Insurance firm signs up academics to predict case outcomes

By Michael Cross | 13 February 2018

nsurance and commercial specialist BLM has become the latest law firm to team up with academics to find ways of exploiting so-called artificial intelligence (AI). Under the agreement with the London School of Economics and Political Science, a team led by three academic experts in data analytics and machine learning will work with the firm on ways to manage litigation risk.

Andrew Dunkley, BLM

Source: BLM

According to an announcement today, the venture will build on the firm's existing work by Andrew Dunkley, its head of analytics since 2016. 'The team will develop prediction models to guide BLM's advice to its clients, as well as more sophisticated approaches to value litigation risk, improve decision-making and better manage portfolios of litigation risk,' the announcement states.

The three LSE professors engaged with the BLM research are: Henry Wynn, chair of the university's Centre for the Analysis of Time Series; Pauline Barrieu, dean of LSE's Statistics Department and principal examiner for the Institute of Actuaries AND Milan Vojnovic, chair in data science and expert on machine learning.

The project will aim to create advances in relation to both volume litigation and to high value complex claims. This will include exploring AI and statistical predictive models for valuing disputes and predicting outcomes, predicting cost overruns and case length and managing litigation at a portfolio level, the firm said.

The announcement stresses the intention to develop practical rather than academic breakthroughs. 'There is a strong technology and AI component to this project, but we think combining this with decision science and actuarial expertise will lead to even more exciting developments in litigation risk management,' Dunkley said.

Wynn said that the collaboration seeks to explore 'greater predictability of outcomes to try and determine the optimal strategy for litigation'. Several academic groups are already working on case-prediction systems. Researchers at Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago made headlines last year by announcing that an algorithm had correctly predicted 70.2% of 28,000 US Supreme Court decisions from 1816 until 2015.

BLM is the latest in a series of firms to team up with academic AI experts. In January 2015 Riverview Law announced a partnership with the University of Liverpool and Kennedy's last year began a two-year project with Manchester University on detecting insurance fraud.