

NON-VERBATIM MINUTES

DATE: 18 July 2023

TIME: 14:00 – 15:00

VENUE: Room M, Portcullis House (and via Zoom)

TITLE: The Impact of Intuitive AI on Digital Skills and Society

CHAIR: Chris Green MP (Con, Bolton West)

SPEAKERS: Carissa Véliz - Associate Professor at the Institute for Ethics in AI, University of Oxford
Michaela Neild – Government Affairs and Policy Manager, Google
Patrick Craven - Executive Director for Policy and Stakeholder Partnerships, City & Guilds Group

Minutes

Chris Green MP, Chair of the APPG for Digital Skills, opened the meeting and welcomed speakers and attendees. Chris said there is a need to understand the skills we need as intuitive AI will affect all areas of our lives and for this reason the political debate surrounding the technology is very interesting.

Chris introduced the first speaker, Carissa Veliz, and invited her to speak.

Carissa Veliz, Associate Professor at the Institute for Ethics in AI, University of Oxford

Carissa said that digital skills must not come at the expense of losing analogue skills. There have recently been ransomware attacks on energy companies and they cannot operate anymore due to this hijacking. The company is being forced to contact retired employees to assist and save the day. There is a danger of losing these analogue skills altogether and once they are lost they will not come back. Another example is US Naval officers being taught to navigate by the stars as it is acknowledged that GPS systems can be jammed. Focusing on the digital world risks losing the natural world and communal meeting spaces like coffee shops, the rich world of physical things.

‘Intuitive AI’ is an interesting term, what do we mean by ‘intuitive’? The more intuitive AI is the more misleading it can be. It is easy to engage with a Chatbot, but this engagement is partly so smooth because it hijacks our emotional and empathic responses that are designed to respond to sentient beings. Carissa outlined how sentient beings use emotions like smiling at one another to interact and said there can be confusion when AI simulates this type of sentience, whilst not being genuinely sentient. AI is thereby designed to be imposters as they are posing as something they are not.

ChatGPT and other LLMs almost never say they do not know something. ChatGPT gives an answer designed to be ‘plausible based on a statistical analysis. AI does not know the limits of its own knowledge. Large language models are not truth-tracking, and it is too

risky to use them in contexts in which the truth is extremely important: politics, medicine, etc.

Surveillance is dangerous for democracy. We are collecting too much personal data to feed AI, and that makes us vulnerable. It is dangerous for individuals (risks of discrimination, extortion, stalking, public exposure), and for society (national security risks, risks of personalized propaganda, etc.). This level of surveillance has only been seen before in authoritarian regimes. There is a close link between surveillance, control, and loss of freedom.

Carissa concluded her comments by discussing potential regulation, which should be designed carefully. We should ban the trade in personal data, as she argues in her book, *Privacy Is Power*. We should instantiate randomised controlled trials and safety standards for AI before the public gets exposed to it. There are many elections coming up in the world and we have not solved the problem of fake news and propaganda and intuitive AI could create this type of content very easily, which can influence voters. Algorithm that maximises engagement have a toxic tendency in that the most engaging content is often fake and vitriolic. We should settle issues of copyright to support people in society who innovate. We should also preserve analogue skills as once they are gone we will regret that loss and there is a trend to turn everything into digital that is currently analogue, which is not necessarily the best option.

Chris thanked Carissa for her remarks and invited the next speaker, Michaela Neild, to speak.

Michaela Neild, Government Affairs and Policy Manager, Google

Michaela said AI is not new but it has taken off in the last few months, certainly this year. Generative AI is of great interest to Google where it creates new material. Speeches can be drafted to last a certain period of time, which is new material based on huge amounts of data held. The Internet was the first phase, then mobile, now AI is the most recent significant phase.

Teaching machines has changed. At first it would be descriptive, for example, a Cat has four legs, fur, etc. Around 2012 machines could be trained by pictures, for example, is this a cat or a lamp post? Generative AI, like Bard or ChatGPT, can describe a cat via the data it holds and also give advice on issues to be aware of for a prospective owner when considering become a cat owner.

Google has used AI in its own products since 2012, including Google Translate and Google Maps. Google is optimistic about the potential of AI and has come up with seven principles regarding the use of the technology. Googles AI principles are; being socially beneficial, avoid unfair bias, be built and tested for safety, be accountable, incorporate privacy principles, upheld high scientific standards and be available for use to projects that support these principles. Google would not pursue technology that could cause overall harm, which includes weapons or technology that gathers harmful surveillance or contravenes human rights law. Google works with each country on their own regulations with the EU, Brazil and Canada with legislation currently in development.

Google Health has created a programme that is as accurate as radiologists at detecting breast cancer as a radiologist. Technology can support professionals, allowing them to focus on other aspects of their work. Google has launched an economic impact report that found AI powered innovation can create £400bn in economic value in the UK by 2030. This could save the average worker in the UK one hundred hours per year. The impact on the skills gap and jobs is still being assessed, but Google is working out where they can be most useful.

Chris thanked Michaela for her remarks and invited the final speaker, Patrick Craven, to speak.

Patrick Craven, Executive Director for Policy and Stakeholder Partnerships, City and Guilds

Patrick said he was speaking from an accreditation perspective. The Industry views generative AI as both a threat and an opportunity. The concerns are that AI can be used as a malpractice tool. Assessment methodology has traditionally relied upon testing individuals independent creativity and thought creation process. Where people are not invigilated for assessment tasks, people could use AI to help generate better responses and so misguide assessors. ChatGPT's threat to higher education assessment methodology is a common example of this type of debate.

City and Guilds are not as concerned about this due to assessing people largely based on their occupational competence and practical skills. They would mitigate the risk by adjusting the methodology as and where required.

The area where City and Guilds are most interested in is noting that the AI genie is now out of the bottle and will increasingly find its way into the world of work as a productivity tool, so they are interested in how they assess people's ability to use the tools most effectively. Done correctly, huge productivity gains could be realised. For occupations, the skills to be a digital practitioner in this space and who create the new forms of AI will find its way into the digital occupations curriculum.

Noting the previous discussion, Patrick concluded by saying an important point to note was what is the ratio between the supporting of jobs fuelled by this type of AI to those which are under threat of displacement. There will be winners and losers and where jobs are displaced, where will the new jobs come from so we can transition skills to allow people to take these jobs. AI will not go away and we must be mindful on how we respond to this but approach this evolution process positively.

Discussion

Chris thanked the speakers for their contributions and said we need to step up to understand the opportunity and challenges. The Chair said he would not personally own an automatic car as he prefers to retain his driving skills, nevertheless he acknowledged the appeal of driverless vehicles.

Chris asked about intellectual property rights when users interact with tools such as Google products where they must always accept the terms and conditions. He said that as AI gets

more integrated this leads to a debate about whether the value given is fair to both the companies and the customers.

Anderona Cole from Jisc asked how we eliminate bias in AI in an increasingly polarised society. Carissa said that academics are important as they are not paid by a company. Carissa suggested big tech companies contribute to the polarisation and that we would not want every interaction analysed, solved and potentially used against us.

Lord Aberdare agreed intellectual property is very important as AI gathers vast amounts of data. How do we assess and evaluate generative AI? He felt the seven principles are important but asked who monitors these principles for compliance. Lord Aberdare remembered when he used to check answers given by calculators in his head before trusting they were accurate. He noted the challenges of preserving analogue skills.

Michaela said the question of regulation and oversight is an international question and Google has developed their own principles and reviews them regularly. Google has their no-go areas and works with each government to develop their regulation. Michaela noted the difference required in regulation between calculating fuel efficiency on a route to, for example, advising users on their suitability for a mortgage. Google looks forward to taking part in the AI conference at the end of the year but hopes for an international standard. They do not make the decisions for other tech companies but hopes other companies would agree to adopt Google's seven principles.

Carissa said AI technology touches every area of life. In education, there is a huge benefit in developing analogue skills such as writing. There should be strict limits on the use of AI for students as we cannot promote their human rights if we keep infringing them. We use tech to teach them and this tech is owned by companies. As an academic she has concerns about maintaining the privacy of students as most products are designed to collect data. Tools make us more productive but the tech itself does not necessarily solve all of our problems.

Lord Clement-Jones said he agreed with the points raised about AI and intellectual property. He noted that in the legal profession, paralegals can do the job of qualified solicitors with the assistance of AI tools. Lord Clement-Jones asked about the specific means of teaching people about AI so they can have the digital tools to be able to use it effectively. However, they are regulated, we will need to be able to use AI properly so we are upskilled.

Patrick said digital bootcamps are flexible enough to quickly integrate new types of training as mainstream qualifications take some time to adjust and come to fruition. In the world of digital, new training can quickly become out of date. City and Guilds are looking at online, agile solutions to understand how we get the best use of the tools. This requires a good knowledge of how to make the most effective queries, but also to have a good base knowledge of the subject to be able to validate and assess the answers that are given back by the generative AI.

Jodie Fraser from the National Lottery Heritage Fund said they were interested in how to develop skills to conduct effective searches and to help make work quicker, with appropriate regulation in place to monitor use. Digital literacy and misinformation will

become urgent and the issue of intellectual property has been an issue in every sector she has worked in throughout her career. She asked about the opportunities for AI in terms of refreshing digital skills.

Baroness Uddin addressed the meeting and advised she is Co-Chair of the APPG for Metaverse and Web 3.0. There is a huge gap in access and accessibility and whilst we have been working towards inclusivity in terms of data analysis, sharing, training and upskilling for some time there are many communities that remain excluded. Baroness Uddin said bootcamps and other training opportunities need to be brought to communities where they will be impacted by it as it seems they are only available to people already in the system. AI has been around for a long time but inherently has been discriminatory against Black and Asian young men in particular, so this discrimination is already built in to the systems. The potential is huge, but we must make sure we embed inclusivity.

Patrick said that bootcamps are not restrictive in terms of access, but depending on how they are deployed by the training providers this can affect accessibility. For example, some are targeted towards inactive and unemployed people looking to return to the employment market. These bootcamps could be either online or in person. Some bootcamps are targeted towards the self-employed. Some are targeted towards existing workforce for employers, which would be suitable for those looking to upskill, so there is variety in delivery and variety in access based on who is being targeted.

Carissa said we need to make sure everyone can access the tools. We have an opportunity to rethink what we want in terms of values in society as AI has the power to change it and could change it in the wrong way if we are not clear on what we want to achieve.

Michaela said that there are existing regulations on the use of data such as GDPR but we must continue the conversation regarding newer technology. The UK government are piloting research for data researchers, academics so they can access the most advanced technology and consider issues such as green technology. Chris noted the amount of energy collected for data storage was vast.

Mick Westman of Digital Innovators said that over generations each technology that has come along has become more pervasive. Technology is driven by people and we must continue the human conversations, particularly in an AI-driven world. AI is hugely beneficial to UK plc and could break down barriers. Young people take AI tools for granted and can learn faster than in previous generations. Mick is unsure if we have the mechanisms in place to teach young people about AI. He supports Google's seven principles but feels we need more of them. All young people need to be digital practitioners, reflecting how students in the industrial age needed Maths and English. AI is completely changing the landscape of what future education will look like.

Holly Boothroyd of Microsoft said that intuitive AI are accelerators. She asked when are the people going to see the benefits? Four day working weeks has been trialled and it is fair that people are often afraid about the scale of impact AI will have on their jobs. By giving people back their lives in a four day working week we have an opportunity to help people improve their lives. Holly asked what conversations government is having to ensure people receive the benefits of these technologies in the lives of constituents and how companies are delivering these benefits to their employees.

An in-person attendee said that there are 24.3m in the working population that does not have digital skills. This is not down to lack of provision, but lack of motivation. The speed of AI is leaving people behind and some may not catch up. Chris agreed that we often hear about the digital divide and it affects people at all levels.

Daniel Mullings, Director of Techembrace said that he works with five international companies and finds that when students go into college there is no digital audit to ascertain what skills they have. Michaela said there are many national partners contributing to the journey. Carissa said there are social problems as well as technology problems and big tech must be regulated, even if they are willing to regulate themselves.

Chris thanked all speakers and attendees for their contributions and closed the meeting.