

# The Justis International Law & Technology Writing Competition 2019

**Abstract:** On the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019, the Overall Winner for the Justis International Law & Technology Writing Competition was announced alongside three Best in Category articles for each of the three topics of this year's competition. Dr Matthew Terrell and David Hand of Justis who organise this yearly student opportunity share insights from the latest competition alongside the winning articles.

**Keywords:** technology; legal technology; blockchain; tax; access to justice; armed conflict; social media

## SUBMISSIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Following the success of the first Justis International Law & Technology Writing Competition, designed to help current students demonstrate their writing ability to an international audience, this year the competition has since seen an increase in interest and entries from students around the world wanting to share their creative writing ability.

Three topics were introduced to inspire students in their writing. These were Social Media, Technology and the Law, Access to Justice and Technology, and The Future of Legal Technology. They were chosen as topics as they all enabled students to explore a number of emerging issues, with enough freedom for engaging authors to write about specific issues that they were interested in.

The 2019 competition received entries from students at 61 universities from 29 countries around the world, including the University of Toronto, the University of California, Trinity College Dublin, the University of Oxford, Western Sydney University, Singapore Management University and the University of Dhaka. This level of engagement demonstrates that students from all around the world are taking the time and effort to create interesting and extremely well-thought-out articles on these important topics.

While the competition received many submissions, only six articles from each category were shortlisted and put to our panel of expert judges for review, including Emily Allbon (Founder of Lawbore; Senior Lecturer and Director of Mooting, The City Law School, University of

London), David F. Wills (Editor, Legal Information Management (LIM); Squire Law Librarian, University of Cambridge), Masoud Gerami (Managing Director, Justis Publishing), Ruth Bird (Former Bodleian Law Librarian, University of Oxford, and former Vice President of the International Association of Law Libraries), Nicole Allaband (Editor-in-Chief, Richmond Journal of Law & Technology), James Williams (Annual Survey & Symposium Editor, Richmond Journal of Law & Technology), Ilya Mirov (Senior Articles Editor, Richmond Journal of Law & Technology), and Eli Hill (Annual Survey & Symposium Editor, Richmond Journal of Law & Technology). As all entries were of such high quality, this made the shortlisting, judging and adjudication a challenging process.

## OVERALL WINNER AND BEST IN CATEGORY ARTICLES

We are pleased to announce that the overall winner for the 2019 competition is Kim Rust of the University of Sheffield for their article *Block-chain reaction: Why development of blockchain is at the heart of the legal technology of tomorrow*.

You can read Kim Rust's winning article in this edition of Legal Information Management, alongside articles by Walter Myer of the University of Oxford, Eleanor De of City, University of London and Iphigenia Fisentzou of BPP and who were all awarded Best in Category for each of the three categories of the 2019 competition.

## Biographies

**Dr Matthew Terrell** is the Head of Marketing for Justis, and the driver behind the Law & Technology International Writing Competition. Prior to joining Justis, Matthew was the Co-founder and Chief Communications Officer for Call for Participants, an online research service used by over 600 universities around the world. Matthew was also a Start-up Mentor for both Virgin Start-up's, and Jisc's Summer of Student Innovation.

**David Hand** is the principal Marketing & Communications Analyst and a doctoral candidate at the University of Nottingham researching social and cultural aspects of mobile technology. In his role at Justis, David has been involved with a range of activities, including the Justis International Law & Technology Writing Competition and a multi-stage research project exploring how legal research is taught to students, which will be presented at BIALL in 2019.

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# Block-chain Reaction: Why Development of Blockchain is at the Heart of the Legal Technology of Tomorrow

**Overall Winner, Justis International Writing Competition 2019 by Kimberley Rust of the University of Sheffield**

## BLOCKCHAIN

Blockchain, arguably the most discussed and promising of FinTech trends,<sup>1</sup> has incredible potential to transform legal technology. Infamous as the technology behind cryptocurrencies, distributed ledger technology (DLT) has developed far beyond these origins<sup>2</sup> and may prove far more valuable than the currency it supports.<sup>3</sup> As a form of DLT, blockchain allows for secure decentralisation of peer-to-peer, irreversible exchanges, providing a transparent and irrevocable record as these occur. The technology is already used across the legal industry and a plethora of opportunities to extend its application bubble beneath the surface, under development, waiting to break into the current market.

Yet in spite of its infallible potential, the technology which by its inherent nature should engender trust,<sup>4</sup> is shrouded in uncertainty. Questions of jurisdiction, liability, security and privacy have not been addressed in regulation, leaving instead a dangerous vacuum in legislation on the subject. Logistical barriers also stand in the way of

blockchain's widespread adoption. In light of this, what makes blockchain worth investing in, and what hurdles must overcome to successfully transpose it into new legal technologies?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF BLOCKCHAIN

Across the globe blockchain has been recognised as the future of legal technology. The EU has recognised its innate importance, in its expressed ambition to be a world leader in DLT.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the Law Society has recognised that in-place, in-progress, and envisioned innovative applications of blockchain have the capacity to revolutionise the legal industry, potentially reducing time, cost and risk<sup>6</sup> in provision of client service. DLT already manifests itself in an array of technologies, including smart contracts, cryptocurrencies and protection of intellectual property; ideas under progress include blockchain-founded governance mechanisms<sup>7</sup> and mapping stock trading onto a blockchain-based system.<sup>8</sup>