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Beyond Productivity and Automation: The Evolving AI Footprint on Culture and Everyday Life

Sophia Sanchez · Saturday, December 9th, 2023

Contrary to popular imagination, the impact of artificial intelligence has been rather subtle. Current realities paint a different picture in comparison to the tectonic cultural shift imagined by previous generations of an AI world: conscious cyborgs, automated cars, and bionic humans. Though some of these conceptualizations might indeed remain in the process of development, the actualities of these technologies have been distinct from what has been envisioned in science fiction and futurologists' estimations.

For the time being, language models—the most well-known aspect of AI today—have dominated artificial intelligence and trickled into public consciousness. Although machine learning and artificial intelligence are by no means novel technologies, they've garnered mass appeal and speculation recently.

The field has experienced its fair share of ups and downs in interest and investment before finally maturing into the recent AI boom, which ChatGPT and a slew of other language models released in the previous year have fueled. But beyond technical jargon and discussions on the economic impact lies an often ignored aspect of technology—its imprint on day-to-day activity and the progressive evolution of culture with and around technological innovation.

With AI detectors and [essay checkers](#) skyrocketing in popularity among students and software professionals casually deploying a coding-focused AI to detect bugs in their programs, the changes wrought by artificial intelligence have become the norm in a short span of twelve months. While this might seem increasingly ordinary today, the swiftness of these major leaps becomes apparent when one contemplates life before the latter half of 2022.

Demystifying the Rapid Adoption of AI in Contemporary Society

The technically astute might be able to provide several reasons why AI is a potent aid to human ideation and productivity, as well as being instrumental in helping us solve the most pressing global challenges. While this explains the intent behind adopting artificial intelligence at a higher rate on regulatory and functional levels, it leaves out the social component of AI, and fails to explain why people today have been so quick to accept chatbots—despite near-persistent rumors of human replacement by AI.

The answer to this is possibly twofold. One being psychological and the other, unsurprisingly, related to the economy. The anthropomorphism associated with artificial intelligence and the innate human tendency to view objects, animals, and even computer programs from a hominid perspective tends to offer some explanation as to why people might still view AI positively.

However, this also has a possibly unintended side effect, which might result in unidirectional emotional attachments with artificial intelligence since the latter cannot fathom emotions or emotional constructs for what they are. This has been witnessed by the growing demand for AI companions and personalized AI chatbots. There's been considerable documentation of the psychological effects of AI use, with users of such tools displaying even [anxiety and stress](#) in the absence of these technologies.

Regardless, all effects of AI's psychological impact are not necessarily negative, and there are ongoing explorations that are considering the induction of AI tools in mental health frameworks to ensure better engagement and long-term treatment outcomes through seamless communication. The economic aspect of this dynamic between humanity and AI has more to do with the competitive market. AI's arrival, while initially colored with a broad, generalized brush stroke of automation and replacement, soon revealed that AI has more to do with human betterment and support, as opposed to substitution.

This, coupled with the fact that AI assistance invariably leads to better results in at least some activities, has incentivized the adoption of artificial intelligence among the workforce and the student population. The fear of being left behind invariably pervades modern society and it doesn't come as a surprise that the innately curious younger generations are [quicker adopters](#) of AI technologies.



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Technical Discourse and Beyond: Why the impact of AI Technologies

have been subtle yet significant

The focus of developing artificial intelligence has consistently remained on making human life simpler. Recent launches of language model-based artificial intelligence have also centered around simplifying tedious tasks such as content generation, data analysis, and pattern recognition. Primarily, these technologies have sought to mimic human content and achieve a certain proficiency in doing so.

While the writing and image-generation use cases have kicked up nothing less than a storm, other aspects of generative artificial intelligence such as its help with coding have been far less controversial—revealing another psychological component in humans’ approach toward AI. However, beyond the complexities of neural networks and natural language processing, the integration of AI and ML protocols in everyday life has been gradual, with the shift being noticed only as an afterthought.

While search engine giants like Google have been incorporating AI into their internet search mechanics since the mid-2000s, it was only post-2022 that search engines actively using generative AI became broadly designated as “AI search engines,” permanently altering how people approach the internet. While the average person relied on Google or Bing barely a year and a half ago, chatbots like ChatGPT or Bard have also entered the list of go-to applications when prompt information is a necessity.

Most interestingly, what began as a cautious approach to AI and several uproars surrounding the technology amid calls to pause its development, humans finally resolved to maximize the productivity of these tools by creating new disciplines like prompt engineering.

Though it could be said that people have always been skeptical of new technologies at the start, the story of AI and ML has been different due to the speed at which humans have come to accept these innovations, regardless of the awareness. In one short year, tech giants have gone from carefully broaching the subject to tying up with major music labels to strike [AI music production deals](#) (paywall).

That’s not all, tech giants like Meta have also gone as far as announcing the creation of synthetic personas of celebrities and influencers, in an attempt to monetize their AI offerings by tapping into the vast potential of the teenage and young adult population. These might but be just a couple of instances as to how AI has been altering perception as well as regular existence, despite a near standoffish attitude from broader society not so long ago.

What Lies Ahead

It is apparent that AI is not taking over the world with an infallible army or cyborgs, and it clearly isn’t an omniscient assistant that aids humans in their errands either. Far from it, AI has involved considerable effort and resources to train, sustain, and proliferate. Regardless, it has finally found footing in a world that has experimented extensively, yet borne a certain skepticism in its collective mind toward the replication of human intellect.

It doesn’t take much to realize that AI neither fully understands what it presents to an eager individual interacting with a chatbot, nor does it feel affection or sympathy for someone chatting

with their digital companion. More interestingly, the technology is meticulously decoding human intent to provide the most efficient and pertinent responses for the sole purpose of human ease. While this one-sided, emotional, and partly fearful tryst with AI continues, the technology will continue to transform human perception and approach to everyday subsistence – which, however, might mostly be apparent only in retrospective contemplations.

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