Helen XANTHAKI and colleagues: Big Data for Law

Big Data for Law introduces a 'big data toolkit' that allows the use of big data on legislation by social science researchers and lawyers. The project aims to identify the usages of www.legislation.co.uk by researchers, and to create the possibility of in depth empirical analysis of the whole of statute book by researchers and students. It will do so by means of new open data, new tools and new research methodologies, made available through a new service: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/projects/big-data-for-law. Big Data for Law puts big data technologies into the hands of non-technical researchers for the first time. It aims to derive new open data from closed data sets, providing more of the data that researchers need. For example, potentially personally identifiable user data from legislation.gov.uk cannot be made available as open data, but could be processed using big data tools to identify clusters in legislation, or 'recommendations' datasets of 'people who read Act A or B also looked at Act Y or Z'. Big Data for Law also looks at new ways of codifying and modelling the architecture of the statute book to make it easier to research in its entirety. It explores the concept of a 'pattern language' and applies it to legislation. Pattern languages have revolutionised software engineering over the last 20 years and have the potential to do the same for our understanding of the statute book. A pattern language is simply a method of describing good design practices, structured around problems or issues, with a solution. Patterns are not created or invented. They are identified as good design based on evidence about how useful and effective they are. We hope that the poster will allow us to showcase our work, and to invite feedback from researchers as a means of feeding into the project and influencing its result.