

As any articling student or associate will tell you, a big part of becoming a seasoned and experienced lawyer involves seemingly endless amounts of legal research: hours or days of reading, pursuing tangents that only later are obviously irrelevant, and getting stuck in “rabbit holes” and “spinning your wheels”. All this work, which is typically done on behalf of a more senior lawyer and their clients, accumulates both billable and non-billable hours.

Over the past 20 years, however, software has played an increasingly dominant role in making legal research faster and more precise, and this trend is not going to change anytime soon.

As a result, an important pedagogical question has recently emerged: to what extent are these legal research “tangents” and “rabbit holes” that can overwhelm a junior associate necessary for their proper education and growth into a competent lawyer?

On the one hand, a deliberate avoidance of technology is a common choice in education. For example, we all still learn how to do long division, not necessarily because it is a skill that we need (although this may be true), but because only by learning how to do long division can we learn fundamental truths about numbers and higher level math concepts.

On the other hand, we also recognize the significant educational advantages of employing text editing software for writing essays, for example, where the ability to cut and paste, and reformulate ideas effortlessly makes the learning far more efficient. Most reasonable people

can't imagine forcing a high-school student to draft a 10-page history paper using a pencil and paper (except, perhaps, in some rare and unique circumstances).

However, after considering this question extensively both internally at Alexsei and with our clients and prospective clients, the answer appears relatively clear: after law school, young lawyers will obtain a far superior continued education if they can completely avoid the traditional legal research task, and instead were able to focus on reading and understanding the legal content specific to their legal issues.

If this weren't true, it would mean that reading irrelevant content—and the process of discovering and discarding irrelevant content—is either: i) necessary for learning the relevant content, or; ii) that reading some combination of relevant and irrelevant content is more valuable than just reading the most relevant content alone.

Neither of these appear to be true. First, reading irrelevant content is clearly not necessary because we learn legal principles all the time simply by reading the positive statements of the law and the reasoning that supports them. And second, effective learning is at all times a process of task optimization: by doing one thing you are necessarily not doing something else; and, as such, a correct optimization will result in the correct combination of tasks that form the best education. Of all the things a young lawyer could be doing—including meeting with clients, drafting opinions, factums and other court materials, learning how to ask the right legal questions, and aiming to resolve disputes economically—reading irrelevant legal content instead of relevant legal content to learn about a legal issue seems the least valuable

of all.

Accordingly, it is incumbent on us as lawyers and those that perpetuate the institutional traditions of legal education after law school to provide young lawyers with the opportunity to maximize their education, and let them stop doing legal research entirely.

By using a tool like [Alexsei](#), which leverages state-of-the-art artificial intelligence technologies, an articling student or associate can have a legal research memo directly answering their question referencing the authoritative legal principles and their source, in only 24 hours, and often much less. This is the future of legal education post-law school, for the benefit of lawyers, law firms, their clients, and the legal system at large.

In response to social media comments:

Don't get me wrong, once you get past the headline, my argument is simply that lawyers and students will learn the law better if they only read the content relevant to their issue, and are afforded the opportunity to not read content that is irrelevant to their issue.

Yes, AI and exceptional legal research lawyers allow for this possibility. Because of AI, fewer and fewer lawyers will need excellent legal research skills, and can improve significantly in other areas, leading to increased specialization both towards and away from the legal research task. We have another blog post on this topic to be published in the coming weeks.

I certainly could be wrong, but at this point, I don't see a need for many lawyers to be reading irrelevant content when they are all looking for the same relevant content.

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