

Incorporating Artificial Intelligence into our lives

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Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming an increasingly significant part of our daily lives, transforming the way we work, connect, and solve problems. Initially I thought this not to be a 'good thing' – but I have slowly come around to acknowledging the application as being potentially 'positive'. From the smartphone in your pocket to the smart appliances in your home, AI is already embedded in many aspects of modern living. The ongoing debate – certainly within the higher education sector and the colleagues around me – is centred on whether AI is 'good or evil' – the compromise is to use AI for good – rather than evil and at the same time acknowledge the fact that it is all around us – and we use it, often without (actually) realising. Perhaps it is time we became a little smarter.

My intention in this article/chapter is to demonstrate how we are currently using AI for a range of activities. To some degree I am also promoting the use of AI – in what I call a 'controlled environment'. This is a significant step for me – having had an unhealthy disrespect for AI over many years now reaching a point where I suggest we use AI - with the caveat that he does what it is told – if that is at all possible.

AI at Home

There are several examples - that come to mind (there are many others of course) - of AI that are commonly being used in the home environment. I have highlighted three that I commonly access/use by way of reference - these encompass –

Virtual Assistants – this includes devices like Google Assistant, Amazon Alexa, and Apple's Siri that can help manage schedules, set reminders, play music, and control smart home devices with simple voice commands. *I personally use my devices quite a lot* – especially for weather prediction (each morning and evening) and playing music throughout the house. The ability for long range weather prediction (as close as the weather bureau can accurately predict) and the extensive music library available to me – on command – is often overwhelming – but at all times appreciated. My car, [programmed accordingly, now welcomed me when I turn it on – with either a morning/afternoon/evening greeting – and a personalised name.

Smart Appliances – embraces AI-powered refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners, pool cleaners and thermostats can learn your preferences and optimise energy use, saving both money and the environment. My current lean is on both the *vacuum cleaner* – that busily conducts itself on a Saturday morning and of course the *pool robot* – that does an excellent job maintaining a clean swimming pool. My observation is that both appliances appear to have the ability to learn a system of cleaning as they scope the space required and they become more efficient at cleaning. One is on a carpeted space - and the other is

under water – but they both have this capacity to ‘learn’. It was suggested recently that we name both appliances – a leap too far?

Home Security – utilising AI-driven security cameras can detect unusual activity, recognise familiar faces, and alert you to potential risks in real-time. The system can be turned on via a remote control (smart phone) and the cameras can be viewed from anywhere (literally). Having the facility certainly provides a higher degree of safety and comfort – and at the same time amazes me with its reach and simplicity. There is little doubt in my mind that the system provides a heightened sense of security and safety.

AI at Work

In the workplace we are seeing considerable activity including –

Productivity Tools - where AI can automate repetitive tasks, schedule meetings, and provide writing assistance, freeing up time for more meaningful work. I remain stubbornly ‘actual intelligence’ driven (that is I like to write my own stuff) – but at the same time I have been using the internet for searching information and support material for some time. The notion of handing over the writing completely (or the research work associated with writing) to AI is somehow repulsive – though I suspect this would be quite efficient and useful. Colleagues inform me that it is efficient and time saving.

Data Analysis - using AI algorithms to quickly process large amounts of data, helping businesses make informed decisions and identify trends. Certainly, there are efficiencies evident when it comes to data analysis. Combing through tedious data and searching for patterns and systems is time consuming – and would be best handled by AI – if only I knew how to do it.

Customer Service - utilising chatbots and virtual agents offering 24/7 support, answering common questions, and resolving simple issues – often quite efficiently. Banking comes to mind. It has been some time since I have entered a bank branch or spoken to a customer service provider in person (or on the phone). My banking APPS do all the work these days – providing me with balance updates, transfer opportunities and ‘pay anyone’ options. The process is efficient and easy.

AI in Daily Activities

In our daily lives AI is providing increasing support –

Personalised Recommendations – such as streaming services, online shopping platforms, and news feeds that use AI to suggest content and products tailored to our interests. I have become a regular ‘streaming’ user across a number of platforms providing maximum options. I frequently shop online for a range of products that are delivered efficiently and fuss free. Further, most of my news is available via the internet – with frequent updates and key areas of interest highlighted based on my user access and foci. Essentially these are now customised to my interests.

Navigation and Travel – utilising AI-powered maps and transport APPs provide real-time traffic updates, suggest the fastest routes, and estimate arrival times. Essentially, I would be

lost without my navigation support. The interface between my iPhone and my car now maximises the opportunities available. Further, I now act as my own travel agent – purchasing airline tickets, accommodation and other bookings – all online – done by me with little or any support. This has made customising travel both nationally and internationally so much easier and convenient.

Healthcare – with the help of AI-driven fitness trackers, symptom checkers, and appointment scheduling helping individuals monitor their health and access medical advice more conveniently. My new trusted friend is my health management watch that allows me to monitor my heart rate, blood oxygen balance, stress levels, blood pressure, body temperature, blood glucose levels and a range of other (interesting) issues – who would have thought this possible. A colleague of mine suffered a stroke recently – collapsed – and was saved by his watch that called an ambulance - and essentially saved his life.

Responsible and Ethical AI Use Issues

While AI certainly offers convenience and innovation, it is important to use it responsibly. Being mindful of privacy settings; understanding how your data is used; and staying informed about the ethical implications of AI is essential. It is critical to choose only reputable providers and regularly review permissions and privacy policies. With all this in mind I think it safe to say a responsible approach is both feasible and possible.

I think a sensible approach to all things is probably a good idea. AI use is no exception. Being mindful of the kinds of activities being used is a critical part of managing AI in a sensible way. Essentially, we should be customising our own use of AI to a level of comfort and confidence.

Learning and Adapting

Embracing AI also means staying open to new technologies and learning how they can benefit you. In truth, *I think this is the most critical issue of all*. Many online courses and resources can help you better understand AI, from basic introductions to advanced applications. I would encourage my students and colleagues (not to mention family and friends) to invest a bit of time in the learning process – and better understanding of AI and its application. A recent overseas colleague (at a recent overseas conference) expressed his heart-felt concern about AI ‘taking over’ - but was heartened by those around him re-assuring him that with the proper controls and applications – AI could be quite useful to him. A number of applications were noted – I also took notes.

Incorporating AI into our lives does not require technical expertise – it simply requires a willingness to explore and adapt. By thoughtfully integrating AI into our homes, workplaces, and daily routines, we can improve efficiency, enhance our experiences, and prepare for a future where technology and humanity work hand in hand. It does not require (and for that matter should not) handing over our responsibilities to AI. Rather, it is about ensuring that the things we wish to achieve may be supported by AI in a controlled and managed environment.

I believe I personally have come a long way on this issue.

Emeritus Professor Greg Whateley is currently Chief Executive and Executive Dean at the *Australian Guild of Education* (Melbourne). He has developed a positive relationship with his pool robot and house vacuum robot – who would have thought.