

NTU tie-up explores use of artificial intelligence to improve court processes

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Lester Hio ✉

SINGAPORE - Artificial intelligence might soon remove the boring, administrative parts of the legal profession here, as data analytics and machine-learning software take over the tedious job of poring over cases.

Instead of having junior lawyers sift through archives of past legal cases to support a judgment, such software can scan through documents and pull out related information, leaving lawyers free to focus on higher-value work.

A research tie-up between Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and United States-based non-profit research organisation Mitre Corporation, signed on Thursday (Feb 9), will examine how such technology can be applied in Singapore's courts to improve court operations and productivity.

Software can lessen the load on lawyers by sifting through large numbers of legal cases or doing back-end e-filing and documentation.

Such software will also get smarter and more discerning with time, as machine-learning lets it learn over time to produce better results.

NTU provost Freddy Boey, who signed the agreement with Mitre's senior vice-president Lillian Zarrelli Ryals at a Mitre research campus in Virginia, said the partnership aims to address critical challenges here, such as a shortfall in labour and a rapidly ageing workforce.

"This new partnership brings together Mitre's strengths in smart technologies and judiciary engineering with NTU's expertise in systems engineering as well as our track record in sustainable and intelligent technologies," said Professor Boey.

The two parties also signed another research agreement on developing smart-building technologies to improve workplace safety.

This will look at how smart buildings can be fitted with sensors, for instance, which can track how many workers are in the building at any one time and automatically adjust settings such as lighting brightness and temperature.

These sensors could also be used during emergencies. If a fire breaks out in a building, for example, the information picked up by such smart sensors can help firemen locate people inside and ensure their safe evacuation.