*ChatGPT – The Good and the Bad*

Ken McNamara 3/24/2023

ChatGPT is a Large Language Model – commonly referred to as an LLM.

As of this writing in early 2023, GPT-3 (the basis for ChatGPT) is the largest LLM created to date. The GPT-3 AI model reportedly cost OpenAI $12 million for a single training run.

It was a surprise to early users and developers that GPT-3 can generate coherent and fluent text on a wide range of topics.

But there are serious limitations that must be taken into account when evaluating or using any LLM model and ChatGPT is no exception.

First, while ChatGPT was trained on 570 gigabytes of data - it can’t tell you anything about that data. You have no way of reviewing or validating what ChatGPT presents as fact. When it writes an article it cannot site or credit the source of the facts or opinions in the article. Even if it lists references – they WILL be fabricated.

Second, along with that raw training it has been modified to be “aligned” with its creators view of ethics – more accurately their politics.

Third, Chat does not have access the Internet. The ChatGPT data cutoff date was 2021 – it is blissfully unaware of anything that occurred after that. It is not searching or evaluating current information.

So, just what, at the cost of $12 million, is ChatGPT trained to do?

ChatGPT is trained to predict the next word in a sentence. That is ALL it does.

It is like a phone’s autocomplete on steroids. And if you’ve ever been embarrassed or misunderstood when your phone’s autocomplete – autocompleted the wrong thing – then you understand the first and most important thing about ChatGPT.

You can’t trust it. You can refer to ChatGPT as Artificial Intelligence it certainly is artificial but it is certainly not intelligent – because it doesn’t understand anything it produces – not one bit.

As it generates output it selects each word based on statistical probability. Given 570 gigabytes of input to evaluate – each word will generally be correct – but there is NO relation to the underlying truth or validity of the output. None.

The second thing to understand about Chat is that it is a powerful, very useful, and dangerous tool. Think of Chat like a chainsaw – if you’re careless it will cut off you leg.

Chat is useful for stimulating your creativity, making plans, listing alternatives, gathering information - actually the list is quite long. A quick Google search will find sites that list 150 prompts in 22 categories for using Chat.

But you should never allow unreviewed or unedited Chat output to be published in any form.