THE RISE OF SMART COURTS IN CHINA:
Opportunities and Challenges to the Judiciary in a Digital Age
Information and communication technology has increasingly played an important role in judicial activities. In recent years, digitalization of courts has been explored actively in theory and practice in China. Generally, digitalization of courts refers to that litigation activities like case-filing, court trial, execution, service and preservation can be carried out online to a certain degree, with the help of modern technology like big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and high-tech equipment. Digitalization of courts is considered to help to improve judicial efficiency, contribute to judicial disclosures, provide convenience for people and to establish judicial big data. However, lack of consistent guidelines might undermine the application of digital means in the judiciary. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the progress made so far with regard to digitalization of courts in China, and to analyze the opportunities and challenges during the digitalized process of Chinese courts.

**Key Takeaways**

- Digitalization of courts and judicial reform is still in its infancy.

- A set of clear-cut guidelines are missing for application of remote trial, electronic delivery system and other aspects of digitalization of courts in China.

- Judicial activities are timeliness, and digitalization of courts is expected to contribute to improving judicial efficiency and achieving judicial timeliness.

- Judicial documents are open to the public online to increase the transparency of the judiciary; the whole process of court trial is live broadcasted online to accept the supervision of the public.

*Keywords: digitalization of courts, artificial intelligence, judicial reform, China.*
THE RISE OF SMART COURTS IN CHINA: Opportunities and Challenges to the Judiciary in a Digital Age

By Junlin Peng & Wen Xiang

In recent years, digitalization of Chinese courts has hit the headlines and been heatedly discussed among academics and legal practitioners. In China, the concept of digitalization of courts is to some extent similar to concepts like “smart court” or “intelligent court”. It appears that scholars and academics are not unanimous on what the standard definition of digitalization of court should mean. Digitalization of Chinese court means that litigation activities like case-filing, court trial, execution, service and preservation can be carried out online to a certain degree, with the help of modern technology like big data, cloud computing, artificial intelligence and high-tech equipment. Digitalization of courts is aimed, among others, at facilitating modernization of trial capability and trial system.

Information and communication technology is establishing a new-type of court and litigation system in recent years. It is imperative for Chinese courts to join the rest of the world by digitally transforming its court practice and procedure. China’s President Xi Jinping once stated, “there is no modernization without digitalization”. Thus, digitalization becomes necessary to address some problems presently faced in China during litigation. Suffice to note that a large number of cases need to be dealt with by a relatively small number of judges in China. With the rapid development of economy and increasing consciousness of rights, people tend to resort to law to solve their disputes. Therefore, judges are frequently overloaded having to deal with large number of cases, and the lack of capacity inevitably affects efficiency of case-handling. In addition to handling cases, judges are also saddled with administrative responsibilities, which may result in distraction in the handling of cases. This is also coupled with the fact that the traditional way of collecting, collating and delivering information appears to be too slow to improve the judicial efficiency. Digitalization of courts is seen as useful to improve judicial efficiency.

There is no doubt that litigants care about how cases are proceeding. In the past, it was not easy for litigants and the public to be updated on litigation processes in China. In pre-digitalization times, litigants would try every means to contact judges about information on the progression of their cases. However, judges were and are often too busy to reply to litigants timely. This leads to misunderstanding and distrust. In addition, platforms for disclosure of judicial information rarely existed in pre-digitalization times. Hence, people were inclined to regard litigation activities as non-transparent.
and inaccessible, which severely undermines judicial credibility. Litigation activities are usually time and energy consuming for both litigants and lawyers. In order to file a case, they may have to go to court several times to manually file their court processes. What’s more, litigants, witnesses and judicial appraisers have to appear before court several times even though the facts and legal rules in support of the case are simple and clear.

In principle, digitalization of courts, if well adopted and practiced, may be crucial to solving the problems existing in litigation activities, such as low efficiency, weak judicial credibility and inconvenience. This paper is aimed at addressing opportunities and challenges associated with digitalized processes. It will analyze the legitimacy and legality of certain technological innovations applied in digitalization of courts. It will further examine the questions whether remote trials go against the principle of direct and verbal trial, and whether automation of courts ensure a better quality of justice in China.

Electronic Case-filing (E-filing)

From 1st May, 2015, all courts in China had to start accepting cases based on a case-filing registration system instead of case-filing scrutiny system. The traditional way of case-filing scrutiny requires the judge to scrutinize essential facts and issues to decide whether the court should accept the case or not. Conversely, according to the case-filing registration system, the court must accept the case as long as the case meets the formal requirements of the system. Due to the application of the case-filing registration system, the threshold of filing a case becomes lower and the case number has been increasing significantly since 2015. The reports of the Supreme Court show that courts in China have accepted 14.38 million cases in 2014, 17.66 million cases in 2015 and 19.99 million cases in 2016, which means the case number increases at a relatively high rate. The large number of cases puts a heavy burden on judges who deal with case-filing affairs.

According to Article 14 of Rules of Supreme People’s Court on Several Issues on Case-filing Registration System, in order to facilitate litigants to exercise litigious rights, courts provide litigation services such as case-filing online systems. So far, many courts in China have actively explored and established an E-filing system. In general, E-filing in China can be divided into two modes: filing a case directly online and making an appointment online to file a case. To file a case directly online, as the name suggests, litigants or lawyers submit an electronic version of litigation materials online and judges then assess them online. If those litigation materials meet formal requirements, judges can decide to accept the case directly online. A study shows that so far about 2479 courts (as of 2018) in China have begun to establish E-filing systems.

Beijing, Shanghai, Zhejiang, Anhui, Hunan, Jilin and Guangxi have established E-filing systems in all courts of those provinces. Online case filing system is still being explored in practice and there is no consistent guideline of it, therefore different courts have different rules about E-filing. In Beijing, for example, only lawyers can upload the electronic version of litigation materials to file a case directly online. If those materials go through formal assessment, lawyers are required to send paper versions by couriers to courts. Both litigants and lawyers can make an appointment online to
file a case in Beijing.

Establishing E-filing system is of great significance in relation to an improvement of filing efficiency and convenience for clients. Clients and lawyers can follow the instructions step by step to file a case online, which can reduce judges' workload of providing consultation services. Instead, judges in filing courts can deal with filing affairs online anywhere, which indeed has improved filing efficiency. Compared to the traditional filing model, E-filing helps litigants and lawyers to save some transportation fees, time and energy. For plaintiffs who live far from places in which courts are located, the value of E-filing becomes more obvious. On 4th May, 2017, Mr. Hong who lives in Fujian Province filed a case successfully online to Huangyan People's Court in Zhejiang Province and the first trans-province E-filing in China took only half an hour. However, the design of a case-filing online system is not excellent enough to fully reflect its values. The main concern about E-filing is false litigation. Some judges' concern relates to the fact that people might abuse litigation rights because they cannot verify the identification of parties and censor the authenticity of litigation materials.

**Legal services provided by robot guide**

“Hello, I am a robot guide Xiaoyu. How may I help you?”

“I want to consult about filing a case. Can you help me?”

“Of course! What kind of case are you going to file?”

“How about contract disputes. What materials do I need to prepare?”

“You case belongs to civil and commercial matters. You need to prepare: statement of claims, identification materials, evidence materials. If you have a lawyer, you should submit the letter of authorization. If you are a company, you need to provide basic business information.”

“Oh, I get it. Thank you so much!”

The above conversation happened between a famous host Beining Sa and the first robot guide Xiaoyu in Shanyu People's Court of Anhui Province. In recent years, litigation service halls of many courts in China have introduced robot guides to provide legal services for people. Robot guides are expected to help reduce the service workload of staff in the litigation service hall through taking on the work of legal lecturing and guidance. Robot guides can lead people to corresponding counters to file a case and pay litigation fees. Moreover, they are equipped with massive knowledge to provide introduction of the court, legal consultation service, real-time query of case information. For example, the robot guide Xiaofa in Gaochun People's Court, has learned one hundred thousand legal provisions and regulations, fifty thousand common legal issues and thirty thousand typical cases. Apart from providing legal services, the robot guides can help relieve a serious atmosphere in litigation service halls, because some robot guides can speak in a witty way with a childish sound. Many people may feel nervous when they step into court and the robot guide can help them reduce psychological stress.

**Court trial stage - Remote trial**

A remote trial means that litigants can participate in litigation, witnesses testify and judicial appraisers provide expert opinions through audiovisual transmission technology. Through transmission channels of sound, video and image and terminal equipment established by network
technology, judges, litigants and participants in the proceedings can simultaneously participate in the trial at the court and at the remote trial point facilitated with internet and relevant apps.

Relevant legislation about remote trial is limited in China. Article 259 of Judicial Interpretation of Civil Procedure Law of People's Republic of China (Hereinafter referred to as Interpretation of Civil Procedure Law) stipulates that in summary procedure, with the consent of both parties and permission of the People's Court, the audiovisual transmission technology may be used to open a court session. According to Article 73 of Civil Procedure Law of People's Republic of China, (Hereinafter referred to as Civil Procedure Law) with the permission of the People's Court, witnesses may testify through audiovisual transmission technology under the following circumstances: failure to attend court due to health reasons, traffic inconvenience, force majeure such as natural disasters and other valid causes. Courts in some areas such as Shanghai have issued specific rules for remote trial of criminal cases.

At present, practices about remote trial across the country are in the lead of theory. Therefore, remote trial lacks legislative support and theoretical research. Due to the fact that the practice of courts in various areas is not completely consistent, the remote trial shall be introduced roughly by taking Jilin Province as an example. In Jilin Province there are no strict requirements for the types of cases which remote trials apply to. Remote trial is mainly applied in the summary procedure and it is also applied in first instance of ordinary procedure and special procedure. In addition, there is no need for both parties to reach an agreement; either party can apply for a remote trial. Thus, one party can participate in court trial through cloud conference system and the other party may go to the court to attend the trial in the traditional way.

It is to be noted that car accidents account for a large proportion in civil cases and people injured in the traffic accidents have to wait for a long time to get compensation. Yuhang People’s Court in Zhejiang Province has carried out a significant innovation, the “Yuhang model” in handling road accidents. The “Yuhang model” is actually a pre-litigation mediation platform for road accidents and the platform is established by the joint efforts of the court, insurance company, insurance industry association, insurance regulatory commission and public security agency. With a uniform and transparent mediation standard and compensation calculator in the platform, the parties can quickly reach an agreement with the help of the mediator. Mediation results confirmed by the court will be immediately transmitted to the system of an insurance company. People injured in road accident can get compensation from the insurance company by triggering “one click settlement”. Through the platform, judicial confirmation of mediation documents can be finished within 30 minutes and “one click settlement” can shorten the time of getting compensation to even 28 minutes.

**Execution stage - Electronic delivery system**

Whether the legal documents are successfully delivered affects the exercise of the litigants’ rights and progression of litigation activities. However, it is not easy to deliver legal documents to litigants successfully in China. Even in case of being informed of the accurate address for service, the court has to spend a lot of time on travelling to the address of service if the litigants live far from the court. In addition, population mobility continues to increase in China, so frequent change of residence also poses serious challenge to service. Electronic service is a great innovation in the information era to solve the difficulty of service.
Yantian People’s Court in Guangdong Province takes advantage of social media like WeChat to realize electronic delivery of legal documents. After entering the name, ID number and mobile phone number through WeChat, the served can enter face recognition system. When the face of the served is in front of the camera, the verification of identification can be finished within minutes. The served can receive legal documents like summons to court, notice of filing, notice of adducing evidence through WeChat. Indeed, the “mobile court” option on WeChat ‘allows users to complete case filings, hearings and evidence exchange without physically appearing in court.’ The WeChat app which employs Artificial Intelligence (AI) for decision making, allow litigants appear by video as Artificial Intelligence Judge with on-screen avatar that prompts them to present their cases. Notwithstanding that AI Judges have been proactive, it has been criticized that it is dangerous to hand over legal disputes to virtual Judge using online interface with verdicts given via webchat.

**Intelligent execution**

Difficulty of execution of decisions has always been a problem faced by Chinese courts. The first and essential part of execution is to find the property targeted for execution. The executable property of the executed person exists in many forms, such as savings in different banks, real estate, car, security and so on. Therefore, the judge has to go to different agencies like banks, real estate registration center, vehicle administration office, stock exchange etc. to search executable property one by one. The system of searching executable property online is designed to solve the difficulty of searching and controlling the property of the executed person. The system is established by courts cooperating with the agencies the report mentioned above. By the end of 2017, the courts have searched 16 items of information about executable property online like account information, bank deposit information, vehicle information, foreign investment information, security information etc. The establishment of the system shows that judges can quickly and accurately locate the executable property online without leaving the office. Searching executable property online improves the efficiency of execution work and shortens the time for the executed person to transfer property to evade execution.

The WeChat app which employs Artificial Intelligence (AI) for decision making, allow litigants appear by video as Artificial Intelligence Judge with on-screen avatar that prompts them to present their cases.

For civil and commercial cases, the successful conclusion of most cases will depend on the execution of the court. As the final step of execution, the effect of the judicial auction is closely related with whether the creditor’s claims can be protected. The traditional judicial auction is conducted by auction agency entrusted by courts, and traditional judicial auctions tend to breed judicial corruption. Selected auction houses are designated to proceed with judicial auction in a costly and less transparent manner. In China, of the cases of judicial corruption, 80%-90% appear in the field of execution, and 80%-90% of corruption in the field of execution appears in judicial auctions. If the parties waive the right to choose auction agency, the court has the right to entrust auction agency to implement judicial auction. Driven by high commission interest, the auction agency may distribute 40% of the commission to the judge in order to be entrusted by the court. The public can
supervise the entire auction process online, so the doubts on the injustice of judicial auction can be eliminated to some extent. Judicial auction online can reduce the tendency for judges to become corrupt and may achieve a more transparent and fair judicial auction.

**Judicial information disclosure platform**

The social civilization of a country is closely related to judicial civilization. The judicial activities in a harmonious and civilized society should be open to the public. So far, several electronic platforms have been established to realize judicial disclosure. Judicial disclosure guarantees people’s right to know, right of supervision and right of participation.

The judicial documents can show the whole process of the trial and the quality of the judicial documents can objectively reflect the judge’s professional quality and sense of responsibility. The disclosure of judicial documents is the basic content of judicial disclosure. In July 2013, the website China Judgments Online was officially put into operation. From the operation of China Judgments Online to May 6, 2018, the visit volume reaches 1.5 billion and the total number of judicial documents disclosed on the website is 45 million. During the two years 2014 and 2015, about 14.6 million judicial documents have been uploaded on the website China Judgments Online and 30.5 million lawsuits have been settled, hence, the number of disclosed documents accounts for about 50% of settled lawsuits. Although the portion of disclosure should be greatly improved in the future, the portion of 50% during the period is still commendable and encouraging. Fully advancing disclosure of judicial documents is beneficial in protecting the public’s right to know and right of supervision, though it has excluded the cases related to state secrets, commercial secrets, personal privacy and other information prohibited from disclosure by law. Uploading the judicial documents means that those judicial documents are under the most rigorous supervision environment. The public will speak highly of judicial documents of high quality. On the contrary, documents of low quality will be criticized by the public, which undoubtedly will prompt the judges to be cautious about the trial and adjudication. Under the supervision of the public, the judges may devote more time and energy to improving the quality of judicial documents and preventing abuse of discretion.

**Live broadcast of online court trial**

The principle of open trial is an important principle in the Constitution of People’s Republic of China, Criminal Procedure Law and Civil Procedure Law. According to Civil Procedure Law, court trial about civil cases, except those involving state secrets, personal privacy, or as otherwise stipulated by law, shall be heard in public. On 11th December 2013, the platform live broadcast of court trial online was officially operated, which enables people to watch court trial online even without leaving home. From the operation of the platform on 6th May, 2018, 0.83 million cases have been live broadcasted and the visit volume reaches about 60 billion. Since 1st July, 2016, all open trials of the Supreme Court, in principle, shall be broadcasted on the platform. Live broadcasting court trials online makes the court trials more accessible to the public, which ensure the public’s right to know and right of supervision. Moreover, watching court trial online is a good way of disseminating legal knowledge, enhancing the legal awareness of members of the public, encouraging the public to be law-abiding. In addition, under the pressure of being supervised by the public, the judge will pay attention to their
language usage, their behavior and maintain a fair and impartial position. Cases broadcasted online will become first-hand information on the Chinese trial system and precious resources to promote the rule of law in China.

**Opportunities of digitalization of courts in China**

Digitalization of courts provides strong technical support for judicial justice. Judicial disclosure is the premise of judicial justice and judicial credibility is the outcome of judicial justice. Judicial disclosure is just a means and judicial justice is the ultimate goal. Therefore, the court must actively expand the channels for judicial disclosure, increase the degree of judicial disclosure and enhance the transparency of judicial activities. The popularization of the internet has provided the public with a broader space for supervising and participating in judicial activities. The four judicial information disclosure platforms are good examples to illustrate how digitalization of courts contributes to judicial disclosure. People can obtain the judicial process information and execution information online so that people’s right to know is guaranteed; judicial documents are open to the public online to increase the transparency of the judiciary; the whole process of court trial is live broadcasted online to accept the supervision of the public. In a transparent judicial environment, any hint of unfairness of the trial process may be exposed to the public, which prompts the judges to maintain a neutral and impartial position. Digitalization of courts enables the judicial power to run under the “sunshine” and accept the supervision of the public, which will definitely reduce judicial injustice. Besides, some intelligent auxiliary case handling systems, with the functions of reminding the judgment's deviation from legitimacy and providing evidence scrutiny, help to prevent criminals from being unjustly and falsely charged or sentenced. In conclusion, digitalization of courts provides strong technical support for improving judicial justice and making people believing in courts and judges more and more.

**To improve judicial efficiency**

“Justice delayed is justice denied”, fully demonstrates that efficiency is one of inherent values of justice. The judicial activities are in pursuit of not only justice but also efficiency. Disputes should be resolved timely so that the legitimate rights can be protected in time. With the rapid development of economics and improvement of people’s consciousness of protecting rights, the number of cases handled by courts has been increasing rapidly. Thus, courts at all levels generally face the dilemma that a limited number of judges have to deal with an overload of cases. The digitalization of courts provides an opportunity to improve judicial efficiency to solve such a dilemma which courts in China are encountered with. It also greatly enhances the judicial efficiency and ensures that the litigation can be carried out without undue delay.

**Challenges of digitalization of courts in China**

Although according to article 120 of Civil Procedure Law, when bringing a lawsuit, a statement of claim shall be submitted to the people’s court, together with a number of copies corresponding to the
number of defendants. From the expression of the article, a statement of claim should be submitted in paper version, but plaintiffs only need to submit the electronic version of a statement of a claim by filing a case online. The question whether the electronic version of a statement of a claim has legal validity is not stipulated clearly in the Civil Procedural Law. Even though the courts in different regions such as Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou have issued relevant rules for E-filing, these rules only appear in internal documents of the courts and do not have legal effects across the country. Therefore, to provide a legal basis for E-filing across the country, laws about E-filing shall be formulated by the National People’s Congress or judicial interpretations shall be issued by the Supreme Court to confirm the legitimacy of E-filing and stipulate specific procedures for E-filing.

As discussed earlier, there have been inconsistencies across the country on who can file cases online. In most areas, only lawyers can file a case online directly; ordinary people only can make an appointment online to file a case. Filing a case directly online, as the name suggests, litigants or lawyers submit electronic version of litigation materials online and judges assess those online.

Remote trial

Legislation about remote trial is incomplete in China. Article 259 of Interpretation of Civil Procedure Law stipulates that in summary procedure, with the consent of both parties and permit of people’s court, the audiovisual transmission technology may be used to open a court session. According to this article, it is stipulated that remote trial can be applied in summary procedure, which means remote trial can be applied in civil cases with simple facts and clear legal relationships. However, there is no provision relevant to remote trial in Criminal Procedure Law. The application of remote trial is a manifestation of the exercise of judicial power. The exercise of judicial power must strictly abide by the law. Although, article 259 in Interpretation of Civil Procedure Law provides certain legality for remote trial, it is far from being enough to provide a legal basis for remote trial. Therefore, legality and legitimacy of remote trial and its specific application procedures should be clearly stipulated and approved by the legislature through laws.

First of all, the issues concerning the scope of application of remote trial is worth a discussion. The remote trial in different regions is in the exploratory stage and there is no consistent scope of application of remote trial. Even though the regulations about remote trial are rare, the practice is still in full swing all over the country. In practice, remote trial is generally applied in simple civil cases such as online disputes, criminal cases of second instance and cases about commutation and parole. With regard to the scope of application of remote trial, the paramount premise is that the case can be judged rightly even in remote trial. The following factors may affect the justice of remote trial: Firstly, if the legal relationships of the case are very complicated, remote trial is not conducive to figuring out the truth; Secondly, if the number of the litigants is too large, it is hard for the judge to maintain order of the court through remote trial and the court trial may seem to be chaotic; Thirdly, if the litigants are disabled physically like mute, blind and deaf or litigants are juveniles, remote trial may not be sufficient for them to exercise their litigation rights and the communication between litigants and judge will become difficult in remote trial; Fourthly, if the
evidence needs to be cross-examined by touching, smelling or observing carefully, it may not be completed in remote trial. Based on the analysis above, the scope of application of remote trial can include civil cases of first instance in summary procedure, cases of second instance only dealing with legal issues and cases about commutation and parole. Simple civil cases of first instance in summary procedure refer to those cases with facts which the parties do not have controversies over and the legal relationships between the parties are clear. Cases of second instance only dealing with legal issues refer to the civil, criminal and administrative cases of second cases where the parties acknowledge the facts ascertained by trial of first instance but they have controversies over the application of laws. The reason is that facts are ascertained in trial of first instance and parties will not adduce evidence and go on cross-examination, judge only needs to adjudicate whether the application of laws in trial of first instance is right or not. Cases about commutation or parole refer to whether the judge will commute or grant parole to the criminals according to their behaviors and attitudes in prisons. The reason why criminal cases of first trial are not covered by the scope of remote trial is that criminal trial is closely related to the criminal's freedom and the physical evidence such as weapons of offence need to be carefully identified in court. In addition, the judge cannot tell the authenticity of the criminal's statement and the witness's testimony by observing their subtle facial expressions and moods by remote trial. In short, given that the audiovisual transmission technology is not perfect and the remote trial is under exploration, the scope of application of remote trial should not be too broad.

**Electronic delivery system**

First of all, it is important to understand the scope of the application of electronic delivery system. This article, by way of exemption, delimits the scope of application of electronic service. It is reasonable to preclude judgments, rulings and mediation documents because these three kinds of legal documents are the results of the trials and closely related to the substantive rights and obligations of the parties. Therefore, the article implies that legal documents, except for judgments, rulings and mediation documents, can be served by electronic service, including notification of accepting the case, bill of defense, notification of opening a court session, notification of adducing evidence, court summons, etc. However, three situations should be precluded from the scope of application of electronic service: cases about dissolving marriage relationship, writ for payment in proceedings for supervising and urging the clearance of debt, and bill of statement. Electronic delivery system can produce dual effects on procedural law and substantive law.

The application of electronic delivery system is actually a balance between strong judicial efficiency and weak guarantee of fair procedure. It is obvious that legislation in China sets the standard according to arrival theory, which means the electronic delivery is acknowledged as long as the legal documents enter the served's specific electronic system. Adopting arrival theory is efficiency-oriented but it is detrimental to guarantee fair procedure. A nation-wide system is needed to for electronic delivery of legal documents, and some pilot projects were launched in several regions since 2017.
Conclusion

In conclusion, some achievements have been made in terms of digitalization of courts, but it is still in its infancy in China. Much is still needed to be done to address some of the identified challenges in this paper as it relates to the inconsistencies in e-filing system; the scope of application of remote trial coupled with the uncertainty and inconsistent regional regulations on the application of remote trial; the challenge of streaming of judicial proceedings; among others. This becomes imperative as E-filing system, remote trial and alternative disputes resolution online system provide convenience for people as it helps them save a lot of time and energy. Intelligent voice conversion system, intelligent auxiliary case handling system, system of searching executable property online and electronic service contributes to improving judicial efficiency. In addition, the judicial disclosure platforms guarantee the public’s right to know and right of supervision. Full judicial disclosure is conducive to restricting judicial power, improving judicial justice and strengthening judicial credibility. Even though the significance of digitalization of courts is noticeable, the challenges that come with it might not be ignored. Although some pilot programme are introduced in several regions in China, it is noted that a set of clear-cut guidelines are missing for application of remote trial, electronic delivery system and other aspects of digitalization of courts in China.

Practice precedes law, which means there is a lack of legislative support and theoretical research in the field of digitalization of courts. Technological innovations and the scope of their applications require further debate, or else, it will undermine the legitimacy of digitalization of courts. It is necessary for the judiciary in China to develop consistent systems in order to achieve compatibility and adequate information sharing in the pursuit of rule of law in a digital world. With the global effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, there might be an additional need to accelerate the digitalization of the administration of justice in China with the further exploration of AI technology and cyber-courts in order to streamline case handling within the sprawling court system in China.
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