

## SubTech: an overview

Marc Lauritsen [\[1\]](#)

Cite as Lauritsen, M., " SubTech: an overview," European Journal of Law and Technology, Vol. 2, No. 1.

### What is SubTech?

The Eleventh International Conference on Substantive Technology in Legal Education and Practice - [SubTech 2010](#) for short - was hosted by Fernando Galindo, Pilar Lasala, and [Lefis](#) in Zaragoza, Spain. SubTech has been meeting bi-annually since 1990, alternating between a US and a European host. Its venues have included Salzburg, Chicago, Paris, Montreal, Stockholm, [Cambridge](#) (Massachusetts), [Warwick](#), [Seattle](#), [Oslo](#), and [Williamsburg](#) (Virginia). SubTech a premier multidisciplinary gathering of specialists who work in the confluence of legal education and the technology of law.

SubTech conferences are dedicated to *substantive applications* of information technology in law, as they are *used or studied in legal education*. By "substantive" is meant applications that deal with the distinctively legal substance of what lawyers, judges, and law teachers do. By "legal education" is meant all contexts in which law is studied and taught, not just traditional law schools.

The historical application categories include computer-aided instruction, broadly conceived; artificial intelligence and knowledge management; practice technologies such as document automation; and legal research and databases. These applications and contexts define such a vast landscape of subjects that the conferences avoid getting into doctrine, policy, and other collateral matters, such as the "law of technology," privacy, and intellectual property.

SubTech is designed as a truly international gathering that nurtures inter-speciality exchanges around the development, use, and study of advanced legal technologies in the legal education context. That includes topics such as how to produce graduates who have a greater understanding of technology as well as how to enable better law school teaching.

The major themes in 2010 were: Institutional Overviews, Modeling Legal Knowledge, Technologies of Practice and Legal Administration, Teaching Platforms, and New Directions.

### The SubTech Way

SubTech has been an invitational conference since its inception, with most of the costs of attending (except for hotel and travel) covered by sponsors. Attendees are active

participants, rather than observers, so the conference has the feel of an informal workshop more than that of the typical academic conference.

The conferences been guided by organizational principles such as:

- Lots of open spaces for informal interaction; don't overload schedule;
- A coherent topical framework with elements of spontaneity and serendipity;
- Emphasizing activities that can best be done in person; use Web and e-mail before and after for generic information exchange, finding common interests;
- Maintain balances: structure/chaos; practical/way-out; spontaneous/produced;
- Short talks, small groups, strong moderators, participant profiling, topical cohesion;
- High interaction and real-time collaboration; mixing people in different groupings;
- Being sure everyone gets a chance to tell his/her story, not feel anonymous;
- Geographical, substantive, and gender balance;
- Established figures as well as significant newcomers;
- Active participation - this is a working conference.

**SubTech 2012** will be held at New York Law School on July 26-28. The organizers will be reaching out to potential participants soon.

---

[1] Marc Lauritsen, co-originator of SubTech and author of [\*The Lawyer's Guide to Working Smarter with Knowledge Tools\*](#), is president of [Capstone Practice Systems](#) and of [Legal Systematics](#). Marc has served as a poverty lawyer, directed the clinical program at Harvard Law School, and done path-breaking work on document drafting and decision support systems. He's a fellow of the [College of Law Practice Management](#) and co-chairs the American Bar Association's [eLawyering Task Force](#). Marc can be reached at [marc@capstonepractice.com](mailto:marc@capstonepractice.com), or [@marclauritsen](#) on Twitter.