Forthcoming in the *Australian Law Journal*.
Please cite only to final published version.

'A MERE LEGAL MACHINE IS A SOCIAL DANGER': AI, LEGAL EDUCATION, AND CHANGING EXPECTATIONS OF LAWYERS

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Drawing on Karl Llewellyn's famous 1929 lectures to law students at Columbia University, this article, delivered as a talk to the Anglo-Australasian Lawyers Society (Australian Chapter) in July 2026, examines what the growing ubiquity of generative and agentic AI demands of legal education and the legal profession today. It argues that law must be studied comparatively, immersively, and feelingly: through engagement with difference across legal and non-legal systems; through experiential learning that cultivates what Llewellyn called 'hunching power'; and through regular encounters with the weight of responsibility that lawyers bear for ensuring the law remains 'worth having'. The article connects these pedagogical imperatives to three shifts in societal expectations of practising lawyers: rising client and workplace demands; growing matter complexity; and an increasing need for creative institutional and legal design.

INTRODUCTION

In a series of lectures delivered at Columbia Law School in New York in 1929, published the following year as *The Bramble Bush: On Our Law and its Study*,[1] Karl Nickerson Llewellyn, a key figure of the American Legal Realist movement, famously addressed various cohorts of law students: students about to embark on their studies; at different intervals in their degrees; or about to graduate. Llewellyn took up a series of questions that he imagined students at these various stages would have, among them 'how does the study of the law … bear upon the work that you will do and the life that you will leave when you leave this school',[2] as well as the question '[w]hat is the part [the lawyer] plays in this society?'.[3]

Llewellyn delivered those lectures at a time of unprecedented uncertainty for law students, law graduates, and the legal profession, in the United States ('US') and globally. The prosperous, jazz-scored Roaring Twenties were giving way to the cataclysmic Wall Street Crash of October 1929.[4] Meanwhile, geopolitical shifts elsewhere brought uneasy ructions and reordering. Under

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[1] Karl Nickerson Llewellyn, *The Bramble Bush: On Our Law and its Study* (Oceania Publications, 1951, first published in 1930).

[2] Ibid 11.

[3] Ibid 141.

[4] John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash 1929* (Houghton Mifflin, 50th anniversary ed, 1979, first published in 1954).

the leadership of Joseph Goebbels, 1929 marked the first time the Nazis managed to win seats in the Berlin City Council elections.[5] In 1929, the Indian National Congress resolved that its objective would no longer be Dominion Status within the British Commonwealth, but rather *purna swaraj*, or complete independence.[6] The Soviet Union had become increasingly isolated by that year.[7] And Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine had erupted into violence.[8]

Technological developments around that time also heralded radical transformations in human relations. Colour television was demonstrated for the first time in 1928.[9] In that same year, biologist Makoto Nishimura built *Gakutensoku*, the first functional android.[10] A few years earlier, Czech writer Karel Čapek had coined the word 'robot' in his play *Rossum's Universal Robots*,[11] laying the cultural foundation for the idea of constructing and relating to artificial people. Around this time, physicist Robert Van de Graaff developed the Van de Graaff generator,[12] creating high-voltage electricity later used to power early particle accelerators and digital equipment. Almost every one of the US's largest companies of the 1920s owed something to electrification. Some of the largest of those never survived the October 1929 crash.

There is, of course, a limit to these historical parallels and a great deal of selectivity in the events just highlighted. Nevertheless, one can imagine that Llewellyn felt himself, his students, and his professional colleagues on shifting sands as he spoke in 1929, in a way not entirely dissimilar to our current experience in law schools and the legal profession in Australia. That is without even mentioning the revolution in jurisprudence of which Llewellyn was part

[5] Anders G Kjøstvedt, 'The Dynamics of Mobilisation: The Nazi Movement in Weimar Berlin' (2013) 14(3) *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 338, 351.
[6] DA Low, 'Vortex Debate: The Purna Swaraj Decision 1929' in DA Low (ed), *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The Imprint of Ambiguity 1929–1942* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) 41.
[7] Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation: Border Controls in the Soviet Union and its Successor States, 1917–1993* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998) 51-2.
[8] Yehoshua Porath, *The Emergence of the Palestinian-Arab National Movement, 1918–1929* (Routledge, 2015), 266-71.
[9] Edward W Herold, 'A History of Colour Television Displays' (1976) 64(9) *Proceedings of the IEEE* 1331, 1331.
[10] Mateja Kovacic, 'The First Symbiotic Multispecies Robot: Gakutensoku's Symbiotic Cosmos' (2025) 41(2) *History and Technology* 158, 161-2.
[11] Karel Čapek, *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* (Ivan Klíma Introduction, Penguin Classics, 2004, first published 1920).
[12] FA Furfari, 'A History of the Van de Graaff Generator' (2005) 11(2) *IEEE Industry Applications Magazine* 10, 10. See also RJ Van de Graaff, Karl T Compton and LC Van Atta, 'The Electrostatic Production of High Voltage for Nuclear Investigations' (1933) 43(3) *The Physical Review* 149.

between the late 19th century and early 1940s that left a mark across the common law world still discernible today.[13]

When speaking of shifting sands, I have in mind the growing ubiquity of generative AI, agentic AI, and digital workflow automation among law students and legal practitioners. I am thinking, also, of the fundamental challenges that this growing ubiquity poses to a wide range of legal institutions, including law schools. According to a Thomson Reuters survey from earlier in 2026, almost six in 10 law students use generative AI several times per week for academic work.[14] This is broadly in line with the findings from surveys within Sydney Law School indicating that 45% of students are using generative AI in their legal studies weekly or more often, while more than 60% report using it in their studies occasionally.[15] In this context, the questions addressed by Llewellyn about legal education, legal work, and the role of law in society are as timely and pressing as ever.

This article takes up Llewellyn's questions afresh; that is, it asks 'how does the study of the law … bear upon the work that [law graduates] will do and the life that [they] will lead when [they] leave [university]'? It argues that the growing ubiquity of generative and agentic AI in legal work and legal education necessitates a fundamental reappraisal of how law is studied and what is expected of those who practise it. It advances three claims about the imperatives to which legal pedagogy must now respond; law must be studied comparatively, immersively, and feelingly, as explained below. These pedagogical imperatives are connected to three corresponding shifts in societal expectations of Australian lawyers: rising demands from clients and legal workplaces; growing multidisciplinary complexity in legal practice; and an increasing need for creative institutional and legal design that extends beyond the reach of legacy data and prior practice. The article draws throughout on Llewellyn's *The Bramble Bush* as both a point of departure and a mark of what must endure in the formation and capabilities of lawyers amid technological upheaval.

[13] William W Fisher III, Morton J Horwitz and Thomas A Reed (eds), *American Legal Realism* (Oxford University Press, 1993).
[14] Thomson Reuters Institute, *2026 Law Student Pulse Survey: How Law Students Understand AI Better than their Institutions* (Report, Thomson Reuters, May 2026) <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2026/05/Law-Student-Pulse-Survey-2026.pdf>.
[15] Sydney Law School, *Student AI Survey* (Report, University of Sydney, May 2026, on file with the author). These findings are based on the responses of 192 participants representing around 6% of students enrolled.

WHAT SHOULD LEGAL EDUCATION BECOME?

Before considering how expectations of Australian lawyers may be changing, let us first examine contemporary challenges facing Australian law students and legal educators and how to deal with them. This section offers a brief, high-level argument regarding what is it that law students need to be learning now, or rather *how* they should be learning, if they are to meet changing expectations of the lawyers that some of them may become, discussed in the next section.

The 'how' question is just as essential as the 'what' question for reasons that Llewellyn anticipated in 1929. In view of 'the nature of our system of multiple jurisdictions, the accidental constellation of our statutes, the inductive concrete method of our case-materials', Llewellyn cautioned, it would be in his words 'hopeless' to approach the learning of law as a matter of imbibing information.[16] Rather, he explained, information can only ever be 'a *vehicle* for study'.[17] 'Without the information, no understanding', Llewellyn continued. 'Therefore the information must be insisted on. *But it does not* from the angle of professional use have peculiar value in itself'.[18] This is worth re-emphasising given the incredible allure of AI, backed by large language models, putting vast swathes of information at law students' fingertips, in increasingly cogent and compelling forms. Needless to say, access to this information alone does not hold any pedagogical value at all. Putting legal information at a person's fingertips does not a lawyer make.

As this section will elaborate, three ways of studying law are crucial at this time. First, it is imperative to study law comparatively or in dynamic relation to other systems and forms of knowledge and sense-making, including non-linguistic modes, among them computational and machine learning logics. Second, having regard to the distance that the mediations of technology are inserting into so many societal interactions, including in educational settings, law must be studied immersively. It is vital that students study the workings of law and legal institutions through the exercise of judgement in actual human encounters. Third, it is imperative to avail students of opportunities and provocations to study law feelingly. That implies studying in a way that builds appreciation of the complexity and frailty of humans and other living beings, and of human-made institutions, enabling students to experience the weight of responsibility for making the law 'worth having', without its value or virtue being presumed.

[16] Llewellyn (n 1) 93.
[17] Ibid (emphasis in original).
[18] Ibid (emphasis in original).

Each of these contentions connects to an argument about changing demands now placed on lawyers.

The Law is Not (Just) the Law

To elaborate the first of these contentions, as to the value of comparative study, it is critical to clarify that comparativism ought not to be understood solely by reference to the conventions and methods of comparative law scholarship and teaching. The importance of law students studying comparatively does not just entail students studying Thai Law alongside Australian Law, for example, although that is certainly a dimension of comparative study of enormous and ongoing value in learning law. Comparative study also involves historical comparison so that law students understand that things have not always been as they appear to be now, institutionally and legally, and that they will be otherwise again. Comparison among different peoples' experiences of the law and legal institutions, and differences in how legal logic manifests across various fields of law, are also tremendously important. This includes paying attention to differences in how, for example, a corporate lawyer and an administrative lawyer might approach a given scenario or question. Finally, comparativism encompasses the study of law in dynamic relation to non-legal epistemes, including computational and machine learning logics – not to approximate the learning of a computer science student, but to be able to navigate discerningly the ever-more-apparent entanglement of the digital and analogue in legal work and beyond.

More so now than perhaps ever before, law students need to learn that the law is not the law is not the law. Such coherence, autonomy, and timelessness as the language or the profession of law exhibits are forever under construction. What we take to be the law, presupposed by the 'rule of law', or bound up in the nature of legal work, are always being configured, and expressed in different relational, institutional and infrastructural forms, and will be *re*configured again and again.

Karl Llewellyn captured this when he cautioned the students of 1929 against subscribing to 'the snobbery of existing institutions'. 'It is not enough to study legal institutions as they stand', Llewellyn observed. '[T]o study these law-things in their present shape and only in their present shape is almost inevitably to come to take them for granted' as things that 'require no criticism'.

'Perspective comes only through the perception of difference', he went on. 'To perceive difference differences must be presented'.[19]

Because of the growing ubiquity of digital workflow automation and generative AI in legal work, the differences with which law students must be confronted also include differences between analogue, human logics of legal reasoning, and digital, probabilistic, symbolic, and spatial logics characteristic of the transformer architectures underpinning prevailing large language models and generative AI.[20] Law students need to understand that their AI tool of choice is not 'thinking' or 'reading' when the interface suggests that is what it is doing. More than that, they need to be able to appreciate what is at stake in deciding to subject a particular question or procedure to analysis using neural networks embedded in mostly closed-weight models, as opposed to analysis through iterative reading, thinking, and dialogue in one or more human languages.[21] They need to be able to recognise and make thoughtful, informed use of the potency and the imperfection of *both* these modes and understand how, where, and with what implications they are becoming increasingly enmeshed.

So, law must be studied through comparative engagement with difference if law graduates are to meet changing expectations of lawyers and the law. Remaining, for the time being, with law students, let us now turn to the second of the arguments foreshadowed above: the importance of immersive learning.

Building Hunching Power

With respect to the value of immersive learning of the law, we can draw insight, once again, from Llewellyn. 'It is not easy', Llewellyn remarked, 'to turn human beings into lawyers'.[22] He continued: 'Neither is it safe. For a mere legal machine is a social danger. Indeed, a mere

[19] Llewellyn (n 1) 102.
[20] Ali Reza Sajun, Imran Zualkernan and Donthi Sankalpa, 'A Historical Survey of Advances in Transformer Architectures' (2024) 14(10) *Applied Sciences* 4316. Transformer architectures signify a type of artificial intelligence model that analyses relationships between words (or other 'tokenised' pieces of information) by considering them together rather than one at a time. Their defining feature is an attention mechanism allowing the model to determine and weight which parts of the input are most relevant to other parts when generating an output. This enables transformers to capture context and long-range relationships more effectively than earlier AI systems which operated sequentially, affording the foundation of contemporary large language models and generative AI.
[21] Open-weight models make their trained model parameters ('weights') available for others to download, inspect, and run, whereas closed-weight models keep those parameters proprietary and provide access only through the developer's hosted (subscription) service or application programming interface.
[22] Llewellyn (n 1) 101.

legal machine is not even a good lawyer. It lacks insight and judgment. It lacks the power to draw into hunching that body of intangibles that lie in social experience'.[23]

Hunching power is what Llewellyn argued law school is mainly designed to cultivate in students: that is, sound, intuitive judgment borne of having imbibed, individually and collectively, 'that body of intangibles that lie in social experience'.[24] As Llewellyn explained: 'Good hunching-power is a resultant of good sense, imagination, and *much* knowledge'.[25] And 'hunching … [is] vital to [legal] practice'.[26]

To develop this hunching power, Llewellyn suggested, students must 'pickle [them]selves in law'[27] by being encouraged to '[e]at law, talk law, think law, drink law, babble of law' and engage in 'cooperative thinking and practice in consultation' with faculty and fellow students.[28] Because Llewellyn was preoccupied with dispute resolution, he was especially interested in hunching power about what the courts would do in a particular instance. Yet he did not stop there. As well as being able to predict what the courts will do, Llewellyn wrote, a law student needs to learn how to discern 'the life of the community, the needs and practices of [their] client … in a word, the *working situation* which [they are] called upon to shape *as well as* the law with reference to which [they are] called upon to shape it'.[29] This is why, Llewellyn argued, law students needed to engage with the social sciences and a whole range of 'non-legal' material.[30] Llewellyn invited the students of 1929 into 'a study of law which deals not with words but with practice … with living fact'.[31]

Llewellyn argued persuasively that law students and graduates only gain hunching power when they have been exposed to enough scenarios, enough clients (both real and imagined), enough lived, worked examples of creative problem-solving, both successful and unsuccessful, to be able to discern whether a particular legal argument has legs, or which lines of inquiry might hold greatest promise in a given setting. This requires much more than reading cases, or time spent listening to lectures. It requires a great variety of doing.

[23] Ibid.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid 98 (emphasis in original).
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid 96.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid 23 (emphasis in original).
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid 24.

Law clinics and external placements present indispensable opportunities for law students to learn, and build hunching power, by doing. Yet the kinds of doing that hold value for these purposes are not limited to clinical teaching or work-integrated learning, nor even to mooting or simulation. There are any number of ways in which law students may be invited to try out arguments, to exercise judgement, to explore possibilities, and to wrestle with the difficulties of decision and the challenge of advising others in all sorts of human contexts. It is possible to do so, for instance, by law students being invited to explain and justify their choice of learning tools in class, and to have meaningful input into how their law school is run.

Immersive learning entails exactly the kind of learning that law students' recourse to generative AI can undermine. That is because AI interfaces tend to focus students' attention on the evaluation, verification, and optimisation of outputs rather than the process of thrashing through intellectual undergrowth, negotiating disagreement, trying out ideas, and finding a way through. Educational literature on 'desirable difficulties' and 'productive failure' suggests that learners achieve deeper and more durable understanding, and acquire greater ability to adapt and transfer knowledge, when they actively wrestle with problems, even unsuccessfully, before having their efforts assessed.[32] The widespread use of generative AI may diminish opportunities for this kind of productive cognitive struggle.

This undermining cannot be addressed by mandating law students' withdrawal or abstention from AI, even if that were practically possible to police (which it is not). AI is already too embedded in social, economic, and legal life for that to be a responsible option. Anyone using conference call technology such as Zoom, or shopping at a big box retailer or supermarket chain, or driving on Sydney roads, is engaging at some level with AI. People's relationships, perceptions, and options in these settings and countless others – including their legal relationships and options – are being shaped by AI. Some students and staff across law schools are committed to minimising their use of generative AI and their views merit respect. Nevertheless, as AI becomes ever more systemically and infrastructurally embedded in Australian life, and across many other national and international contexts, that is an increasingly difficult thing to do.

The immersive learning experiences into which law students need to be invited today must surface the background conditioning work that AI and digital technology are doing and open

[32] Manu Kapur, 'Productive Failure' (2008) 26(3) *Cognition and Instruction* 379; Robert A Bjork and Elizabeth L Bjork, 'Desirable Difficulties in Theory and Practice' (2020) 9(4) *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition* 475.

these to analysis, deliberation, and debate. Given the smoothing and soothing tech-mediated environments in which so many people are living and learning, we need to create as many opportunities as possible for students to grapple with friction, exercise judgement, and experience the human consequences of their judgements. And these are experiences that students cannot have in isolation; they demand dialogue and collaboration. This goes to everything from how we design group work in the classroom to how we engage students in law school governance and the co-design of law school environments, both physical and virtual.

This concludes this article's second argument about how law must be studied to meet the changing expectations of lawyers: through inviting students into attentive, frictive immersion in the dilemmas arising from the prevailing conditions of their living and learning. Law student learning must be immersive not just in the ways that Llewellyn suggested, but also by inviting engagement with the ambient normativity of AI and the rampant unevenness of its effects.

Feeling the Burden of Making the Law Worth Having

To meet the changing expectations of lawyers, law must also be studied feelingly, or in ways that invite full-bodied human investment. To underscore the point, let us go back to a quote from Llewellyn offered earlier: 'a mere legal machine is a social danger'.[33] Llewellyn acknowledged that learning to think like a lawyer entails 'lop[ping] off [a student's] common sense', 'knock[ing] [their] ethics into temporary anesthesia', and dispensing with some of their 'sense of justice' along with propensities for 'woozy thinking'.[34] Yet Llewellyn nonetheless insisted that one could only acquire the insight and judgment characteristic of good lawyering by holding on to the very human instincts that legal education tends to ask students to unlearn.

To be clear, to talk of studying the law feelingly is not to suggest that law students should be invited into rampant emoting, pity or pathos at every turn. To learn law feelingly is to experience whole-heartedly that lawyers' choices have consequences, both intended and unintended. To appreciate this, law students must be afforded opportunities throughout their studies to exercise discretion and, with that, to experience the fallibility of law and legal institutions and to feel the weight of collective responsibility for their continued reinvention.

In Llewellyn's words, '[i]t is the [legal] profession that keeps the law alive. It is the profession that keeps the law from sitting too closely strait-jacketed upon the social body'.[35] This vests

[33] Llewellyn (n 1) 101.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid 147.

lawyers with 'a responsibility that reaches beyond [their] clients, beyond [their] surroundings, that reaches to the future of the people'[36] – indeed, to the future of an overheating, depleting planet. This is a responsibility from which 'there is no escaping':[37] that is 'the burden of making the law worth having – over the long run, and from day to day'.[38] If law schools do anything, they must encourage students to feel this most human of responsibilities regardless of whether law graduates ultimately choose to shoulder those responsibilities explicitly or prefer to try to leave them to others. In other words, law students must feel the burden of trying to ensure that the law is worth having, and to recognise that the worth of our laws and legal institutions cannot be presumed.

Again, this imperative is more pressing than ever in the face of the growing ubiquity of generative and agentic AI. That is because the students enrolled in law schools today are not just faced with questions of whether and how to make use of generative AI in their university studies, nor how the take-up of AI could affect their employment prospects and the kind of careers to which they might aspire. Students face such questions in every domain of their lives: from how they form and conduct romantic relationships; and how and where they seek personal, financial, and health advice; to how they communicate with friends and strangers – indeed, to the maintenance of their very cognitive capabilities. Everything seems in flux to an extent that even students listening to Llewellyn in 1929 might have found disquieting. Under such conditions of heightened uncertainty and plasticity, the choices that today's law graduates make now and into the near future could have enormous repercussions for themselves and others, repercussions that cannot readily be discerned.

With all this to contend with, and with so many tech 'fixes' apparently on offer, it can be difficult for students to grasp exactly why law, legal institutions, legal ideas, and legal qualifications may be worth devoting their energies to. Yet questions of legal design and redesign lie at the heart of so many of the troubling transformations underway around us. Contemporary frontier AI development, like internet and platform development, is conducted on intensely legalised terrain. Frontier AI developers are reengineering or endeavouring to reengineer corporate governance structures, employment relations, notions of intellectual property, and contracting practices, along with many broader social and economic dynamics. Their work is anything but lawless. Frontier AI developers need law to be able to do what they

[36] Ibid 148.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid 150-1.

are attempting to do. So, questions of whose laws, which laws, or what kind of laws will come to dominate are very much in contention at this juncture. To engage with law feelingly is to be attuned to the power dynamics that inform legal or techno-legal change, and to develop the combination of technical, critical, and empathic capabilities required to navigate them.

CHANGING EXPECTATIONS OF LAWYERS

What, then, of how expectations of lawyers are changing? What are the shifting societal demands that law graduates educated comparatively, immersively, and feelingly may be better equipped to meet than law graduates educated narrowly, remotely, and indifferently? Again, three points can be made about shifts in prevailing expectations of Australian lawyers. Employer and client expectations may be on the rise. Legal problems in many settings are becoming more complex. Legacy approaches to many prevailing and emergent challenges appear increasingly anachronistic.

Expecting More of Lawyers, For Less

Today's law graduates face the prospect of being expected to exercise independent judgment sooner after graduation with less on-the-job training. In many legal workplaces, junior lawyers have traditionally been given time to observe and learn through working closely with more senior lawyers, receiving feedback in the form of document mark-ups and on-the-job explanation. However, with growing recourse to general-purpose AI and law-specific AI to handle preliminary research, drafting, and document review, time and space dedicated to junior lawyer training risk becoming compressed. Mid-level responsibilities and expectations of relatively high-level analytical and strategic capability may be foisted onto early-career lawyers as traditional, high-volume 'training' workflows get automated. In some contexts, junior lawyers may no longer be given much chance to build up capacities for judgement over time.[39] To the extent that this is the case, legal educators now bear the significant burden of trying to pre-empt or backfill for this erosion of on-the-job training.

Clients' expectations are rising too. Some are bringing work in-house, expecting in-house legal teams to do more with the aid of AI. Some are requiring work to be delivered in shorter time frames, again because of the anticipated accelerant of AI, raising the prospect of lawyers' billing practices changing and margins tightening, or at least generating expectations (and

[39] Lachlan Robb et al, 'It's the End of the World as We Know It: Generative Artificial Intelligence and the Changing Landscape of Legal Practice and Education' (2025) 48(4) *UNSW Law Journal* 1129, 1145-7.

fears) of such change.[40] In the face of these shifts and the rising cost of maintaining access to frontier AI models, it may become harder to justify billing or being billed for time spent training junior lawyers. Senior lawyers equipped with the 'hunching power' borne of many years of experience may be best positioned to have their productivity augmented by use of AI. Effective use of AI supplying rapid analytical assistance requires contextual interpretation and astute evaluative capability, suggesting that accumulated experience may be an essential complement to the technology.[41] Meanwhile, junior lawyers' opportunities to build up that accumulated experience and associated hunching power, and then use it to employ AI discerningly, may be declining.

Expectations of law are rising also. Equipped with generative AI and a sense of grievance sometimes whipped up on social media, many individuals and communities are finding causes of action where none exist.[42] Fallacious or misplaced notions of legal entitlement may be bolstered by the sycophancy of AI models.[43] Self-described sovereign citizens may expect pseudo-legal arguments to deliver in ways that actual laws and legal institutions cannot. And of course, meritorious claims may be brought forward with the aid of AI too.[44]

All this means that lawyers must become more rather than less adept at navigating complex human (and human-nonhuman) relationships. Hence the importance of students in law schools experiencing the learning of law comparatively, immersively and feelingly, appreciating the weight of responsibility upon them.

Complexity Growth

As expectations of lawyers and legal institutions rise, many areas of legal work are also growing in complexity. Cross-border supply chains now implicate multiple jurisdictions and, in many sectors, regulatory and compliance obligations both 'hard' and 'soft' have expanded over recent decades.[45] At the same time, workforces are, in many settings, becoming more

[40] Ibid 1151-3.
[41] Benjamin Knight, Dmitry Mitrofanov and Serguei Netessine, 'Human-Algorithm Collaboration in Gig Work: The Role of Experience, Skill Level, and Task Complexity' (2026) *Information Systems Research* (advance).
[42] Joe McIntyre, 'Pseudolaw and the Illusion of Legal Meaning' (2025) 50(3) *Alternative Law Journal* 190.
[43] Cody Turner and Nir Eisikovits, 'Programmed to Please: The Moral and Epistemic Harms of AI Sycophancy' (2026) 6 *AI Ethics* 168:1-15.
[44] Colleen V Chien et al, 'How Generative AI Can Help Address the Access to Justice Gap Through the Courts' (2025) *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* (forthcoming).
[45] Nico Krisch, 'Entangled Legalities in the Postnational Space' (2022) 20(1) *International Journal of Constitutional Law* 476-506.

multidisciplinary.[46] Law firms and large legal departments employ project managers and technologists alongside solicitors. Community and public service providers deploy lawyers alongside social workers and health professionals aiming to address social needs holistically. Parties increasingly call upon expert evidence to help untangle the technical and scientific dimensions of many disputes, especially in matters involving structured finance, competition law, class actions, construction disputes, intellectual property litigation, environmental litigation, or when reliance is placed on forensic science. These are among the reasons why it is so valuable to study the law comparatively: to understand how different disciplinary logics, professional responsibilities, and systems of knowledge compare, and appreciate the tensions and misunderstandings that can emerge when they interact.

Call for Creativity

Alongside changing expectations of lawyers, and the growing complexity of many areas of legal work, demands for legally trained professionals to do creative institutional and legal design work are rising as conventional legal institutions and democratic governments come under new or intensified pressures. Many organisations find themselves facing systemic problems that require novel rules, adaptive governance techniques, and newfound approaches rather than traditional one-size-fits-all, set-and-forget legal arrangements. The pace and uncertainty of change are rendering inherited models of episodic, front-loaded lawmaking increasingly anachronistic insofar as those models presuppose that legislators or policymakers can identify the relevant problem or regulatory object up front and settle on a durable solution before implementation, with good confidence as to outcomes.[47] The challenges of climate change, growing inequality, and democratic backsliding render such assumptions increasingly unsafe, often demanding ambitious, multisectoral legal innovations.

Unable to reach beyond the range of legacy data, AI cannot contribute much to this forward-thinking work. Even so, frontier AI developers themselves are experimenting with legal design, advancing new organisational models developed in collaboration with legal scholars.

[46] Christine Parker et al, 'The Ethical Infrastructure of Legal Practice in Larger Law Firms: Values, Policy and Behaviour' (2008) 31(1) *UNSW Law Journal* 158, 159: 'Lawyers in Australia and around the world ... increasingly work in organisations – large law firms, in-house corporate legal departments and government departments and agencies'; Salvatore Caserta, Niclas Haagensen and Mikael Rask Madsen, 'New Professional Spaces and Trajectories: Tracing the Evolution of Legal Professionals – Introduction to Special Issue' (2025) 32(1) *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 1, 3: 'the operational space of legal professionals has evolved beyond the boundaries of conventional legal spaces'.

[47] Deirdre Ahern, 'The New Anticipatory Governance Culture for Innovation: Regulatory Foresight, Regulatory Experimentation and Regulatory Learning' (2025) 26(2) *European Business Organization Law Review* 241.

Anthropic, for instance, co-designed its current corporate structure with Yale Law School's Professor John Morley. It is organised as a Delaware public benefit corporation alongside a Long-Term Benefit Trust, both nominally dedicated to 'the responsible development and maintenance of advanced AI for the long-term benefit of humanity'.[48] This underscores the point made earlier: that the advance of AI is legally enabled and must be engaged with as such.

In all these ways, expectations of law and lawyers are changing in the face of many contributing factors, including the growing ubiquity of AI. Client and community expectations are rising; more complex problems are presented; and demands for creative legal redesign beyond the range of prior thinking and practice are growing. These are all expectations that require human-first capabilities, including capacities for imaginative, engaged, and thoughtful lawyering – the very capacities that law students must be educated comparatively, immersively, and feelingly to acquire.

CONCLUSION

In 1929, faced with a world that was fracturing politically and economically, and being reconfigured technologically, Karl Llewellyn spoke of how integral to effective lawyering were 'timing, tact',[49] and a capacity to bring 'half-scared, jealous, captious cross-purposers together'.[50] Llewellyn spoke also of the need to exercise judgement comprised of 'tiny touches of vision and [a] deft hand—informed with guts'.[51] Ninety-seven years later, these human elements are more, not less, important to law and lawyering. Llewellyn spoke also of the need to dispense with the 'silly idea that the sound normal road to such knowledge is "a course"'[52] or a prescribed series of courses. If we approach the teaching and learning of law too narrowly, too vocationally or too parochially, with attention only to servicing the immediate needs of the local practising profession, we risk producing graduates who lack the imagination, adaptability, and resilience that are most needed at this moment.

In the closing pages of *The Bramble Bush*, Karl Llewellyn offered his readers a poem, calling on his audience to '[s]urge from the loins of the elders'.[53] Needless to say, it has not weathered

[48] John Morley, David Berger and Amy Simmerman, 'Anthropic Long-Term Benefit Trust' , *Harvard Law School Forum on Corporate Governance* (Blog Post, 28 October 2023) <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2023/10/28/anthropic-long-term-benefit-trust/>.
[49] Llewellyn (n 1) 153.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid 154.
[53] Ibid 152.

well. Yet before venturing misguidedly into poetry, Llewellyn spoke some words that do bear repeating by way of closing. He said: 'I speak in bitter seriousness ... I speak without expectation, but I speak in hope'.[54] This article is written, likewise, in hope – hope that law students, legal educators, and legal professionals in Australia might meet this dizzying and dicey moment well, not as 'captious cross-purposers', but collaboratively, with 'tiny touches of vision', 'deft hand[s]' and 'guts'.

[54] Ibid 150.