NNIP Camp Day 1

Session: Using AI in our Research

September 23, 2024 4:00pm

Leader: Luc Schuster

Notes: Rob Pitingolo

Attendance (from sign in sheet): Luc Schuster, Rob Pitingolo, Vinita Wagh, Ashley Clark, Emily Jex, Jill Walsh, Haley Raetz, Cameron Yap, Nick Occhipinti, Erik Woodworth, Stephanie Quesnelle, Michael Henderson

Schuster: Welcome. Let’s go around and say what inspired you to this session.

Henderson: I’m here to learn

Vickers: Use chat gpt occasionally. Seems like it could be useful.

Wagh: Downfalls of using AI when it’s not clear how to use them. Lots of platforms making you use their tools like Google. I find things helpful like looking up syntax.

Clark: We do a lot of report writing. I’ve played around with it with report writing and editing. Using it as a tool for comparison vs. creation. Our org needs a policy in place soon. We have some team members who are anti-AI.

Jex: Had discussion about potential uses such as brainstorm, use to generate code. We’ve also written articles about philanthropic space. Don’t have a formal internal process. Need to think about disclosure.

Raetz: We are having the same conversations. We don’t want to be held back but want to have a comprehensive policy. The way we use it now is relatively limited. Allow assistants to do citations. Not allowed for literature reviews. Haven’t found it super useful for code. Use it as a thesaurus a lot. Might use it for a quick pass at something. Earlier stages can be useful.

Walsh: We are using it for coding but feels like a lot of it is not doing things right. Use cases for excel. Skeptical of using it in other ways.

Yap: Not using AI extensively. We live in a moment where AI is fresh and new. Work with a lot of grad school students. I want to develop specific protocols about when it’s acceptable and not.

Occhipinti: Use chat gpt for coding Python. I see a possible use for data cleaning.

Woodworth: Use AI for building things with code. Think more about machine learning. Is this a good approach to address this issue? We used it for a submarket analysis for the Atlanta region.

Quesnelle: Don’t use AI at all but husband is very big AI researcher.

Amaya: I know it’s the future, I just don’t know how to start.

Shuster: What are the things we have found it useful for? Do we have policies and ideas for guardrails?

Clark: I can ask it to re-write text at different grade level. We still do data viz internally. Simplify something in a certain way.

Woodworth: We have look at AI to compete in a world with for profit actors where they will use whatever means they can.

Amaya: You can tell when it’s AI generated. I’ve seen some things out there where I know.

Quesnelle: It’s getting better.

Amaya: It’s good for translations.

Henderson: Translation is amazing.

Schuster: What about taking my content and having it summarize?

Asimiah: Text can be hyperbolized.

Vickers: It can be too generous.

Clark: You can ask for tone but I don’t know I’ve ever copy/pasted what came out of it.

Woodworth: There are different types of communication. Email is different from a report. You can use it for different things.

Raetz: Many of us come from academia which has very strict rules about plagiarism.

Jex: Saying without saying that when you use it you have to use critically what it is saying. Sometimes things sound good but isn’t actually saying anything.

Shuster: Some people lead with AI art.

Asiamah: All art is derivative.

Jex: My spouse feels similar.

Schuster: What is art?

Amaya: As long as it’s cited it’s not a problem.

Clark: Depends on the case. We invest in a lot of photography. Important to pay a Detroit photographer to capture Detroit.

Amaya: I’ve seen a lot of small businesses helped by AI.

Raetz: Even if we cited chat GPT I would not trust it to give an image.

Quesnelle: Faces might be less of a privacy concern. Putting a real child face next to poor literacy rates. Maybe it’s better to have AI generate an imagine of a fictional child.

Walsh: Graphic design using abstract images of people.

Woodworth: Has it made you less productive?

Shuster: I am still the process of experimenting.

Wagh: There are tools that have you map out where research is.

Raetz: Scanning vs. reading and understanding.

Asimiah: It is obvious when you are producing something beyond your means. It’s like cliff notes but worse.

Clark: The bias that is in research. There could be a difference between academia vs. an administrative job

Pitingolo: Urban has done some thinking about this. Currently running a pilot on several different AI tools. Highly recommend Graham MacDonald’s blog post on this topic.

<https://urban-institute.medium.com/exploring-ai-how-urban-is-piloting-guidelines-around-using-ai-in-our-research-and-policy-work-42cc8b8dcf08>