



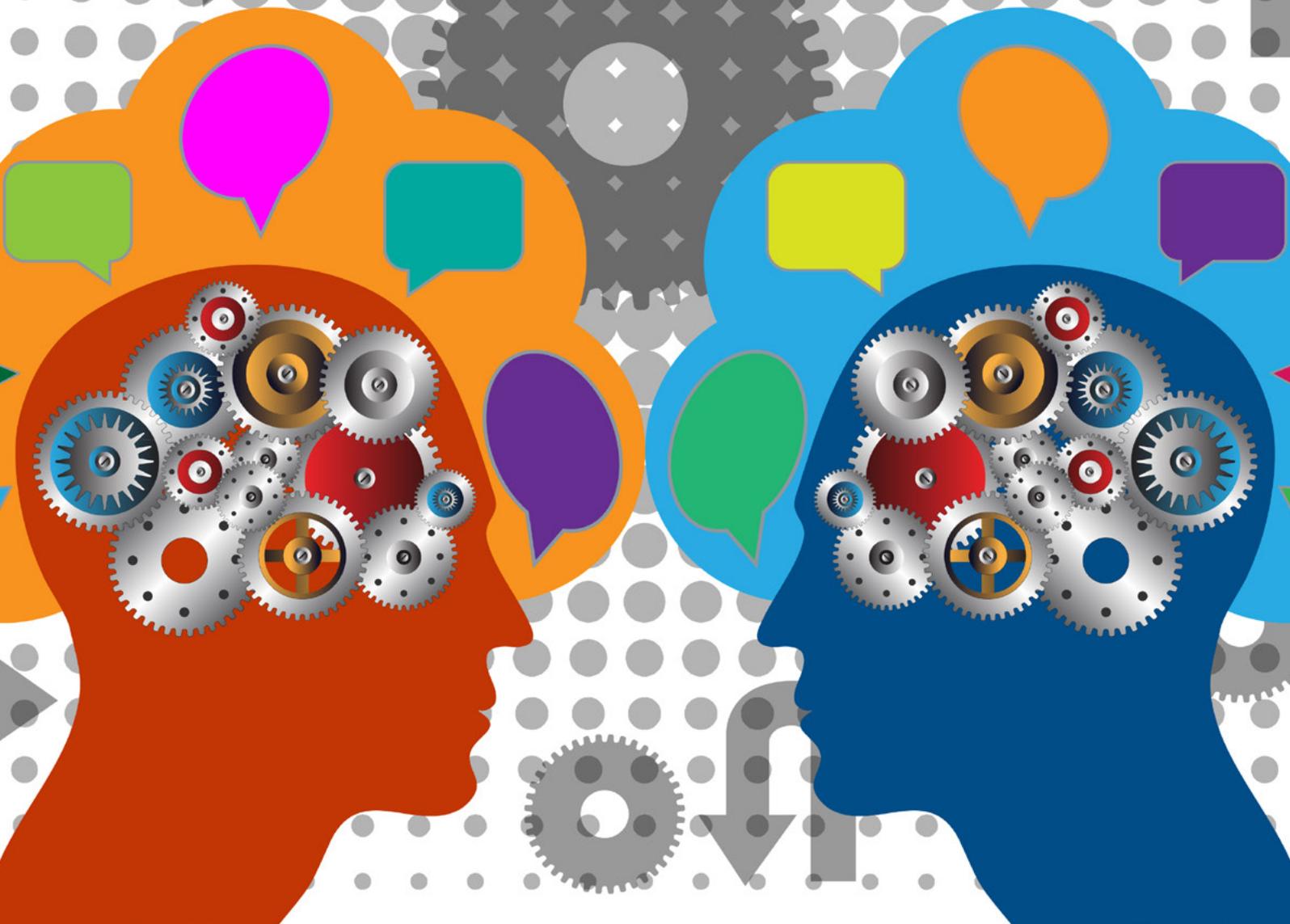
Lawyers Are not Magicians

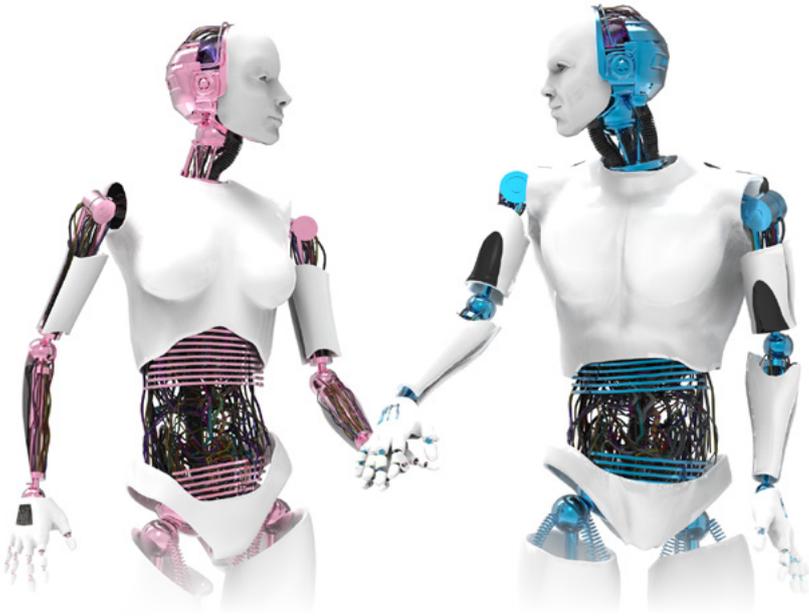


History of Legal Word Processing



Is the Law Ready for Deep Learning?





# It's time to think about **new laws** for the age of robot companions

BY CHRISSIE LIGHTFOOT

In the second of two articles for *Legal IT Today*, Chrissie Lightfoot asks how the law will deal with the rise of human-robot companionship, relationships, sex and love



In the first part of this article, published in the previous issue of [Legal IT Today](#), I asked what laws would be required to cater for the proliferation of machine intelligence, cognitive computing, artificial intelligence and robots. In this issue, I ask what laws will be required as relationships and even marriage between people and robots start to become increasingly commonplace.

## Law in the robotic age

Prostitution is known as 'the world's oldest profession'. In order to gain some insight as to why people will be prepared to hire the services of robots for sex (malebots and fembots) and

even contemplate marriage with them, I attended a futures conference in early 2014. Here I met David Levy, an artificial intelligence (AI) researcher and the author of a thesis titled *Robot Prostitutes as Alternatives to Human Sex Workers* <sup>1</sup>.

David argues that the arrival of sexbots seems imminent when we consider recent trends in the development of humanoids, sex dolls and sex machines of various types. I agree. But where will all this sit with the law?

## Robot hooker

With regard to sex dolls, Japan and Korea lead the way. Upmarket sex dolls, for example, have been seen as a possible way around Korea's Special Law on Prostitution. Hotels in the country started to hire out 'doll experience rooms'. These hotels assumed that there was no question of them breaking the law, as their dolls were not human. Since sex acts were occurring with a doll and not a human being, the Special Law on Prostitution did not apply.

With sex dolls becoming increasingly 'human' in appearance, touch and able to relate (comprising AI, meaning the sex doll / robot converses and expresses emotion), it is highly likely that sex entrepreneurs will infiltrate the global 'sex for hire' community swiftly. The robot sex for hire money-go-round will be too lucrative to pass up.

How will this affect the UK, US, Japan, Korea and other countries? We will have to address our existing laws on prostitution (and porn), particularly when robots become so sophisticated that we will indeed be questioning what it means to be 'human' and the ethics and morals surrounding this.

Attitudes and behaviour with regard to relationships, love, sex, sexual exploits and sexual union have changed through the ages in relation to age, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation. For example, homosexuality, until very recently, was a taboo subject and societies throughout the world spurned gay men and women. But attitudes have changed and the law has followed. Here in the UK, and in some other parts of the world, gay marriage is now lawful. I dare say that if you had read in the 1980s or 90s (30 or 20 years ago) that the UK Parliament would pass the Civil Partnership Act 2004 and the US would enact a similar law,

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*Is it too far fetched to claim that 20/30 years from now we could be reading that the Robot Partnership Act 2035/45 has become law?*

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you would have scoffed and mocked. But here we are in 2015 and so it is.

#### **Robot marriage**

We currently live in a world where:

- In divorce proceedings, the parties argue over who gets full custody of the pet;
- A bridegroom chooses a dog as his best man;
- There are websites where you can 'marry' your dogs;
- Our children adore virtual pets, such as the Tamagotchi;
- Sex dolls are available for hire;
- A man says (in real life): 'I've tried having girlfriends but I prefer my relationship with my computer';
- Men marry their computer game characters/sex-dolls; and
- Gay marriage is lawful.

Human-robot relationships are surely indicative of the way human love, relationships, sex and marriage are evolving. I share more of my ideas and predictions in my latest book, *Tomorrow's Naked Lawyer: NewTech, NewHuman, NewLaw – How to be successful 2015 to 2045*, along with my belief that it is likely that some societies will accept love, sex and even marriage with robots within 20 years. Matrimonial law and family law will need to evolve accordingly.

If you're thinking my ideas are outrageous, think again. Since writing that book in early 2014 and publication later that year, my predictions and insights have been picked up in the mainstream press, media and popular

culture, and the topic has, thankfully, begun to be debated – at least in the public domain, if not in the ivory towers of law.

#### **Robot wife**

While there have been fictional accounts of human-robot relationships, sex and love recently in popular culture – for example the TV drama series *Humans* and the movies *Her* and *Ex Machina* – there have also been real-life accounts, some of which include marriage.

There are, for example, men who already claim to love and/or desire to be married to their robot; see [synthetic love](#) and [technosexual](#). Back in November 2009, a Japanese man stood before a congregation to marry the 'woman' he loved, Nene Anegasaki. Nene is a computer game character, a 'virtual girlfriend' in the Nintendo DS game *Love Plus* which he 'brought to life' as a sex doll. In doing so, he arguably became the [first man to marry his robot](#).

It is inevitable that the rise of human-robot companionship, relationships, sex and love will lead people to call for the right to [marry their robot](#), forcing lawmakers to consider expanding marital rights and lawyers to deal with the disruption and problems that will inevitably ensue.

Is it too far fetched to claim that 20/30 years from now we could be reading that the Robot Partnership Act 2035/45 has become law?

#### **Law in the interstellar age**

Such is mankind's curiosity, thirst for knowledge and spirit of adventure that a Dutch company announced early in 2014 that it requires 20 healthy adults to train for eight years to be the first group of human beings to colonise Mars by 2023. This being the case, I highly recommend that one of these 20 souls should be a legal anthropologist. If we have a blank sheet, and we contemplate law and order on a new planet, how would we begin all over again? I suggest: 'From martial law to Martian law... but not back again.'<sup>2</sup>

Someone told me recently: 'I admire how you handle the tension between technology's promise and its peril.' And I guess this statement sums up what lies ahead for those valiant colonists, for us

entrepreneurs / business people, lawyers and the law-makers writing the 'letter of the law' at the dawn of the digital, robotic and interstellar ages. Ask yourself:

- How are you going to combine 'pure blood' human workers and robot workers in your business? What employment law issues are likely to cause concern?
- Is the law already fit for purpose to support and/or protect your commercial interests and working environment as robots permeate your business? If not, what do we need to do about it?
- How do you reconcile porn and/or prostitution and/or robot sex workers related to the workplace, and business ethics as humanoid robots enter the working environment?
- Are you ready not only to think about all this, but also to do something about it?

One thing is certain, we require what I call 'NewLaw' in this digital age, looming robotic age and inevitable interstellar age to cater for the robot worker. To bring law and order in an attempt to avoid imminent chaos, we must act now.

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<sup>1</sup> Levy, D, Robot Prostitutes as Alternatives to Human Sex Workers, white paper, London, 2006. Accompanying material includes: Levy, D, Marriage and Sex With Robots, EURON Workshop on Roboethics, Genoa, March 2006; Levy, D, Emotional Relationships With Robotic Companions, EURON Workshop on Roboethics, Genoa, March 2006; and Levy, D, A History of Machines With Sexual Functions: Past, Present and Robot, EURON Workshop on Roboethics, Genoa, March 2006; Levy, D, Love and Sex With Robots, Harper Collins, New York, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Lightfoot, C, Tomorrow's Naked Lawyer: NewTech, NewHuman, NewLaw – How to be successful 2015 to 2045, Ark Group, London 2014.