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Generating Deep Discussions Around Generative AI

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The resurgence and emergence of generative artificial intelligence technologies (GAI) presents as a point of both celebration and consternation for the contemporary media and information ecosystem. On one hand, GAI technologies are making information and content creation increasingly accessible and affordable to a plethora of audiences and helping to close longstanding skills gaps in an (increasingly) permanently online and permanently connected world.¹ On the other hand, GAI usage is surging at a time of already precarious and diminished media literacy skills² paired with increased discord, incivility, and misinformation. The latter concerns overshadow and potentially overwhelm the potential for GAI to assist, improve, and optimize human communication. As is seen with any emerging technology, GAI has sparked equally loud cheers and jeers, with dueling news and pop culture headlines both celebrating an era of unlocked human potential while cautioning against the threats of automation.

With this in mind, our collection of essays features informed commentary and critique from media scholars and industry professionals written to introduce the myriad applications and challenges of GAI and associated technologies. For example, Bowman offers a discussion of the “moral panics” accompanying GAI debates that closely reflect prior historical fears of technology, and Gunkel asks us to consider ways in which large-language models (LLMs) augment rather than diminish writing. Archer presents a balance of “the good, the bad, and the ugly” around GAIs in producing complex and realistic video content, noting that the distinctions are often more about intention and effect than technology *per se*. Wallace likewise examines ethical, legal, and practical concerns regarding legislation of GAI in a variety of applications. Jackson and their colleagues present evidence that LLMs often struggle to understand world Englishes,³ and Loof and his colleagues consider more deeply the psychology and phenomenology of humans being partnered with AI technologies in the emerging digital (and physical) workplace. Davis delves into how the rapid expansion of GAI applications, encompassing large language models, image generators, audio, and video, is fundamentally reshaping the way content is created and consumed on a global scale. Ferreira offers an industry insider perspective on the pace of the industry and the changes occurring. Sévigny and Waxman provide a thought-provoking commentary on the intersection of relationship-building and trust within the context of generative AI.

The essays pose more questions than they provide answers, and we consider this to be a deliberate aspect rather than a flaw. GAI tools have revolutionized the way our current mediated experiences are shaped. These powerful technologies not only assist in optimizing various tasks but also hold immense potential for future possibilities in diverse fields. The ideas presented in the following pages serve as a source of intellectual inspiration, igniting curiosity and stimulating critical thinking regarding the potential implications of upcoming advancements in the communications industry and throughout academia. As readers consider these thought-provoking articles, they embark upon a journey to explore uncharted territories within the

realm of AI research and its impact on society at large. By challenging existing assumptions and raising new inquiries we hope these essays lay the foundation for stimulating further discussions and investigations that will shape the trajectory of AI advancement in both immediate practical applications and long-term societal implications.

References

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