Intelligent Devices Retirement Preserve: (un) Natural Wonders

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Abstract

The following is a proposal to present a 20 minute presentation on *Intelligent Devices Retirement Preserve: (un) Natural Wonders*, a media design installation that invites viewers to think about and question what retirement would be like for artificially intelligent devices. By suggesting something as ridiculous as retirement for an artificial intelligent device, the viewer is forced to think about and question the ethical implications of the work life of an artificially intelligent device. The piece questions whether devices should be worked until they can no longer function, whether they should be repaired or upgraded, and whether they should enjoy leisure time. By proposing this scenario, the piece underscores the need to design the experience not just for the user, but also for the device.

Futures of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial intelligence will be implemented more and more into the daily aspects of the labor industry, both in industrial and non-industrial jobs. Industrial jobs are defined as jobs that would normally be described as blue collar, and non-industrial jobs as ones that would be normally described as white collar. It is important to describe them as such, because as the workforce starts to incorporate artificial intelligence into labor the definition of "blue collar" and "white collar" will change. This change will be much like how labor changed during the industrial revolution. The change might not be as significant, but it will definitely be impactful. Jobs like programing, once seen as white collar, will more than likely be split, or completely become blue collar (Thompson 2017). As this shift happens artificial intelligence will obviously advance, becoming, more intelligent and capable of greater and broader tasks and jobs. With this advancement the functionality of a job's day to day routines will start to shift, and it's more likely, or possible, that the algorithm will become more of a co-worker embodied within a device, which also could be seen as a co-worker depending on the relationship the worker has with the device in the task being carried out. In this likely future, especially with industrial jobs, workers that once did things manually or with the help of devices, would more than likely have to start to program, and fix more engineering based issues for the device on the floor. This is already evident at one company where workers are working with cobots, robots that work alongside workers that are using them, to eliminate the need for the worker to make repetitive motions that the job requires, which normally have led to work related injuries (Hollinger 2016). Instead the workers are being trained, not replaced, to work alongside the cobots, how to instruct them, and how to program. That way if something goes wrong with, or something breaks on, their "coworker", they know how to fix it.

Importance of the Park

Intelligent Devices Retirement Preserve: (un) Natural Wonders explores what life would be like for artificial intelligence algorithms, and the devices that they embody, if they had a choice to retire and do whatever they wanted. By envisioning and illustrating the outcomes of their retirement, it presents the question to the viewer: do intelligent devices and the algorithms they run off of deserve down time to themselves or should they work until they are no longer serviceable? If the device is decommissioned do we then move the algorithm and its knowledge to a new device. And what happens, or what do we do, when the algorithm is out of date. Is there some form of archive or place for it to live its life, or do we just delete it and let it vanish?

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Exploring these questions aims not to anthropomorphize smart devices, but instead get the viewer to think past the norm of how people currently see robots and algorithms, proposing a future where we care for, and even grant humanhood to, devices and acknowledge them as colleges rather than objects. This relationship has already been reported in companies that use cobots, and train their employees to work with and service the devices they work with (Hollinger 2016). This does not mean that the devices have feelings or emotions, but it puts into question the care and ethics that we consider when looking at the quality of life for the device. It also puts into question the responsibility we as designer have to design an experience not only for the user, but also for the algorithm. The ethics of training an artificial intelligence network, what it's being trained on, by whom, and for how long should come into question when developing an artificially intelligent network. These factors, design the experience of that algorithm, and need to be considered just as much, if not more, than how the user experiences it.

Intelligent Devices Retirement Preserve invites viewers to think past the typical issues regarding sentience, and smart devices taking over jobs, by depicting the retirement of devices with a tongue to cheek attitude. An example of this is the depiction of the (un) Natural Wonders that some devices create in their retirement. These far-fetched examples or what a device and its algorithm are capable allude to why they might be entitled to a little down time rather than be forced to work from creation to decommission. The intention behind depicting the more plausible to the absurd is to point out to both the general public, but more importantly the scientific community that are developing, engineering, and experimenting with artificial intelligence, that these questions need to be asked, considered, and planned for, designed for, and to start to take these ideas into account when working in the future of artificial intelligence. If the ethical treatment of artificial intelligence is not taken into consideration at the outset, the repercussions could become significant or even dangerous issues when creating the future iterations of artificial intelligence.

Artist Biography

Michael Milano is Masters of Fine Art candidate in the Media Design Practices program at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, CA. His work focuses on how artificial intelligence and robotics will shift labor in the American workforce. More specifically how the role of the day-to-day of a job will need to change in response to working with robots that either work alongside or augment a worker.

References

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