Trade Journal Entry #5

TechCrunch, AI, Oct. 30th to Nov. 5th

In TechCrunch AI section, over 80 articles are published during last week including following (only shows ten about different topics):

* AI safety advocates tell founders to slow down
* Microsoft and a16z set aside differences, join hands in plea against AI regulation
* What can we do about the spread of AI-generated disinformation?
* US laws regulating AI prove elusive, but there may be hope
* Women in AI: Sophia Velastegui believes AI is moving too fast
* How to harness generative AI in music and video production without displacing artists
* The future of AI governance, with SB 1047 architect Sen. Scott Wiener
* How AI startups can navigate legal and ethical minefields
* AI models get more election questions wrong when asked in Spanish, study shows
* The current and future landscape of AI on wheels with Jesse Levinson from Zoox

This week’s TechCrunch AI field was center at TechCrunch’s Disrupt conference in San Francisco. In the conference, Perplexity CEO Aravind Srinivas discussed the AI search engine’s growth amid a lawsuit from News Corp, citing issues about content usage rights. Also, Zoox CTO Jesse Levinson outlined Amazon’s next steps in robotaxi field. Panels explored AI’s role in spreading disinformation, with insights from Meta Oversight Board’s Pamela San Martin on deepfake abuse by state actors. Other than the conference, Apple released AI-powered "Apple Intelligence" features, Google expanded AI Overviews to over 100 regions, and Cohere launched Aya Expanse, a multilingual model using “data arbitrage” to enhance language diversity. OpenAI broadened its Advanced Voice Mode to new EU regions, raising ethical concerns over its hyper-realistic voice capabilities. In parallel, discussions on AI’s environmental impact highlighted a potential e-waste crisis, with predictions suggesting the industry’s tech demands could generate 10 billion iPhones’ worth of waste yearly by 2030.

The article that catches my eye is the one titled “GenAI suffers from data overload, so companies should focus on smaller, specific goals” (<https://techcrunch.com/2024/11/03/genai-suffers-from-data-overload-so-companies-should-focus-on-smaller-specific-goals/> ). The article is focused on a part in TechCrunch Disrupt 2024. In the conference, DataStax CEO Chet Kapoor emphasized the foundational role of data in AI, especially unstructured data, noting, “There is no AI without data, there is no AI without unstructured data, and there is no AI without unstructured data at scale.” Joined by Vanessa Larco from NEA and George Fraser from Fivetran, Kapoor advised companies to prioritize product-market fit over scaling too quickly in generative AI. Larco encouraged startups to “work backwards” by targeting specific objectives and identifying essential data, rather than using all available data, which she warned could lead to “an inaccurate, expensive mess.” Fraser reinforced a “solve the problems you have today” approach, citing the high cost of premature scaling. Kapoor likened today’s generative AI to the early “Angry Birds era” of apps, predicting that 2025 would usher in transformative AI applications that meaningfully impact businesses.

I’m interested in this article because it reflects strategies similar to those I used during my last internship. In B2B contexts, data sets are much smaller than those in B2C, making it challenging—if not impossible—to train a truly general model. Amid the excitement over Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) handling all human tasks, business leaders can easily fall into the trap of unrealistic expectations for AI applications in their companies. As the article suggests, “Only solve the problems you have today,” which is practical advice for avoiding the high costs of building AI models that are overly ambitious. This article hints at a possible end to the AI hype bubble; promoting smaller data usage, for instance, could actually harm data labeling and generation businesses. They raised this issue partly because some companies have already sampled the promises of AGI and advanced AI agents, only to find that the technology isn’t fully realized yet, and the potential benefits from the hype bubble have somewhat faded. I’m looking forward to seeing the progress that follows as the hype fades—where there may be less funding but a better research environment, with fewer public pressures and distractions.