Highlights 2016

Testing our Research before Leading International Judges

In June 2016, iCourts hosted and co-organised the annual Brandeis Institute for International Judges (BIIJ). The BIIJ is a three-day retreat for approximately 20 judges from different international courts with the goal of sharing experiences and ideas. The iCourts-BIIJ differed from previous BIIJ retreats because of the decision to expose the practitioners to the newest research into international courts. This included presentations by the Center Director and other iCourts staff highlighting the latest empirical and theoretical findings of the centre. Having the judges as expert audience, provided a unique opportunity for a dialogue and knowledge sharing between the research center and high-level actors. While the event was governed by Chatham rules of confidentiality, it closed with a public event with presentations by judges and researchers. Some 100 people attended the public event.[1]

Creating a Global Research Centre

iCourts has since its launch in 2012 been characterized by a very high degree of internationalization with regard to staff and research. Compared to the average figures provided in The Danish National Research Foundation's Standard Agenda 2016-17 (shown in parentheses below), the percentage of non-Danish staff at iCourts are the following: Permanent faculty: 50% Non-danish (30%), Postdoctoral 80% (70%) and Phd student 70% (45%.). This is very atypical in our area of research but fundamental to our research agenda, which is both universal in intellectual scope and global in geographic range. In addition, our visiting programme and Permanent Visiting Professor Programme further contributes to making iCourts a truly global research centre. Both of them bring a steady flow of international visitors to the centre every year.

Developing New Big Data Driven Legal Research

iCourts is home to the largest database of decisions by international courts in the world. The database is both an in-house resource servicing the data needs of staff and increasingly also a public resource made available at icourts.dk. The database and resulting research is central to the goal of making iCourts a central hub in research on international courts. What makes the iCourts database stand out in comparison to other similar projects is not just the mere size of it and the smart ways it stores data, but also the associated expertise in computer science and statistics available at the centre. This has helped situate iCourts at the cutting-edge of what might well be one of the most significant developments in the field of law, namely new forms of automatised legal research which can be used not only at research institutions such as iCourts but also in courts, law offices and departments of the state in charge of legal decision-making. iCourts is committed to further this development of robotic law in all its basic science dimensions.

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[1] See further at http://www.brandeis.edu/ethics/internationaljustice/biij/2016.html