AILET

Interview of Gunjan Saxena, Assistant Prof. UPES: Law School Life and Career in Legal Design

Aditya Anand · 19 Sep 2020

Gunjan Saxena is an Assistant Professor at UPES Dehradun. She completed her bachelor's in law from DSNLU and her LLM from QMU, London. She has worked extensively in the area of legal design in India and abroad. In this interview, she talks about her law school life, her professional life, and the intricacies of legal design.

Tell us about your law school experience in India

At a very young age, I had decided to pursue law and when I joined law school, I lived that dream. It was a great learning experience. When I joined NLU Vizag it was a fairly new University we used to sit and brainstorm best strategies for debating and mooting in our freshman and sophomore years. This developed a strong academic intrigue.

I used to particularly enjoy debating and researching, represented the university at British and Asian style parliamentary debates. It helped in developing a well-rounded perspective because what I was learning at was complimented by experiences and opinions.

In the year 2013, my team won the Manthan Youth Convention in 2013, using structural policy design we had suggested a model for revamping the judicial system of the country focused on specializing the courts, ***"Multi-furcation of the Federal Justice System"***

Click here to see the presentation.

We secured the first place and were invited to the research before an audience of 4000+ students from institutions including IITs, IIMs, NLUs among others from all over the country. The audience included Mr. P.M. Narendra Modi, Late Mr. Arun Jaitley, Late Mr. Ram Jethmalani, Mr. Chandrababu Naidu among others.

I was also a part of the **Editorial Board** for **Jural Quorate** which was the flagship legal research journal of DSNLU. We had on the panel Professor Jane K. Winn from Washington University, the then Vice-Chancellor of DSNLU Prof. Dr. V Kesava Rao among other prominent names from India including, Late Prof. Shamnad Basheer and lawyers like Ms. Geeta Luthra on our panel.

For the Ninth Foundation Day of DSNLU, I ideated a **Legal Art Gallery "Juripatio"** at NLU Vizag. As far as I am aware, it was first of its kind in India and was inaugurated by Late Professor N. R. Madhava Menon and I remember accompanying him through the illustrations.

He was impressed by this *novel idea* and suggested things which remain as ideation capsules for me when I work in the area of Legal Design.

In the final year, I became the **Convener** of the **Law and Technology Society of DSNLU**, and organized a competition for students to make very short videos about law school life. I experimented a lot on Legal Design during my years at NLU Vizag, holding the baton of Legal Design even when it was not formally introduced as an area of law.

How was attending Queen Mary London for LLM? Which course did you take?

Queen Mary was another amazing experience for me. I was pursuing LL.M. in International Business Law and had the opportunity to be taught by Professor E. M. Dabbah whose expertise in the area of Merger Control is exceptional. I wrote a thesis on ***"Data valuation in digital merger assessment"***, suggesting an impact scale for the same under his supervision.

Being a **Legal Designer at Qlegal made a great chunk of my experience in QMUL**. My major area of study included a focus on Mergers and Acquisitions and International commercial law practice including arbitration and commercial contracts.

Also, had the opportunity to meet Professor Sir Roy Goode, and attend extremely interesting lectures of Prof. Alan Dignam, and Sir Bernard Rix. The experience was intellectually enriching being taught by a faculty who had a niche in what they were teaching and clearly had a passion for the profession.

How has an international LLM helped you in your career?

Career-wise, it clearly streamlined my area of study and work. It gave me an amazing opportunity to focus on my creative instincts and build a skill set for working in the area of my niche'.

I feel, pursuing a Masters' program should not be solely about adding another title to your name, it should be about exploring that area of study which interests you the most and grow through an expansive experience.

Given this belief, I focused on Legal Design and used the many opportunities I got, to work in this area. I spoke to people, noted their suggestions, observation about the commercialization of Legal Design and this helped me in building a portfolio of Legal Design copyrighted to my name.

How would you compare the law schools in India and abroad?

In India, we greatly focus on building a career out of the law, while abroad people have a more expanded outlook, they not only want to work as legal professionals but are passionate about solving existing legal issues.

We lack a focus on research-oriented studies. Research-oriented teaching helps in developing a deeper level of understanding of the subjects among students. Unfortunately, law students in India write roughly a hundred researches throughout a five-year course as projects, but 95% of those researches are low on the value addition quotient, making them replications of pre-existing ideas.

If we plan to develop law as a premiere field in India we must focus on solving current legal issues. None of our law schools are focused on providing worthwhile legal solutions. For instance, during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, our law schools have not been able to help in synchronizing legal processes with technology.

There are areas like ***Data Privacy, Legal Design, Digital Competition Laws, Contract Automations, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data and Surveillance, Online Dispute Resolution, Lawtech, Air and Space Regulation, Communication strategizing*** and a number of such fields which need sophisticated research.

Even if we divide each issue of these issues and create a consortium of universities to focus in these areas we can become pioneer solution providers for the rest of the world. We need to focus on doing what a lawyer is expected to do, provide **human-centric solutions.**

Tell us about the ventures you Co-Founded: Legal Design Arc, TargetCLAT Mentors and IJLJ.

Legal Design Arc is a venture in the area of legal design. We are a group of Lawyers and Designers who are working towards developing legal design innovative tools and providing legal design services to businesses, startups, legal professionals, law students, and Educational Institutions.

TargetClat was a startup, co-founded when I was in my sophomore year. It was based on the idea that *the study material for CLAT preparation is the same and what differentiates a topper, is the techniques used by them*.

The idea was to provide a mentor to all our students who would guide them about using these techniques in the exam. We developed a range of universal techniques which greatly helped our mentees in their preparation. Many of our first batch of students secured a place at the NLUs.

TargetCLAT is now undergoing transformation and is being expanded to provide mentors for law students and law aspirants who will be providing advice in the mentee's area of interest.

More information can be found about it by reaching out to me on my email address. We will soon be launching our web portal too.

I excelled in Media Law and Advertising Law during law school. This is an area where I have worked extensively. IJLJ consultants is a law firm focused at advising on media and technology-related matters. We advise a few clients in MP.

We also run a legal research journal verified by the RNI in India. One can submit their research work for publication to IJLJ on and the submission guidelines can be found on our website.

What is Legal Design?

Legal Design or LD is a process of applying design thinking methodologies to provide user-centric legal solutions, thereby enhancing the experience of law. It is a field that brings together creative outlook and legal solutions for making any legal output effective.

It is Law's own language. The purpose of this language like every other is to communicate effectively. It fosters Simplification, Efficiency, Accessibility and Cross professional inclusion in the legal field. You can read more about it here.

Tell us about your work in the area of legal design

As a young lawyer, I always kept myself motivated with this idea that *"one should either build a product or become one"*. Over the past seven years, I have been cherry-picking opportunities which could help me build a unique skillset which would complement my passion for law and art.

Given that I am an Artist and skilled in canvas paintings, I started experimenting on this congruence early on in my sophomore year in 2013 while interning with an NGO in India where I was asked to summarize the Right to Information and Right to Education Acts.

Click here to see Gunjan's paintings.

I developed a comic book to explain the same to those underprivileged families, as a result, their understanding of intricate details about these Acts solidified.

In the year 2013, I won the National Youth Convention Manthan for our research and suggested model developed using the structural designing technique, I developed a model suggesting *Multifurcation of the courts in India*.

In the year 2016, I ideated and exhibited the first Legal Art Gallery depicting an illustration of major judgments by the courts in India since independence at National Law University Visakhapatnam inaugurated by Late Prof. N. R. Madhava Menon.

In the year 2019, while pursuing LL.M. from the Queen Mary University of London, I got selected as a Legal Designer for qLegal where I developed an employment contract for a Lawtech Startup along with my team.

Given my skill in web designing and web development, we provided a working model of a visual contract for our client. We also developed a course structure using gamification to introduce legal design to law students. I have recently developed a range of such visual contract portfolios copyrighted under my name. Also devised a number of techniques for the same.

I have ideated games and visual design products for businesses and startups using legal design. Currently, I am working as a Legal Designer and bootstrapping two startups in the field of Lawtech and Edtech using Legal Design.

I have recently become a member of the Legal Design Alliance of USA and the Visual Contracts Community of the European Union. I am also involved with a team of other legal designers who are working on Virtual Courts experiences. Alongside, exploring the area of blockchain (Smart Contracts) and contract automation.

What is the potential that legal design holds for lawyers in India and abroad?

Legal Design has huge potential to make the traditional legal field adapt to the technology-driven economy of today. It offers to build solutions in a manner that even a layman can understand the law.

In our fast-paced world, legal professionals are overburdened by text-heavy materials and however, we have created virtual libraries for it, but reaching to the solution becomes taxing. Legal Design offers to reduce this effort and improves efficiency and reduces time.

With a large number of the world's biggest companies on the digital platform, we cannot ignore attending to their needs as corporate lawyers.

Legal Design has the potential to serve businesses efficiently using contract transformation in developing visual contracts, legal design tools & LD portfolios, visual law and gamification can give law its own chain of expression.

Is there a feasible full time career in Legal Design? Which skills do fresh graduates need to have a career in legal design?

The Commercial application of legal design offers many opportunities for those who want to develop a creative outlook towards law. Law graduates need to focus on developing design thinking as a major skill for working in this area.

Legal Designers require a niche in illustrative skills, analogy, logical reasoning, parallel thinking, convergent and divergent thinking, effective expression and a tad bit of imagination. Legal Design expects one to build a technological niche alongside the above mentioned as most offerings of legal design are tech-oriented.

Legal Design requires knowledge of a range of legal subjects and good conceptual understanding of the law.

What is the current state of legal design and what will be the scenario in 5-10 years?

In the coming few years one will see the law being expressed in a tech-driven manner. This expression will be pioneered by legal designers.

Legal design has the potential to build a dedicated language of law and transform the legal expression altogether. In the coming decade, it will become an important skill for a lawyer, placed parallel to skills like reasoning and communication.