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AI, do my homework! How ChatGPT pitted teachers against tech

Know-it-all chatbots landed with a bang last year, convincing one engineer that machines had become sentient, spreading panic that industries could be wiped out, and creating fear of a cheating epidemic in schools and universities. Alarm among educators has reached fever pitch in recent weeks over ChatGPT, an easy-to-use artificial intelligence tool trained on billions of words and a ton of data from the web. It can write a half-decent essay and answer many common classroom questions, sparking a fierce debate about the very future of traditional education.

New York City's education department banned ChatGPT on its networks because of "concerns about negative impacts on student learning." "While the tool may be able to provide quick and easy answers to questions, it does not build critical-thinking and problem-solving skills," said the department's Jenna Lyle.

A group of Australian universities said they would change exam formats to banish AI tools, regarding them as straight-up cheating. However, some in the education sector are more relaxed about AI tools in the classroom, and some even sense an opportunity rather than a threat.

'Important innovation'

That is partly because ChatGPT in its current form still gets stuff wrong. To give one example, it thinks Guatemala is bigger than Honduras. It isn't. Also, ambiguous questions can throw it off track. Ask the tool to describe the Battle of Amiens and it will give a passable detail or two on the 1918 confrontation with World War I. But it does not flag that there was also a skirmish of the same name in 1870. It takes several prompts to realize its error.

"ChatGPT is an important innovation, but no more so than calculators



or text editors," French author and educator Antonio Casilli told AFP. "ChatGPT can help people who are stressed by a blank sheet of paper to write a first draft, but afterwards they still have to write and give it a style." Researcher Olivier Ertzscheid from the University of Nantes agreed that teachers should be focusing on the positives.

In any case, he told AFP, high school students were already using ChatGPT, and any attempt to ban it would just make it more appealing.

Teachers should instead "experi-

ment with the limits" of AI tools, he said, by generating texts themselves and analysing the results with their students.

'Humans deserve to know'

But there is also another big reason to think that educators do not need to panic yet. AI writing tools have long been locked in an arms race with programs that seek to sniff them out, and ChatGPT is no different. A couple of weeks ago, an amateur programmer announced he had spent his new year holiday creating an app that could analyse texts and decide if they were written by ChatGPT. "There's so much chatgpt hype going around," Edward Tian wrote on Twitter. "Is this and that written by AI? We as humans deserve to know!"

His app, GPTZero, is not the first in the field and is unlikely to be the last. Universities already use software that detects plagiarism, so it does not take

a huge leap of imagination to see a future where each essay is rammed through an AI-detector. Campaigners are also floating the idea of digital watermarks or other forms of signifier that will identify AI work.

And OpenAI, the company that owns ChatGPT, said it was already working on a "statistical watermark" prototype. This suggests that educators will be fine in the long run. But Casilli, for one, still believes the impact of such tools has a huge symbolic significance. It partly upended the rules of the game, whereby teachers ask their pupils questions, he said. Now, the student questions the machine before checking everything in the output. "Every time new tools appear we start to worry about potential abuses, but we have also found ways to use them in our teaching," said Casilli.—AFP



(From left to right) Lamar Johnson, Jeffrey Pierce, Storm Reid, Nico Parker, Pedro Pascal, Bella Ramsey, Merle Dandridge and Gabriel Luna attend the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP photos

'The Last of Us'-a new test for video game adaptations

However thrilling they are to play, video games rarely translate well to the big or small screen—indeed, the crossover genre is littered with flops. But the dystopian, zombie-filled HBO series "The Last of Us," premiering in the United States on Sunday and the following day elsewhere, could be about to break the curse. The series has already won a slew of positive reviews, with a score of 97 percent on Rotten Tomatoes, and is on track to be the streaming world's first success of 2023, 10 years after the "The Last of Us" game first debuted on PlayStation.

Game creator Neil Druckmann, along with "Chernobyl" screenwriter Craig



Craig Mazin attends the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California.



Pedro Pascal and Bella Ramsey attend the Los Angeles Premiere of HBO's "The Last of Us" at Regency Village Theatre in Los Angeles, California.

Mazin, helped develop the narrative for television. The story remains faithful to the original Naughty Dog title, following the unlikely duo of demoralized smuggler Joel and spirited teenager Ellie, whom he must protect as the planet's potential last hope against a fast-moving zombie fungus. The nine-episode season-in which Joel is played by "Narcos" and "Mandalorian" star Pedro Pascal and "Game of Thrones" actress Bella Ramsey portrays Ellie—is set in a post-apocalyptic America ruled by a military dictatorship.

The stakes of the series' success are high for HBO Max, which just raised its US subscription fee from \$14.99 to \$15.99 for an ad-free monthly package. HBO "clearly remains the gold standard for original series, but its parent company (Warner Bros. Discovery) is at a crossroads in terms of how much it's willing to spend on projects," said John Cassillo, an analyst with TVREV.

Rare success

Adaptations of blockbuster video games tend not to do well when they are turned into movies or television series. On a list drawn up by Box Office Mojo, only five films in this genre have surpassed \$400 million in earnings. The top one, "Warcraft" (2016) — which took in \$439 million worldwide—doesn't figure in the top 250 on the overall box office list. Other rare successes include "Lara Croft: Tomb Raider" (2001) starring Angelina Jolie, and more recently Netflix's Emmy-winning animated series "Arcane," set in the "League of Legends" universe.

"What makes video games entertaining doesn't always make movies/shows entertaining, and vice versa," said Cassillo. In the case of "The Last of Us," he explained, "the post-apocalyptic story taps into a popular genre even outside of gaming, and HBO has a long-standing track record succeeding with dramatic series."

Cassillo predicted that if the series "uses the backdrop of the game's plot to tell a compelling character story (that could exist even apart from the game), it'll stand a great chance to succeed where other video game adaptations have failed." In an interview with The New York Times, Druckmann said the most important thing in adapting the game was "to keep the soul of it," not necessarily every scene. "What makes the show are the characters, the philosophical arguments of, 'Do the ends justify the means?' And, 'How big is your tribe that you're going to care for?'" he said.

Many more video game adaptations are in the pipeline, including a new "Super Mario Bros" film, a third installment in the "Sonic the Hedgehog" franchise and a "Gran Turismo" movie, as well as a Netflix animated series based on "Tomb Raider." — AFP

Censored woman painter
Artemisia laid bare in restoration

Using gentle, circular motions, an art restorer gently cleans the painting of a half-nude woman that was censored more than 300 years ago by a prudish descendant of Michelangelo. The piece by Artemisia Gentileschi, the Italian Baroque's trailblazing woman artist, is undergoing a months-long restoration to rediscover her original vision, hidden for centuries under a thick layer of strategically placed paint. While the restorers consider it too risky to remove the drapery and veil later painted on to cover the figure's breasts and loins, diagnostic imaging will provide a glimpse of the original nude as Artemisia intended.

"As we say in Italian, it's been turned inside out like a glove with all the diagnostic techniques possible to understand how the painting was conceived, how it was painted," conservator Elizabeth Wicks, the head of the team of restoration experts, told AFP. The experts also want to uncover "what happened to it afterwards, and to see if we can read between the veils of censorship that were added to the painting."



This photo shows "Studio" (Study room), one of a rooms of the Casa Buonarroti Museum, a study room designed by Michelangelo, where the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination) is taking place, in central Florence.

Artemisia painted "Allegory of Inclination" in 1616 to glorify Italy's most celebrated artist, Michelangelo Buonarroti. But the work's curious history has only added to the fascination surrounding Artemisia, the 17th century's most eminent woman painter whose talent, independence and dramatic life story have fuelled new appreciation in the post-#MeToo era.

Hide the flesh

The painting, which many believe to be a self-portrait of Artemisia, depicts a female nude sitting atop a cloud, repre-



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, speaks during an interview with the AFP in front of the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, works on a painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.



This photo taken with a fisheye lens shows "The Galleria" of the Casa Buonarroti Museum, a room dedicated to the glorification of Michelangelo, during the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination), in central Florence. — AFP photos

senting innate creative talent and drive. It was commissioned by Michelangelo's great-nephew, who turned his ancestor's home into a sumptuous residence and museum to celebrate his genius. It was one of 15 paintings Michelangelo the Younger commissioned for the ceiling of the palazzo's gallery.

Artemisia, who went on to achieve fame and the patronage of kings during her lifetime, was paid three times more

known as "Il Volterrano", to modify it. He painted a diaphanous veil over the figure's breasts and heavier drapery over her loins. That extra layer of oil paint, which can take up to 200 years to fully dry, now presents too great a risk to remove.

"I like to think that she had passed away by the time this painting was censored because I don't think she would have been very happy about it," said Wicks. "We're not too happy about it either, but it's part of the history of the painting at this point."

Heroine at centre

Centuries of smoke, and varnish added in the 1960s, have imparted an orangey fake tan to the figure's skin, while the brilliant blue sky painted with lapis lazuli has turned a sickly grey-green. "You can see this leg is lighter because I have cleaned (and) thinned the varnish in this area," said Wicks, dabbing at the canvas while peering through magnifying glasses. Wicks started at the edges, and next month will begin working on the back of the canvas. After a careful restretching, resins will be added to strengthen the fibres of the canvas and re-adhere the paint.

Thus far, X-rays and other imaging techniques have revealed not only the underlying nudity but also changes made to the eyes and hands as Artemisia worked. "What you'd think is under the veil is under the veil. It's all there!" laughed Wicks. During an exhibit that starts in September, visitors will be able to see the work up close before the painting permanently returns to the palazzo's ceiling.—AFP



This photo shows "The Galleria" of the museum, room dedicated to the glorification of Michelangelo, at Casa Buonarroti Museum, where the restoration work on the painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's "Allegoria dell'Inclinazione" (Allegory of Inclination) is taking place, in central Florence.



US conservator Elizabeth Wicks, works on a painting by Artemisia Gentileschi's painting 'Allegoria dell'Inclinazione' in the Casa Buonarroti Museum.