

AI's Recent History

The Skinny on AI for Education, January 2024

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Marvelling at AI's Swift Evolution

Watching the breath-taking pace of AI progress this past year, one realization stands out - the future is here. From AI art tools like DALL-E 2 generating striking imagery based on text prompts, to chatbots like ChatGPT, Bard and Google Gemini holding remarkably human-like conversations, emerging capabilities once confined to science fiction shape daily headlines at a dizzying pace.

Beyond the excitement lies profound questions. Who should govern increasingly impactful technologies permeating life and work? Whose values get embedded across machine learning models deployed at a population scale? What mechanisms can foster human flourishing amidst such rapid change? Collaborative leadership is needed on all sides to grapple with complex balances and imbalances.

Spotlighting Promising Classroom Applications

Simultaneously, we must thoughtfully and judiciously implement specific AI advances to harness their benefit for learners. For instance, initiatives providing free access to powerful computing infrastructure for researchers and technology developers can make developing education-focused AI tools more viable and equitable. Complementing such efforts, techniques adapting state-of-the-art natural language models can greatly reduce barriers to adoption, like the need for extensive data annotation.

Research illuminating best practices for AI implementation provides educators with key guardrails - from customising models on specialised learning tasks to boost performance, to directly engaging students in critical evaluation of real-world systems using current events. Such engagement builds essential skills for agency in an AI-infused world by examining both profound opportunities and risks through an ethical lens.

Considering the Complexity of AI Regulation

Alongside rapid progress, governments grapple with policy responses balancing economic competitiveness, accountability and human dignity. For example, the European Union's new AI Act creates oversight bodies governing both private and public sector systems. It mandates impact assessments for high-risk applications like healthcare algorithms. Fines over algorithms enabling prohibited practices aim to prevent unacceptable risks, though complex trade-offs underlie determining what constitutes 'unacceptable'.

Cultivating Enduring Human Capabilities

Amidst such swift change what foundations best serve students for lifelong agency? Data and AI literacy empowers self-determination; higher order thinking skills, such as metacognition differentiate AI and Human Intelligence and increase individual learning performance, traditions like philosophy nurture ethical reasoning spanning decades of volatility. If anchored in care, courage and community, schools can elevate and engage young people in leadership to shape a shared future guided by our highest common hopes - of justice, promise and human dignity for all.