

Assignment: Information Policy/Technology Events in the News

Michael P. Currier

University of South Florida, School of Information

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Dr. Richard Austin

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The recent boom in publicly accessible artificial intelligence tools like OpenAI's ChatGPT have taken the world by storm. Language processing AI has since changed the tech ecosystem and has both created and inhibited opportunities throughout almost every industry. Though the introduction of consumer accessible AI tools may feel sudden, the technology has been in development for decades. Still, legislation has been slow to keep up.

In Leslie and Rossi's review of generative AI tools (GenAI), they explore the impacts that the commercialization has had throughout different layers of society as well as outlining the action that needs to be taken by legislators to create coherent guidelines around the development and use of GenAI (2023). The publication argues that the risks created by GenAI tools are currently unregulated and, due to the race-to-market between different GenAI start-ups, the fastest track to deployment is being incentivized rather than the safest track to deployment. It also argues that the lack of government regulation in the GenAI space creates an environment that fosters monopolistic control from the biggest players as they destructively develop their algorithms. A risk of current GenAI systems more relevant to the field of information science is the spread of misinformation that occurs when interacting with these solutions. Language models such as ChatGPT generate responses that sound believably true, though these models often generate completely false responses in an attempt to give every question an answer.

I do not believe there is just one core issue at the heart of GenAI. Such universally useful technology introduces both solutions and complications into every industry. Not only are previously established industries impacted by these tools, but new industries are built using the GenAI technologies to create information-based products, further expanding the amount of stakeholders in the technology. For example, there are many new start-up companies that use

ChatGPT and/or other language model solutions to generate chat bot responses for sectors such as customer service. I believe that it is important for legislators to act as fast as possible in creating guidelines, regulations, and restrictions on GenAI before more unregulated and unfamiliar entities are built on the backs of these AI tools. The longer governing bodies wait to impose restrictions on GenAI, the less agency lawmakers will have to shape the status quo of the AI industry.

In my opinion, the longer regulatory bodies wait to impose wide-reaching restrictions on GenAI solutions, the harder it will become to reel the industry in later. While it would be unreasonable to expect comprehensive and effective legislation to be written as fast as GenAI solutions are being developed, I believe there is one change regulators can make that will force GenAI developers to build their solutions more cautiously while appropriate end-to-end guidelines can be created: hold companies more accountable for the faults of their products. Currently, companies like OpenAI are pushing for legislation that protects them from any consequences that their products may create. For example, the spreading of false information or providing instructions to a user on how to do things like create home-made weapons. While it is (arguably) unreasonable to hold companies entirely accountable for blatant misuse of their products, introducing some vague legislation that holds companies at least partially accountable for the consequences of their product's faults/misuse introduces the precedent that companies do not have the freedom to "move fast and break things" (p. 3).

Ultimately, GenAI solutions will have a major impact on the future of not just information professionals, but on all professionals in every industry. While it would be unreasonable for GenAI solutions to be expected to be flawless, it should not be unreasonable in the eyes of legislators to create a baseline level of accountability for the issues those solutions

give rise to. GenAI is a complicated and far-reaching topic, and it will inevitably take longer for regulators to respond to it than it will for developers to push the technology further. Still, the goal of legislators in the United States and beyond should be to hold companies accountable for their products and the consequences they create.

References

Leslie, D., & Rossi, F. (2023). ACM TechBrief: Generative Artificial Intelligence. In *ACM eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3626110>