saw such great potential with it that it formed an exclusive partnership with LegalMation to help develop their future offerings.

The innovation and utility of LegalMation lies in its simplicity. To begin, a user merely drops and drops a PDF complaint onto LegalMation’s website. LegalMation’s Complaint Analysis module then performs optical character recognition (OCR), analyzes the text, extracts words and phrases, and categorizes the data contained in the document. Using machine learning (a type of AI that relies on “training” from example documents), LegalMation is able to make sense of the issues and allegations in the complaint and create a fully formatted draft answer with appropriate affirmative defenses. Of course, the output is only a draft answer, which must be reviewed and revised by an attorney, but the quality of the machine-generated work product has been compared to that of an experienced paralegal or junior associate. At the same time, the system also generates a draft discovery request of similar quality. This output, which would take an average of six to eight hours for an attorney, is done in about two minutes. LegalMation’s Discovery Analysis module uses a similar approach to generate fully formatted discovery objections and responses based on the upload of a PDF discovery demand, saving several more hours of manual labor.

Embrace Artificial Intelligence
How does all this talk about AI and automated document generation comport with the earlier advice to relax and not worry about losing your job? Because there is a difference between your job and the tasks that make up your job. Advanced technology tools will do some of the tasks that you now do manually. Newer, more efficient methods of doing some work will continue to develop and
automation will continue to streamline tasks and eliminate some of them altogether. But, because of the limitations of ANI, our jobs are safe and you’re not likely to be replaced by a robot anytime soon. In fact, embracing advanced technologies such as AI may be the key to more (and better quality) jobs. A recent report from Wolters Kluwer concluded that “technology leading law firms … are significantly more likely to report higher firm profitability” than others. Firms with higher profits typically hire more lawyers and administrative staff. Professionals with real intelligence will embrace artificial intelligence and look for ways that it can help increase efficiency and provide greater value to their firms and clients. (Read the report at bit.ly/JA19WKreport.)

**AALL 2019 ALERT**
Don’t miss the program “Artificial Intelligence and Implicit Bias,” Tuesday, July 17 from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. For more information visit bit.ly/AALL19AIbias.

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