

Disruptive Artificial Intelligence: The Future of Nigeria's Legal Landscape and Judicial Process in the 21st Century

Dr Charles Omole LLB, LLM, Phd (Bucks), Director General Institute for Police and Security Research

Distinguished colleagues, esteemed members of the Nigerian Bar Association, respected members of the judiciary, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen:

Imagine a future where a young man's fate is decided not by a judge, but by a machine trained on the prejudices of the past. Where the corridors of our law firms echo with silence, as the next generation of lawyers is replaced by algorithms. Where justice itself can be hacked, manipulated, or rendered unaccountable. This is not science fiction. This is the disruptive power—and the danger—of artificial intelligence in our legal system. Today, we must confront these challenges head-on before they become our reality.

We are living in an age of rapid technological advancement. The world is changing at a pace that is both exhilarating and, at times, unsettling. At the heart of this transformation is artificial intelligence—AI—a technology that is already reshaping industries, economies, and societies across the globe. For the legal profession, AI represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It is a force that can democratize access to justice, enhance efficiency, and strengthen the rule of law. Yet, it also poses risks to privacy, fairness, and the very fabric of our legal system.

I invite you to join me in a journey of exploration and reflection. Together, we will examine the transformative power of AI, the challenges it presents, and the steps we must take to ensure that it serves the cause of justice in Nigeria. We will draw lessons from global best practices, analyse the current state of AI adoption in our country, and chart a course for the future—one that maximises the benefits of AI while minimising its risks.

This is not merely an academic exercise. The decisions we make today will shape the future of our profession, our judiciary, and our nation. As lawyers, judges, policymakers, and guardians of the rule of law, we must lead, innovate, and ensure that technology serves humanity, not the other way around.

UNDERSTANDING DISRUPTIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence, or AI, refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think, learn, and make decisions. AI systems can process vast amounts of data, recognise patterns, understand natural language, and even “learn” from experience through algorithms known as machine learning.

AI IS NOT A SINGLE TECHNOLOGY BUT A CONSTELLATION OF TECHNOLOGIES, INCLUDING:

- **Machine Learning:** Systems that learn from data and improve over time without explicit programming.
- **Natural Language Processing (NLP):** The ability of computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language.
- **Computer Vision:** The ability of machines to interpret and process visual information from the world.
- **Robotic Process Automation (RPA):** The use of software robots to automate repetitive tasks.

WHAT MAKES AI “DISRUPTIVE”?

The term “disruptive” refers to innovations that fundamentally alter or replace existing systems, processes, or industries. Disruptive AI is not about incremental improvement; it is about transformation. In the legal sector, disruptive AI can:

- Automate tasks that were previously the exclusive domain of lawyers and judges.
- Change the way legal services are delivered, making them faster, cheaper, and more accessible.
- Challenge traditional business models and hierarchies within law firms and courts.

TYPES OF AI RELEVANT TO LAW

Let us consider some of the most relevant AI technologies for the legal profession:

- **Legal Research Tools:** AI-powered platforms like ROSS Intelligence and LexisNexis use NLP to search and summarise case law, statutes, and legal commentary.
- **Document Review and E-Discovery:** AI can quickly review thousands of documents, flag relevant information, and identify patterns that might be missed by human reviewers.

- **Predictive Analytics:** By analysing historical case data, AI can predict the likely outcome of litigation, helping lawyers to advise clients and develop strategies.
- **Contract Analysis and Automation:** AI can draft, review, and manage contracts, reducing errors and speeding up transactions.
- **Chatbots and Virtual Legal Assistants:** These tools can provide basic legal information to clients, answer frequently asked questions, and even help with document preparation.

GLOBAL TRENDS IN AI ADOPTION IN LEGAL SYSTEMS

Around the world, legal systems are embracing AI at varying speeds:

- **United States:** Law firms are using AI for e-discovery, due diligence, and legal research. Courts are experimenting with AI to assist in bail and sentencing decisions.
- **United Kingdom:** The judiciary is piloting AI-driven case management systems and exploring the use of AI in legal aid.
- **China:** AI is being used in “smart courts” to assist judges, automate administrative tasks, and even draft judgments.
- **India:** The Supreme Court’s e-courts project is leveraging technology to digitise records and improve access to justice.
- **South Africa:** AI is being explored to address access to justice challenges, particularly in underserved communities.

These examples illustrate that AI is not a distant or abstract concept. It is a reality that is already reshaping the legal landscape in profound ways.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF AI ON LEGAL SYSTEMS

Legal Research and Document Review

Traditionally, legal research has been a time-consuming and labour-intensive process. Lawyers and their teams would spend countless hours poring over case law, statutes, and legal commentary. Today, AI-powered research tools can analyse vast databases in seconds, identifying relevant authorities, summarising key points, and even flagging inconsistencies.

For example, ROSS Intelligence, built on IBM’s Watson, uses NLP to answer complex legal questions by searching through millions of documents. LexisNexis and Westlaw have integrated AI to provide more accurate and relevant search results. These tools not only save time but also reduce the risk of human error, ensuring that lawyers have access to the most up-to-date and relevant information.

Case Prediction and Analytics

AI can analyse historical case data to predict the likely outcome of litigation. By examining patterns in judicial decisions, AI can provide insights into how a particular judge might rule, the likelihood of success on appeal, or the probable duration of a case.

In the United States, platforms like Lex Machina provide analytics on judges, courts, and opposing counsel, helping lawyers to develop more effective strategies. In the UK, similar tools are being used to inform settlement negotiations and risk assessments.

Access to Justice

One of the most promising applications of AI is in expanding access to justice. In many countries, including Nigeria, a significant portion of the population cannot afford legal representation. AI-powered chatbots and online platforms can provide basic legal information, help with document preparation, and guide users through legal processes.

For example, **DoNotPay**, an AI-powered chatbot in the US and UK, helps users contest parking tickets, apply for asylum, and navigate small claims court. In India, the e-courts project has made court records accessible online, reducing barriers for litigants.

Court Administration

AI can streamline court administration by automating case management, scheduling, and the allocation of cases to judges. This can help to reduce delays and backlogs—a chronic challenge in many jurisdictions, including Nigeria.

In China, “smart courts” use AI to manage case files, schedule hearings, and even notify parties of upcoming deadlines. In the UK, the HM Courts & Tribunals Service is piloting AI-driven systems to improve efficiency and reduce administrative burdens.

Transforming Legal Education and Training

AI is also transforming legal education. Law schools are beginning to integrate AI and legal technology into their curricula, preparing the next generation of lawyers for a digital future. Online platforms offer courses in

legal technology, data analytics, and AI ethics, enabling lawyers to upskill and stay relevant.

AI AND THE JUDICIAL PROCESS

The judicial process is the bedrock of the rule of law. Here, AI offers both opportunities and risks.

AI-Assisted Judgments

Some jurisdictions are experimenting with AI tools that assist judges in drafting judgments or in sentencing. For example, in China, AI systems analyse case facts, relevant laws, and precedents to suggest possible outcomes. In the US, risk assessment algorithms are used to inform bail and sentencing decisions.

While these tools can enhance consistency and efficiency, they also raise critical questions:

- **Transparency:** How does the AI arrive at its recommendations? Can its reasoning be explained and scrutinised?
- **Accountability:** Who is responsible if the AI makes a mistake—the judge, the developer, or the government?
- **Bias:** If the AI is trained on biased data, it may perpetuate or even amplify existing inequalities.

Safeguarding Judicial Integrity

Judicial integrity is the cornerstone of the rule of law. AI systems must be used to assist, not replace, human judgment. The final decision must always rest with a human judge, guided by the principles of justice, equity, and fairness.

To safeguard judicial integrity, it is essential to:

- Ensure that AI systems are transparent and explainable.
- Regularly audit AI systems for bias and errors.
- Provide judges with training on the strengths and limitations of AI.
- Establish clear guidelines on the use of AI in judicial decision-making.

Enhancing Efficiency and Reducing Backlogs

AI can assist in reducing case backlogs by automating routine tasks, such as scheduling hearings, managing case files, and notifying parties of deadlines. This frees up judges and court staff to concentrate on more complex and substantive issues.

In India, the e-courts project has digitised millions of case files, making it easier for judges to access information and manage their dockets. In the UK, AI-driven case management systems are being piloted to improve efficiency and reduce delays.

Ensuring Fairness and Due Process

While AI can enhance efficiency, it must not come at the expense of fairness and due process. It is essential to ensure that all parties have access to the information and tools they need to participate fully in the judicial process. This includes providing training and support for lawyers, judges, and litigants.

AI, NATIONAL SECURITY, AND THE RULE OF LAW

AI in National Security and Law Enforcement

Artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a cornerstone of national security strategies worldwide. In Nigeria, as in other countries, AI is being explored for use in surveillance, crime detection, border security, and counterterrorism. AI-powered facial recognition, predictive policing, and data analytics can help law enforcement agencies identify threats, track criminal activity, and respond more effectively to emergencies.

For example, AI can analyse vast amounts of data from CCTV cameras, social media, and communication networks to detect suspicious patterns or potential security threats. In countries like the United States and China, AI-driven surveillance systems have already been deployed in major cities, airports, and public spaces.

Balancing Security with Civil Liberties and Privacy

While AI offers powerful tools for enhancing security, it also raises significant concerns about privacy, civil liberties, and the potential for abuse. In Nigeria, where the rule of law is still consolidating, the unchecked use of AI in surveillance and law enforcement could lead to violations of fundamental rights, including the right to privacy, freedom of expression, and protection from arbitrary detention.

The challenge is to strike a balance between leveraging AI for national security and safeguarding the rights of citizens. This requires:

- **Clear Legal Frameworks:** Laws and regulations must define the permissible uses of AI in security and law enforcement, set limits on data collection and retention, and establish oversight mechanisms.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Security agencies must be transparent about their use of AI and subject to independent oversight to prevent abuse.
- **Public Awareness and Engagement:** Citizens must be informed about how AI is being used and have avenues to challenge misuse or violations of their rights.

Risks of Bias, Abuse, and Overreach

AI systems are only as good as the data they are trained on. If the data reflects existing biases or discriminatory practices, AI can perpetuate or even amplify those biases. For example, predictive policing algorithms trained on historical arrest data may disproportionately target certain communities, leading to over-policing and social injustice.

Moreover, without proper safeguards, AI can be used to target political opponents, suppress dissent, or discriminate against vulnerable groups. The legal profession must be vigilant in defending the rule of law and ensuring that AI is used ethically and responsibly.

The Role of Lawyers in Safeguarding Rights

Lawyers have a critical role to play in ensuring that AI is used in a manner consistent with the Constitution and international human rights standards. This includes:

- Challenging unlawful or disproportionate use of AI in court.
- Advocating for robust legal frameworks and oversight mechanisms.
- Educating clients and the public about their rights in the digital age.

THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT: CURRENT STATE AND CHALLENGES

Let us now turn our focus to Nigeria. While the potential of AI is immense, the reality on the ground presents significant challenges.

State of AI Adoption in Nigeria's Legal Sector

Nigeria's legal sector is at the early stages of AI adoption. While some forward-thinking law firms and government agencies are experimenting with AI-powered research tools and case management systems, widespread adoption remains limited. Most legal practitioners still rely on manual processes, paper records, and traditional methods of legal research and advocacy.

Infrastructure and Digital Divide

A major barrier to AI adoption in Nigeria is the lack of reliable digital infrastructure. Many courts and law offices, especially outside major urban centres, struggle with inconsistent electricity, limited internet access, and outdated technology. This digital divide exacerbates existing inequalities and limits the ability of lawyers and judges to leverage AI tools.

Education and Digital Literacy

Another significant challenge is the lack of digital literacy among legal professionals. Many lawyers and judges have limited exposure to technology and may be resistant to change. Legal education in Nigeria has not kept pace with technological advancements, and there is a pressing need for training and capacity building in legal technology and AI.

Regulatory and Ethical Gaps

Nigeria currently lacks a comprehensive legal framework governing the use of AI in the legal sector. This creates uncertainty for practitioners and clients alike and exposes the profession to risks such as data breaches, misuse of AI tools, and ethical lapses. There is also a lack of clear guidelines on issues such as data protection, client confidentiality, and the use of AI in court proceedings.

Socio-Economic and Ethical Challenges

AI has the potential to displace jobs, particularly among junior lawyers, paralegals, and administrative staff. At the same time, it can create new opportunities for those who are willing to adapt and upskill. The legal profession must grapple with the ethical implications of automation, including the risk of widening inequality and undermining the social contract between lawyers and society.

Opportunities for Innovation

Despite these challenges, Nigeria has a vibrant tech ecosystem and a young, dynamic population. There are significant opportunities for innovation in legal technology, from AI-powered legal research tools to online dispute resolution platforms. By investing in infrastructure, education, and regulatory reform, Nigeria can position itself as a leader in legal innovation in Africa.

GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

To navigate these challenges, we must learn from global best practices.

Regulatory Frameworks

Around the world, countries are developing regulatory frameworks to govern the use of AI in the legal sector:

- **European Union:** The EU's Artificial Intelligence Act is a pioneering effort to regulate AI based on risk categories. High-risk applications, such as those used in law enforcement or the judiciary, are subject to strict oversight, transparency requirements, and human oversight.
- **Singapore:** The Model AI Governance Framework emphasises transparency, accountability, and human-centricity. It provides practical guidance for organisations deploying AI, including risk assessment, data management, and stakeholder engagement.
- **United States:** While the US has taken a more decentralised approach, various states and federal agencies have issued guidelines on the ethical use of AI in law and government.

Judicial Guidelines and Ethical Standards

Judiciaries in several countries have developed guidelines for the ethical use of AI:

- **United Kingdom:** The Judicial Office has issued guidance on the use of AI in the judiciary, emphasising the importance of human oversight, transparency, and the avoidance of bias.
- **Canada:** The Canadian Bar Association has published ethical guidelines for lawyers using AI, including recommendations on competence, confidentiality, and accountability.

Capacity Building and Public-Private Partnerships

Capacity building is essential for successful AI adoption. Countries like Estonia and India are investing in digital literacy programs for legal professionals, judges, and court staff. Public-private partnerships are driving innovation, with governments, universities, and tech companies collaborating on research, training, and the development of AI tools.

THE IMPACT OF AI ON THE LAW OF EVIDENCE IN NIGERIA AND THE CHALLENGE OF DEEPFAKES

Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the landscape of evidence in legal proceedings, presenting both opportunities and profound challenges for the Nigerian legal system.

AI and the Law of Evidence

AI technologies are increasingly used to generate, analyse, and interpret evidence. Tools powered by machine learning can sift through vast troves of digital data— emails, social media, CCTV footage, financial records— identifying patterns and connections that would be impossible for humans to detect unaided. In Nigerian courts, this could mean more efficient discovery processes, faster case preparation, and the ability to uncover hidden facts.

However, the use of AI-generated or AI-analysed evidence raises critical questions for the law of evidence, especially as it relates to Admissibility, Chain of Custody, as well as Bias and Errors based on wrong predictive data.

The Nigerian judiciary must therefore develop new standards and protocols for the admissibility, authentication, and evaluation of AI-related evidence. Judges and lawyers will need training to understand the strengths and limitations of these technologies, and to ask the right questions when AI is involved.

DEEPFAKES: A NEW THREAT TO TRUTH AND JUSTICE

Perhaps the most alarming development is the rise of “deepfakes”—hyper-realistic audio, video, or image forgeries created using advanced AI. Deepfakes can make it appear as though a person said or did something they never did, with a level of realism that can fool even trained observers.

The implications for legal and judicial practice in Nigeria are profound:

- **Evidentiary Reliability:** Video and audio recordings have long been considered powerful, almost incontrovertible evidence in court.

Deepfakes undermine this trust, making it possible to fabricate “evidence” that is nearly impossible to distinguish from reality without sophisticated forensic analysis.

- **Authentication Burden:** Lawyers and judges will face increasing challenges in authenticating digital evidence. The courts may need to rely on digital forensics experts and new technical standards to verify the integrity of recordings and images.
- **Weaponisation of Misinformation:** Deepfakes can be used to blackmail, defame, or manipulate public opinion, potentially influencing the outcome of high-profile cases or even inciting violence.
- **Delay and Complexity:** The need to scrutinise digital evidence more closely will likely increase the length and complexity of trials, as parties challenge the authenticity of recordings and demand expert analysis.

SAFEGUARDING THE INTEGRITY OF EVIDENCE

To address these challenges, the Nigerian legal system must:

- **Update Legal Frameworks:** Amend the Evidence Act and related rules to specifically address AI-generated evidence and deepfakes, including clear standards for admissibility and authentication.
- **Invest in Capacity Building:** Train judges, lawyers, and law enforcement in digital literacy, forensic analysis, and the detection of manipulated media.
- **Promote Collaboration:** Work with technologists, forensic experts, and international partners to develop best practices and stay ahead of emerging threats.
- **Public Awareness:** Educate the public about the dangers of deepfakes and the importance of verifying information before accepting it as truth.

In this new era, the law of evidence in Nigeria must evolve to meet the challenges posed by AI and deepfakes. The integrity of our judicial process—and the very possibility of justice—depends on our ability to adapt, to question, and to ensure that truth is not lost in a sea of digital deception.

PRACTICAL STEPS FOR NIGERIAN LAWYERS AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION

How, then, can Nigerian lawyers and the legal profession maximise the positive impacts of AI while minimising its destructive possibilities? Allow me to suggest some practical steps:

Upskilling and Digital Literacy

Lawyers must embrace lifelong learning and invest in digital literacy. This includes:

- Attending workshops, seminars, and online courses on legal technology and AI.
- Learning to use AI-powered research tools, document automation platforms, and case management systems.
- Every Law practice MUST have an AI Champion who will lead discussions, policies, training strategy and stakeholder management as it relates to all things AI.
- Staying informed about technological developments and their implications for legal practice.

The Nigerian Bar Association can play a pivotal role by organising training programs and providing resources for members.

TOP TWELVE BENEFICIAL OUTCOMES OF AI TO LAWYERS AND LAW FIRMS

1. EFFICIENCY & SPEED

AI greatly reduces the time required for repetitive or labour-intensive tasks (e.g., document review, legal research, due diligence), allowing lawyers to produce more in less time.

2. ACCURACY & CONSISTENCY

By drawing on large datasets and rules-based processes, AI reduces human error and ensures consistency across documents and opinions.

3. DEPTH & BREADTH OF INSIGHT

AI enables lawyers to analyse large volumes of information and identify patterns and precedents that would be impossible (or extremely time-consuming) for a human to uncover manually.

4. COST REDUCTION

Greater efficiency translates into lower operating costs and allows legal services to be delivered at a lower cost to clients.

5. PREDICTIVE & ANALYTICAL CAPABILITY

AI can generate predictive insights (litigation outcomes, case trends, **judge tendencies**, etc.) to assist lawyers in strategy formulation and risk assessment.

6. AUTOMATION OF ROUTINE WORK

Tasks such as contract drafting, compliance checks, standard form agreements, case summarisation and discovery can be partially or fully automated.

7. ACCESS TO JUSTICE

AI-powered tools (chatbots, self-help platforms, document generators) expand legal support to individuals and small businesses who cannot afford traditional legal services.

8. PERSONALISATION OF LEGAL SERVICES

AI allows the tailoring of advice, clause libraries and legal products to the specific needs of individual clients or sectors.

9. ENHANCED DECISION SUPPORT

Lawyers can rely on AI to provide data-driven recommendations and scenario analyses when making legal judgments or advising clients.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT & COMPLIANCE

Real-time monitoring, compliance analytics and automated alerts help firms and in-house legal departments identify and mitigate legal and regulatory risks more effectively.

11. SCALABILITY

AI can make a one-man law firm look like a big firm of ten lawyers. With AI tools doing many things a physical lawyer would have done, a small law firm can punch above its weight easily and without stress.

12. INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH

AI enables lawyers who deal with international cases to quickly translate documents and obtain a detailed analysis of them within the context of international jurisdictions. AI gives quick intelligence of the legal landscapes of other countries and reduces the knowledge gap tremendously.

MINIMISING THE DESTRUCTIVE POSSIBILITIES OF AI

While the benefits of AI are significant, we must also be vigilant in addressing its risks.

Addressing Bias, Transparency, and Accountability

One of the most significant risks of AI in the legal sector is the potential for bias. AI systems learn from data, and if that data reflects historical prejudices or systemic inequalities, the AI can perpetuate or even amplify those biases. For example, if an AI tool used for bail or sentencing recommendations is trained on data from a justice system with a history of discrimination, it may unfairly disadvantage certain groups.

To address this, Nigerian lawyers and policymakers must:

- **Demand Transparency:** Insist that AI vendors and developers provide clear explanations of how their systems work, what data they use, and how decisions are made. “Black box” AI—where the decision-making process is opaque—should be avoided in legal contexts.
- **Promote Explainable AI:** Support the development and adoption of AI systems that can provide understandable reasons for their outputs. This is essential for accountability and for building trust in AI-assisted legal processes.
- **Regular Auditing:** Establish protocols for regular auditing of AI systems to detect and correct bias. This should include independent oversight and the involvement of diverse stakeholders, including civil society and affected communities.
- **Accountability Mechanisms:** Clearly define who is responsible when AI systems make errors or cause harm. This includes contractual provisions with technology providers, professional standards for lawyers, and regulatory oversight.

Data Protection and Cybersecurity

AI systems in the legal sector handle sensitive client information, court records, and personal data. A breach of this data can have severe consequences for clients, lawyers, and the integrity of the justice system.

To minimise these risks:

- **Implement Robust Security Measures:** Use encryption, secure access controls, and regular security audits to protect data.
- **Comply with Data Protection Laws:** Adhere to Nigeria's Data Protection Regulation (NDPR) and any future legislation on data privacy.
- **Educate Staff and Clients:** Train all staff on cybersecurity best practices and inform clients about how their data is protected.

Human Oversight and the Irreplaceable Role of Lawyers

No matter how advanced AI becomes, it cannot replace the ethical judgment, empathy, and contextual understanding of a human lawyer or judge. AI should be seen as a tool to augment human capabilities, not as a substitute for professional responsibility.

- **Maintain Human Oversight:** Always review and validate AI-generated outputs before relying on them in legal advice, court submissions, or judicial decisions.
- **Preserve Professional Judgment:** Use AI to inform, not dictate, legal strategies and decisions.
- **Foster a Culture of Ethical Reflection:** Encourage ongoing discussion within the profession about the ethical implications of AI and the boundaries of its use.

CALL TO ACTION

The future of Nigeria's legal landscape will be determined by the choices we make today. I urge every stakeholder—lawyers, judges, the Bar Association, government, and the wider society—to act decisively and collaboratively.

FOR THE NIGERIAN BAR ASSOCIATION

- **Champion Digital Literacy:** Lead the way in providing training, resources, and support for lawyers to develop digital and AI skills.
- **Promote the working group** focused on AI matters at the national and chapter levels.
- **Develop Ethical Guidelines:** Draft and promote clear ethical standards for the use of AI in legal practice, including issues of bias, transparency, and client protection.
- **Advocate for Regulatory Reform:** Engage with government, the National Assembly and other regulators to shape laws and policies that foster innovation while safeguarding rights.

FOR THE GOVERNMENT (Including NASS)

- **Invest in Infrastructure:** Prioritise investment in digital infrastructure—reliable electricity, internet access, and technology for courts and law offices.
- **Enact Comprehensive Legislation:** Develop a legal framework for AI that addresses data protection, accountability, and the ethical use of AI in the justice system. New laws should be drafted to keep the nation in touch with modern AI digital realities.
- **Set up a committee:** A Presidential Commission on AI should be established that will advise the government in a proactive way on how to respond to the new AI-led landscape across all sectors, not just the legal profession.
- **Support Research and Innovation:** Fund research into legal technology and support public-private partnerships to drive the development of AI tools tailored to Nigeria's needs.

FOR THE JUDICIARY

- **Embrace Technology:** Adopt AI and digital tools to improve court administration, reduce backlogs, and enhance access to justice.
- **Develop Judicial Guidelines:** Establish clear protocols for the use of AI in court processes, ensuring that human judges retain ultimate authority and responsibility.
- **Provide Immediate and Ongoing Training:** Ensure that judges and court staff receive ongoing training in digital literacy and the ethical use of AI. Make AI training a compulsory annual training for ALL judges.

FOR INDIVIDUAL LAWYERS

- **Embrace Lifelong Learning:** Continuously update your skills in technology and AI to remain relevant and effective.
- **Understand the three levels of AI knowledge competence:** Basic Knowledge, Operational Knowledge and Practitioner Knowledge. Law Firms should make sure ALL their lawyers are trained to a Basic level as a minimum. IPSPR can help provide all the training required.
- **Appoint an AI Champion:** Every Legal Firm should appoint a partner-level individual as an AI champion for the practice. This will be the person acting as AI evangelist within the firm and promoting training and knowledge sharing.
- **Experiment Responsibly:** Integrate AI tools into your practice but always prioritise the interests of your clients and the integrity of the profession.
- **Defend the Rule of Law:** Be vigilant in challenging the misuse of AI and advocating for justice, fairness, and human rights. Also, be on the lookout for AI-created evidence being presented as Fact by mischievous

clients and colleagues. You will not be able to identify deep fakes if you are unaware of developments in the AI space.

EXAMPLES OF REAL-LIFE ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE DANGER OF UNCONTROLLED AI

1. COMPAS AND ALGORITHMIC BIAS IN US SENTENCING

In the United States, several courts have used an AI tool called **COMPAS** (Correctional Offender Management Profiling for Alternative Sanctions) to help judges assess the risk that a defendant will reoffend. The intention was to bring objectivity and data-driven analysis to bail and sentencing decisions.

However, a 2016 investigation by ProPublica revealed that COMPAS was **biased against Black defendants**. The algorithm was more likely to falsely label Black defendants as high risk and white defendants as low risk, even when controlling for prior offences and other factors. Judges, trusting the “neutrality” of the AI, sometimes followed these recommendations, leading to unfair outcomes and undermining public trust in the justice system.

This case demonstrates how AI, if not carefully designed and monitored, can **amplify existing social biases** and result in discriminatory legal outcomes— often without transparency or recourse for those affected.

2. LAWYERS FILING FAKE CASES GENERATED BY AI (MATA V. AVIANCA).

In 2023, attorneys for a plaintiff suing Avianca Airlines submitted a brief that cited six non-existent cases produced by ChatGPT; the judge called it an “unprecedented circumstance” and sanctioned the lawyers. This shows the risk of unverified AI outputs contaminating the record, wasting court resources, and exposing clients and counsel to sanctions and reputational harm when basic verification and supervision are skipped.

Also, in June 2025, the UK High Court publicly warned lawyers after multiple filings cited AI-invented cases—underscoring that this isn’t hypothetical and isn’t confined to one jurisdiction.)

3. JUDGE OPENLY RELIED ON CHATGPT IN A RULING → TRANSPARENCY AND DUE-PROCESS CONCERNS

In Cartagena, Colombia (2023), Judge Juan Manuel Padilla said he used ChatGPT to help draft a ruling in a child’s medical-rights case, even reproducing chatbot answers in the judgment. Scholars flagged the risks:

opacity about sources, potential inaccuracies, and the blurring of who is actually “reasoning” in the decision.

Takeaway: If judges lean on AI, courts need public disclosure, rigorous verification, and clear limits so parties can challenge errors that may have influenced the outcome.

These examples **are not hypothetical**—they are real, and their consequences are profound. They demonstrate that **AI can introduce new forms of bias, deception, and injustice into legal proceedings** if not properly regulated and understood. The legal profession in Nigeria must act proactively to ensure that technology serves justice, not undermines it.

IN CONCLUSION

Distinguished colleagues, the legal profession in Nigeria stands at a crossroads. Disruptive artificial intelligence is not a distant threat or a passing trend—it is a present reality that is reshaping the way we practice law, deliver justice, and uphold the rule of law. The choices we make today will determine whether AI becomes a force for good—expanding access to justice, enhancing efficiency, and strengthening the rule of law—or a source of new risks and inequalities. We must approach this challenge with wisdom, courage, and a steadfast commitment to justice.

Let us seize this moment to lead, to innovate, and to ensure that technology serves the cause of justice in Nigeria. Let us work together—lawyers, judges, policymakers, and citizens—to build a legal system that is not only fit for the 21st century but also true to our highest ideals.

Thank you for your attention.