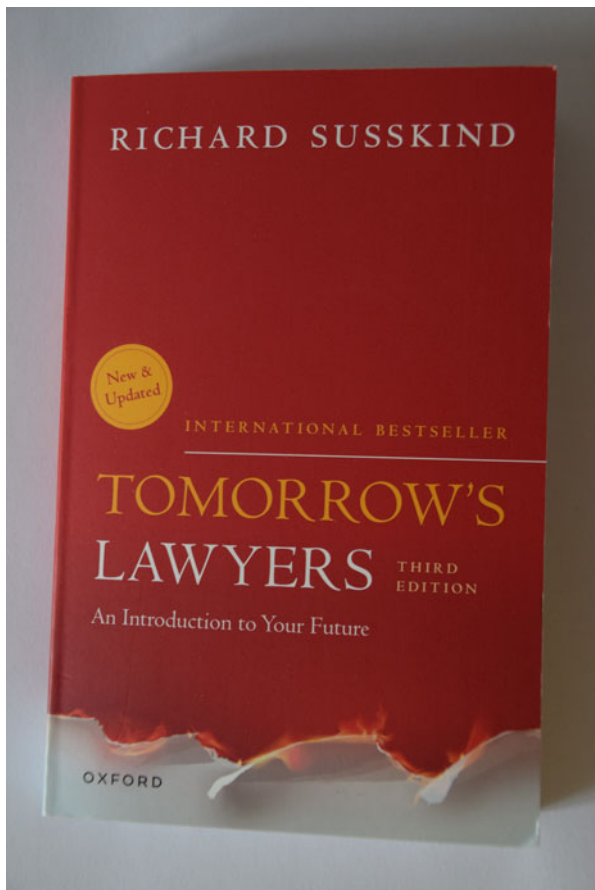


Book Review

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Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future by
Richard Susskind 3rd edition, 2023, published by
Oxford University Press



Some books have value because we enjoy them. Other books have value because we learn from them. With this in mind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers* must surely be judged a doubly valuable book. The work, which has come to be seen as a classic in a niche genre, aims to offer practical guidance for those building a career in law. But it does much more than this.

For many in the legal world, Richard Susskind will need no introduction. The President of the Society for Computers and Law, and Technology Adviser to the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales, Susskind has been writing for decades about the future of legal services through the lens of changing technologies and working methods. This third edition of *Tomorrow's Lawyers* follows the previous editions from 2017 and 2013 and in it he updates his key messages, while also including a new chapter on the impact of the Covid pandemic.

The purpose of this third edition is to provide inspiration and guidance not just for aspiring lawyers but also for those who seek to modernise and improve our legal and justice system; to challenge how these systems are (or aren't!) currently working; and to suggest ways in which new technologies and new processes can be used to shift the status quo. Susskind covers three main themes, what he calls the 'more-for-less' challenge, liberalisation, and technology. He paints a picture of a new world where online courts are the norm; where innovation in the form of commoditisation and alternative sourcing can be successful; and where we embrace and utilise technology to serve our need for efficiency. What this book is not is a guide to how robots are going to take over the jobs of lawyers and judges. Instead, there is practical guidance in how step changes can have a positive and constructive effect on what and how the legal justice system delivers.

As someone who has worked in the law firm environment for 25 years, I found this book hugely enjoyable and readable. Susskind hangs his ideas and arguments together in a coherent manner and, having heard him in full flow as the keynote speaker at the British Legal Technology Forum 2023 conference, I can easily imagine him in the room with me speaking the words as I read the book. Susskind discusses at length the different opportunities that are becoming available as we move into the future – the pandemic accelerated the uptake of new tools and changed many minds, but did not really push *innovation*. “Uncontestably, we have witnessed an accelerated deployment of some technologies, but most of these have essentially propped up our conventional ways of applying and delivering legal knowledge – through in-person engagement,” Susskind tells us. He goes on to write at length about the “seismic transformation that awaits us, which is when many of the activities that lawyers and the outcomes they deliver are themselves undertaken by increasingly capable systems operating autonomously or in support of non-expert users. That transformation, in many ways the focal point of this book, has surely been decelerated by Covid”.

Anyone who has a stake in the legal sector will find this book interesting and relevant, even if just dipping into it. For example, 'young' lawyers will learn about all sorts of new possibilities and roles that are opening up, if a career as a traditional solicitor or barrister no longer has the same appeal. As Susskind says, there will emerge a new range of employers in quite different types of legal business – accounting firms, legal know-how providers, legal process outsourcers and more. And, at the other end of the scale, partners can more fully understand and explore how expedient it is to become more innovative with how they commoditise

Book Review

and charge for their work and knowledge in order to keep competitive. Legal technologists increasingly have the scope to be more innovative within the legal sector and use their skills to transform the way that legal work is done through the full range of current and future technology tools.

The book concludes with a powerful call to action, where Susskind implores future lawyers to take an active role in developing the future of legal services, to embrace

the growing excitement and to participate in the shaping of the next generation of legal services.

I'm certainly looking forward to seeing how the predictions Susskind makes in this new edition of *Tomorrow's Lawyers* pan out.

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