Pioneers and Pathfinders: Dr. Megan Ma
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Steve Poor

Hi, this is Steve Poor and you're listening to Pioneers and Pathfinders.

Today, we revisit one of our most thought-provoking conversations, this time with Dr. Megan Ma. Since she joined us on the podcast, Dr. Ma has co-founded and become the Executive Director of the Stanford Legal Innovation through Frontier Technology Lab—otherwise known as liftlab. With a rich background in political science, economics, health law, and economic law, Dr. Ma brings a truly interdisciplinary lens to the future of legal education and technology. In our conversation, she shares her insights on how we train the next generation of lawyers, why mentorship and thoughtful design matter, and what it means to build a future-ready legal profession. Whether you're a seasoned practitioner or just starting your career, this episode is full of wisdom and perspective on where the law is headed and how we will get there. Let's take a listen.

Our guest this week is a leading thinker on the application of generative AI in the legal profession, Dr. Megan Ma, the associate director of Stanford's Law, Science, and Technology program, as well as the Stanford Center for Legal Informatics that are known as Codex. She also teaches courses in computational law and insurance tech. Dr. Ma has a background in a variety of fields. She majored in political science and economics, has masters degrees in health law and economic law, and earned her PhD in law. Additionally, Dr. Ma is an advisor to the PearX for AI program, and serves as editor-in-chief for the *Cambridge Forum on AI, Law, and Governance*, as the managing editor of the *MIT Computational Law Report*, and as a research affiliate at Singapore Management University in their Centre for Computational Law.

We had a fascinating conversation about Dr. Ma's lifelong interest in linguistics, how empathetic large language models can be for users, how generative AI could change lawyer mentorship and thoughts on the future of technology and the profession. Thanks to Dr. Ma for making the time and each of you for listening.

Megan, thank you so much for making time in your busy schedule to talk to me today.

Dr. Megan Ma

Thank you so much Stephen for the invitation and I'm really pleased to be here.

Steve Poor

I'm delighted to have the opportunity to talk to you. You're one of the leading thinkers in the application of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, into the profession. And I also want to talk about your thoughts on that topic and how we create lawyers and what does it mean to be a lawyer in the world of generative AI. But first, tell us a little bit about your origin story. You got your bachelor's in political science and economics, so

it's not like you were you didn't get in computer science, yet you've become an expert in generative AI. How did that happen?

Dr. Megan Ma

Yeah. So I guess my background, I think at face value, it's political science and economics and in economics actually there's quite a bit of statistics that we have to do. And so some of that technical side maybe came from there. But I have to say even today like I'm probably not a top technical expert out there. But I think I was always drawn to linguistics. So what's not actually featured on in my undergrad is I also kind of worked in the space of politics and I was always fascinated by the science of language. And so I think naturally that was a lead in into kind of down the line, large language models or even before the natural language processing. And I think even as a kid I had taken issue, I think with association of the word and the meaning. And so the kind of, you know, as people say, the sign versus the signified in that type of stuff, that's always what kind of effectively broke my mind at times. I think you know a lot of people are like, why can't you just take the word chair as is to mean a chair? But you know, I was like, well, why is it spelled like that? And it just drove, you know, a lot of my friends and family crazy when I used to kind of just intentionally disassociate words, where I would speak almost my own language just because I was trying to figure out in my own way, why you know, words mean the way that they do. And I think over time like probably my interest in law came from this other fascination I had with language.

Steve Poor

You must have driven your parents crazy. Oh, absolutely. But I can see how you became drawn to the legal profession because words are bread and butter, right? They are. They are what we have to work with.

Dr. Megan Ma

Absolutely. I think when we think about, you know, so much of the work that lawyers are focused on, it's interpretation, whether it's, you know, starting from the finding the right words in drafting, you see a lot of lawyers having their best hips or even figuring out, you know, words that are what they call flags and risks. All of that comes from understanding the parameters around interpretation, and then when things are outside of that, that's where really kind of the juiciness comes from. Trying to figure out, you know, when are apples not oranges or when are apples, oranges, all of those things are areas that, to your point like it is the bread and butter for many lawyers. And I was always kind of. You know, in my PhD I like looked into what people cared about in the language of the law and all we ever hear about is there's this incredible scholar whose name is David Mellinkoff. And he said something hilarious that, you know, law is just a viscous sea of verbiage. And I thought that resonated with me so long. Because, you know, if we were to build technology in any way around it, it's got to focus on this verbiage. It's got to understand why, you know, we say things the way that we do.

Steve Poor

Yeah. So you've been involved in artificial intelligence for a while now. Did it sort of this ChatGPT Big Bang explosion of interest, did that surprise you?

Dr. Megan Ma

I think it surprised me. The reaction that the world had to it. What's amazing to me is the fact that it's actually a combination of two technologies with quite a history. The chat bot that we've known forever and that, you know, even people think about, you know, the scary tales of Clippy when it first came up. Like you could these back or something like that. And then the other side of it is neural Nets. I mean, neural Nets started in, like the '50s, the '40s, basically. There was already signs of the development of neural networks. And this fascination around creating technology that is similar to the brain. And so you know, combination of this technology, that explosive effect is what I thought was fascinating. And it could be because, you know, suddenly technology that's seen on the back end. Became at the forefront because it was so approachable, and I saw this, you know, down the line as a bit of like a double edged sword because people saw the chatbot as almost like a confessional or what I call the fallacy of the Oracle, where you can start interacting with it. It'll give you a responses. And you treat that as some form of truth. And I think that that was always the case where technology kind of had this risk, but more often than. Ever like if something is this approachable and this accessible, that's really what gets people to have this allure around it. But, you know, I think with artificial intelligence and technology, for me, it really started with my interest in the medical space. That's kind of an area that I started in and, you know, in that time. A lot of people cared about AI diagnosis and how you know how we should react to that. And I think at the time I was thinking about, it was like 2017, there was a sudden rise in medical AI where you can use at a consumer facing level this company called Babylon Health. They were telling everyone you know like we have 93% accuracy or something like that when it comes to medical diagnosis. Even for rare diseases and things like that, whereas a Harvard trained, you know, or an Oxford trained physician of 35 years of experience can only get 85% accuracy and you know for the first time we were answering this question, you know is accuracy all that matters when it comes to technology and getting domain expertise? And I think this conversation has sort of come back especially with, you know, hallucination and people thinking like how accurate do these tools have to be. But when it comes down to it, I think it's a trust around technology that keeps kind of popping up and curious ways. To me, I think it boils down to like if I were to get a response from, you know, medical AI diagnosis, how much would I trust that response? I definitely need a second opinion for myself. And you know, if I were to receive this response, you know, how should I be reacting to it, so to speak? And I think, again, this question kind of comes back up like when you think about legal AI.

Steve Poor

Yeah, that's an interesting point. I didn't think about it in terms of the trust, but it's easy. The accessibility of it makes it easy to trust what you're getting out of the AI because it's easy to think of it as a it's so human like that. People let their guard down.

Dr. Megan Ma

I think it's fascinating because there was a study that was out where people were trying to determine whether these machines are more empathetic than a human doctor, and I think they did this experiment where they just did like an ask me anything with doctors and some of the responses were generated by, you know, generative AI and I mean, I think it was ChatGPT and other responses were obviously created or responded by, you know, human doctors. And it turns out that people felt the large language models were more empathetic that they actually preferred responses from these tools, and of course that there's like these natural human factors where, you know a doctor answering it, they're probably like oh, they went on Web MD again. And so, you know, they naturally were led down the path to thinking they have cancer or something like that. This is, you know, ChatGPT, which I think is like highly I think sensitive to maybe the nervousness and because they're sycophantic. So they want to please you, they make you feel welcome and justified in being worried or anxious about something. My mom, she loves to use ChatGPT as a starting point for almost every single question that. She has and I think from her lived experience. She always says that she felt like her family doctors. They started to tell her you are only allowed two questions in this visit with me. Figure out those questions in advance, and for my mom, she's someone that has a laundry list of questions. Anytime she goes to see the doctor. And so I think, like, again, this technology, it's really changing our perception at the end of the day, in what is humanistic.

Steve Poor

Which is both exciting and scary. So it caused you to move from the medical field focus of medical field into the legal profession.

Dr. Megan Ma

So, I was actually in the legal profession, but I was focused on medical law. So the question of medical malpractice, but kind of moving from medical, so, so the medical health law into technology was really owed to a little stint I had done in the Canadian government where I was working on self driving cars or autonomous vehicles. And it was actually kind of this moment where I was really surprised at not the technology itself. The technology itself was exciting for everyone. It was again, the same sort of excitement and fear duality that we're experiencing and seeing with generative AI. But I was most surprised by how. The I was working in the government at the time how everyone else had to understand retrofitting and adapting the technology to existing infrastructure. And what I mean by that is you know, we had this serious working group that was interacting with the California government interestingly, to understand from their perspective how they had to figure out ways to make these cars more amenable to the infrastructure that they had today. And what I mean by that is they put in these little like reflectors that divided, you know lanes so that these cars could see the different lanes better. There was also a change in the traffic light that they updated all the traffic lights so that they were LED lights as opposed to their existing bulbs. And all of these were excellent kind of observations and lessons learned. But from the Canadian side,

the biggest difference is actually something that doesn't seem that important, but we have inclement weather. California enjoys this beautiful weather and nice sunshine that they don't have to face questions of snow of serious rainfall and for us. It's actually a little bit deeper such that if it snows and if it snows to the level that we experience where you know heavy snowfall could be a couple feet, there's a little reflector that is dividing between the lanes that's going to be buried in the snow. No one will see it. And I think the other side of it is, the traffic lights that were retrofitted with LED, they no longer admit a little bit of heat. And actually that's necessary in Canada because when it snows, that bit of heat will melt off the traffic light so that the traffic lights won't collapse at the weight of the snow. So, these changes, if we don't think about how technology actually interacts with the society more broadly, the technology itself can only go so far. And a lot of the society itself just can't figure out ways to have it, you know, be meaningfully adopted.

Steve Poor

That is absolutely fascinating, and it never would have occurred to me to worry about snow for self driving cars and the way you had to worry about it. That's fascinating.

Dr. Megan Ma

And you know, I think about that right now, right? Like I think in the legal profession, we always had, whether it's a privilege or a curse, we never really had to think about technology quite deeply. You know, all the tools that we were handed, the reliance we have, for example on Office 365 and you know, all of the classic incumbent tools, they were just sort of thrusted to us and we made our way around it, right. I think all of you know, the complaints we received all the time about how terrible Microsoft Word is…Well, we've made do and I always think about how the only people keeping WordPerfect alive are lawyers and law firms. And so to me, I was saying that part of what's shocking I think today for the profession is for the first time ever, this technology actually seems to be doing work that we think we've always had ownership over. Obviously there's an expectation. What's generated? You can always hear partner or senior associates say, well, you know, I mean it misses XYZ and whatnot. I think that nuance is because, you know, the models are not trained on our brains. They're trained on the product, not the process. So they've seen thousands of contracts and they're just mimicking. But they're not mimicking the way that lawyers are seeing these issues. And so I think, this technology because it actually lacks the ability to think like a lawyer. And I always say that this is different than thinking like a human because it's missing out this mental process. There's just no way to kind of have that passive use of the technology and very similar to how we have to think about very, you know things that seem very, very small like snow, we actually have to think about how significant this nuance is when we want this technology to work with us. Otherwise, we're always going to be stuck in a paradigm where adoption is either low or when we adopt it, we don't think about the downstream impact. For example, like if these vendors are advertising to you that it's doing associate level work, what is going to happen to our associates? The things that keep me up at night are my law students, they're going to go and enter into a practice where they're not sure what exactly what work they have to do. And I think for me, it's all

about, you know, how does this technology work in collaboration with us. So this notion of human machine collaboration, I think if we don't figure out a way to change our structure, how we train our lawyers, how we enable them to think like lawyers, we're going to kind of run down a path where we might just be traffic lights that collapse and the weight of snow.

Steve Poor

Let's pulling that thread a little bit because I've been struggling with that internally in the firm as well. On one side, there's the training people how to use the technology, how to interact with it, how to how to be the copilot, or how to use it to augment their practice. But it's interesting me the point you made about how do they develop wisdom and experience. Because we talk about, it's going to free people up to do higher level work, it's going to free people up to exercise judgment and wisdom, and those human characteristics that machines can't bring. And I get that, and I buy that. But how we have used these tasks as proxies for the apprenticeship nature of the practice of law for years: giving people time and grade, giving them the belief that they'll develop expertise by looking at thousands of content. That work is now going to be gone or reduced significantly such that it's not a, it always was a proxy for training. It was never really good training to begin with.

Dr. Megan Ma

Right.

Steve Poor

How do we develop the next generation of people who can exercise wisdom and judgment and experience in a world of AI?

Dr. Megan Ma

Yeah, I mean, that's a great question. That's. You know, actually focal point of my research right now is how do we bridge the gap between, I think there's always been a gap between law school and practice where law school, you know, you focus on, you know, the analytical skills, the critical thinking and you think you're taught to think in edge cases and then you get to the law firm. And you're faced with kind of brute force that apprenticeship that you're talking about just by the sheer volume of the same type of work that you're doing. And I'm trying to hit two birds with one stone where not only are you teaching them how to use these tools, but you're teaching them in a way that actually hones their legal skills. And so, what I mean by that is give an example, as we recently built an M&A negotiation simulator, the idea is that you are teaching them negotiation skills. And as well as speaking with a client and when to actually even ask for help from other legal experts. And so we have multiple modules from junior associate to senior associate to partner and all of them are catching what I call “client and industry nuance.” And so for example, in the junior associate, you're getting the groundwork right. You're actually trying to figure out how do I negotiate reps and warranties? How do I kind of work through like corporate structure or how do I work

through you know burnouts and things like that? Senior associate is that's where the curve balls start to happen a little bit and you already have a sensitivity to certain types of issues. And so, for example, at the senior associate level, we throw a curveball say you know the target company is a SaaS company and you notice that there is a cyber security incident that has popped up. How do you then pivot and renegotiate reps and warranties? And then the partner level is trying to capture, you know, when you're actually on partner track, you bring in partners because deals could go south very quickly and you need to figure out how to pivot or your client. Is unexpectedly really unhappy with the situation that is external to the deal and wants to back out. How do you kind of navigate that more gracefully? Those types of things are ones that we want to prime them for, or at least allow even junior associates all the way to partner to preview in advance what their path could look like. And a lot of it is meant to almost distill the experiential knowledge and the brains of our senior lawyers showcasing them: the scars, scar tissue, the war stories that they've seen and be able to kind of build that into an AI version of them. And then you're basically kind of having these office hours anytime and customized learning based off of the experience of other senior lawyers.

Steve Poor

I'm a little speechless at that. That just sounds so awesome. What's been the reaction of the students and the other professors to this use of artificial intelligence to simulate the role previously played theoretically by senior partners or law professors? Do they worry about what it means for their jobs and their role in the profession?

Dr. Megan Ma

Yeah. So that's a great question. I think they welcome it when they realize that the goal is not to remove them from the entire process. The goal in fact is to alleviate some of the actually mental and emotional burden sometimes of knowing that you have to mentor and train the next generation of legal experts. And you know, a lot of professors, for example, they always share that, “I wish I could make my office hours longer, or I wish that when we finish exams or when we asked them to do tests that I could give so much more personalized feedback.” But everyone has their own bandwidth. And it's the same thing for partners. There's a lot of junior associates that are paired with world class lawyers, but they just don't have enough time. And the current sort of model in law firms is that it incentivizes you to continue to hone your own craft, as opposed to kind of enable mentorship. And so sometimes we have. Almost like a sacrificial lamb teaching partner. And then, you know, you have all these other rainmakers in your law firms and some rain makers really are motivated to teach. Other rain makers want to teach, but are unable to teach in a manner that is actually quite clear or well received by juniors. And so a lot of what our goal is, is can I draw out this implicit, tacit, experiential knowledge and be able to capture it in a small model such that you know you're interacting with this AI version of that partner? And as I mentioned before, you know in the Reddit study on language models being more empathetic, these models can be tuned to not only the personality of that partner, but also can simultaneously be used in a way that could share knowledge that is more broadly understandable. And what I mean by that is right now, even today you can figure out ways in which the model

could—if you're a visual learner, for example, you might be able to have the partner, the AI partner showcase an entire universe, a road map of how a deal is done, as opposed to kind of just telling them in a dialogic way. We have kind of so much potential that this technology is able to do purely from a creative lens. And that's why I think customized learning was never before able to, or there was something missing and that missing link right now is generative AI to me. So, not only are you able to capture the personality and the war stories and all of that scar tissue, that is actually wisdom, but you're also able to kind of communicate it to young lawyers and junior associates in a highly dynamic way. And it's not just, you know, open up your scratchpad and start taking notes. It could be like here's, you know, a visual, or here's a table, or here's something that could, like, reveal a lot of this knowledge and present it in a way.

Steve Poor

Do you have plans to commercialize this product? Because it's really interesting.

Dr. Megan Ma

I appreciate that. So the technology that we're building, it is meant to be highly customizable. That's kind of, you know, point number one, we do co-create all the technology with law firms. So we do have sets of law firm partners that spend time and resources and work very closely with us and our kind of base requirement is always we do have one version that is open source. And so, even for our M&A negotiation simulator, we have a version that's a very primitive alpha prototype that we've released openly on hugging face, which is like an open source platform. And for anyone to basically download and build on top of this is because we're researchers and we care about that. The other kind of more fleshed out version of it that we've co-created more seriously with law firms there is kind of this idea that if it's law schools, we might consider licensing it to other law schools so that they can kind of start using it right from the get-go to their own students. But for a law firm perspective, if you co-create with us and if you build with us, then there's versions of it that you can commercialize as a law firm and deploy internally. That's kind of what we think the technology is suited for. We don't really think…If it's at a level of generalizability, it's probably kind of the most basic primitive version that. We think it's better if you build on top of anyway, but if we are customizing it with you and if we're co-creating with you, we're tackling the hardest problems here and we expect that it's probably not generalizable outside of your law firm or even that practice itself. And so, the goal is then you can deploy internally.

Steve Poor

Awesome. That's incredible. Take me out two or three years. Where do you see technology taking the profession?

Dr. Megan Ma

Yeah, that's a great question. So, I think for me, how I always see it is we've managed to build excellent silos for ourselves at times where we detach, I think mentally, like how we build up the next lawyer with actually quality of our legal work product. And actually

they're highly integrated. So for me, I think in the coming years, the technology is going to be able to better showcase with us what is quality legal work and for us to help justify why we charge the prices that we do, for example. I think we've never really had to face this particular question, our only metric was the billable hour, so to speak. And then we just billed blindly and because people didn't have as much of A sense of what is legal knowledge, how do you draft the right contracts or whatever from the outside? No one had a way of testing how good this contract was written or how good this legal brief is, or whether or not I'm like rightfully representing my client. Now, this technology has made that a little bit more revealing. Whether or not it's entirely the case, people could, at least, you know, like the WebMD's of the world be like, look at what I've noticed and kind of question the billing structure and so I think in the coming years, the technology itself is going to continuously evolve, but as it gets better and better, we have to be prepared to answer the question, you know what is truly quality legal work? And that's I think what we're going to be focused on. It's going to find ways to integrate end to end, you know from the way that I train a lawyer. All the way to the work product that. Being developed, that's going to be a meaningful showcase of, you know why I would pay X amount of money for this particular lawyer. And I think the other side of it is that the technology is going to fundamentally allow us to spar with one another in a very, very interesting maybe expansive way we're going to be able to have. Broader mind space of how contracts actually can play out. We might be able to actually simulate end to end if there were different practices that we chose, like how the contract could play out in its life cycle. And so, there's actually going to be quite a bit of potential all across the profession, I think it's just a matter of, as I said, how is this environment or external environment going to react to the technology? And it's not going to be as simple as like this is the low hanging fruit. This is what the technology is going to be able to do, and this is the kind of like line in the sand, so to speak, it's going to impact end to end how a lawyer behaves altogether.

Steve Poor

We've got an access to justice problem in this country at all levels of society. What role do you see generative AI playing in helping deal with that problem?

Dr. Megan Ma

That's a great question. So we've been thinking about this a lot from the perspective of…A lot of people think like, oh, it's a matter of being more expeditious in the work. So with pro bono teams, if you have technology, then you know it can accelerate your legal research and drafting and all of those things so that you can naturally kind of clear your docket faster, so to speak. I think about it from the kind of consumer perspective. And so a lot of what's been used for self help, a lot of people are like, oh, if I just interact with the chat bot, it can point me to the right direction. It can kind of showcase with me, like all the these are the types of legal issues I have to work through. What I noticed actually is that people have difficulty actually even asking the first question. Because they don't know what is wrong here actually. And a lot of times when you interact with legal aid or are dealing with, you know, whether it's divorce, whether it's a landlord-tenant issue, whether it's immigration and all of that, it's really a somewhat traumatic time. And so, I

what we noticed actually was a huge bottleneck across the board is actually intake is I don't even know which questions I need to start with. Most of the time, people just go into a stream of consciousness and it's a lot of significant emotional and mental burden on the intake lawyer or the intake specialist, whoever that might be, to distill a lot of these anecdotes. A lot of the times you're the first point of contact and people will go all across the board. You might have a tangential story that's unrelated at all. You might have some sort of side rant you might have. Like you know. Then you get to the crux of it, where they start talking about what were the issues that had gone wrong. We started to experiment with voice AI. Because we notice that people tend to reason through streams of consciousness. In order for them to make sense of something, they actually talk it through and a lot of people actually face what I call the free text box syndrome where you know, if you imagine going to a restaurant, they ask you to, like, provide your comment or review, you're kind of stuck there and there and then you end up saying something like trivial like the food was great or something like. People have the same issue for across the board. If you're just asking them to use text or write out, kind of what is the problem or what you think, it's much harder to condense in words than if you just kind of go through a huge kind of anecdotal and moment of sharing. And so, voice AI is excellent for that. We've been like thinking about using a platform called Fat P. The origins of that platform came from kind of one of the founders going through a moment where he needed mental help. And he was speaking with his therapist and his therapist was unable to kind of, like, distill through what was really the root here? And so, you know, therapists started recommending journaling, but they were having a serious problem with journaling because they couldn't put pen to paper, essentially. And so when the cofounders he just opened up voice notes and started speaking to voice notes. And over time, he shared those transcripts with this therapist and his therapist. Was able to finally break down what might be the. Issue here and that really inspired him to build this platform known as Fat P. It's focused on voice AI and I thought that this might be the perfect use case for legal aid and self help and exploring areas of access to justice, because if we're able to alleviate that initial bottleneck, that is kind of across the board. It might be actually quite a significant breakthrough for people to be able to just call a hotline almost so this platform, you know, uses actual phone numbers. But on the back end is a voice a why? And they're highly empathetic. And so it will make you feel like your worries and anxieties and whatever emotional trauma that you're going through at the time is understood and is heard. And then on the other end of it, you get a distilled summary because, you know, these models are excellent at summarizing, for example. So you get a nice, condensed structured list of issues that the intake lawyer can then take refer back to a transcript of that conversation and actually be able to have a very meaningful next encounter with the prospective client that has entered legal aid.

Steve Poor

We talked about the trust issue earlier in the conversation. How do you develop the trust for the consumer to use voice AI?

Dr. Megan Ma

That's a great question. So I think the somewhat magic of it is that it uses a lot of analog technology, even though on the back end, it is this generative AI technology. And what I mean by that is as I said, you're not hopping on a platform, you're not like logging in, like a chat to open air or something like that. You're actually dealing with just your phone and so you don't even need a smartphone. You can just simply call that number and have a conversation. And I think that this is pretty natural for most people, whether or not you know you suddenly will face uncanny valley kind of mentality, knowing that at the other end it's someone that it's not a human. I think the humanistic or empathetic voice that is now familiar across these types of AI models is going to maybe create the illusion at least, that this is again all familiar. And I think, in that way, trust could be built.

Steve Poor

I know we've run over our time, but I've got one last question for you. Do the characteristics of people that you're looking for law students and ultimately lawyers change in a world of AI? Are you looking for different types of people, different types of students?

Dr. Megan Ma

I don't think it does necessarily, but I'm already starting to see an expanded set of backgrounds come into law school. I think, at least when I was going to law school, all anyone ever cared about was like, you know, I have some sort of background in humanities. Actually, a lot of people had, you know, the economics and political science background like me.

Steve Poor

Yeah, so did I.

Dr. Megan Ma

In fact, I was told not to bring up that I had a linguistics background because they didn't think it was kind of important, and I shouldn't. But I think that's definitely starting to change. You know, even in the past few years, I've had a lot of students from the CS side approach me, engineers, computer scientists, mathematicians will come up to me and say, you know, I have a stem background, but I want to go into law school and in the past, that population was very small. And also they would. Always almost always go into IP and specifically Pat. And I think that that's entirely changed now. I say that because sort of witnessing some of my students right now, many of them are engineers, but they went into law school because they were like oh, you know, actually there's quite a bit of synergy between how we are thinking as logicians or how we are asked to kind of map out structured information. And kind of distill out the conditions and conclusions from it. I find overlap with the way that lawyers could work, for example. Actually, just this year, we're going to be onboarding our inaugural cohort of Codex Graduate Student Fellows and they are a class of JD CS PHD's. I think that prior to this day and age, I would have never imagined that I can welcome a whole set of these absolute brainiacs from both sides that are simultaneously honing their craft in computer science and

engineering while also doing legal work. And I think that that's the direction that we're going to see. It's not necessarily that it's going to usurp kind of the existing, maybe philosophical humanity backgrounds, but we're going to see more and more of this balance that whatever background that you have in all kind of diverse specializations, you're going to see them kind of integrate into the legal practice. And I think one note on that as well, we've seen it in other jurisdictions like in the UK, you don't necessarily have to learn law in order to be a lawyer. You can go down the solicitors path with a background in whatever area and we've seen as well historically their own judges are not necessarily lawyers or have the same legal training as we expect here in the US. And so, I think it's just going to spread and I think that's really showcasing the impact of the technology.

Steve Poor

Well, it's an exciting time to be in the profession, isn't it?

Dr. Megan Ma

I'm certainly excited. Keeps my days new every day.

Steve Poor

Well, thank you so much for your time. Megan, I know we kept you longer than I promised. It's been fascinating. I could keep the conversation going for a long time, but thank you so much. You're doing great work, and I look forward to following you.

Dr. Megan Ma

Yeah, I'm grateful for the opportunity, Stephen, and thank you again for inviting me.

Steve Poor

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