

ENC1102 Research Proposal – Project 1

With the rapid growth of generative artificial intelligence platforms and technology, there is a growing concern about the relevance of human creativity and innovation and how it may be eclipsed by the over-saturated use of generative artificial intelligence (hereafter referred to as “GAI”), especially by the general public. This begs the question: *what are the concerns regarding the use of generative artificial intelligence within the domain of what has been the landscape of traditional human artistry?*

The advent of open source language models and generative text-to-image platforms, and the ability for ordinary citizens to host and curate their own GAI systems introduces a growing need to structure this new technology within the framework of human effort and artistry. When “art” can be created with a few strokes of a keyboard at a text prompt, the importance of human agency and creativity hangs in the balance of being dangerously overrun and trampled by what could essentially be characterized as an “uncaring system” of machine learning and replication.

Exploring these intricacies of the human condition in relation to this specific technology requires primary research of what the artists and consumers themselves have to say on the subject. What are the voices of the artistic communities saying and what is the ongoing discourse to be found in online spaces?

I intend to study the online communities of Reddit, specifically those in the GAI spaces and perhaps some that specifically bar the use of AI to glean what their positions could be on the subject. I also intend to explore the ongoing discourse being held by YouTubers in the artistic space in regards to GAI (for example Benn Jordan and Zee Bashew both have videos discussing their viewpoints on GAI, the comments sections of these videos are a perfect place to explore the communities’ thoughts). My hope is to specifically find what people are discussing in terms of future policies, ethical dilemmas, good-use-practices, the future of the technology and how humans may interact with it, and any other ongoing concerns of the community.

Currently I have managed to locate 5 scholarly articles regarding this subject, one of which is a peer-reviewed opinion piece, 3 of which perform some form of primary research on different angles of the situation, and one of which explores the art space of actors and voice actors. With these I am able to cover most of the requisite existing thought on the subject. However, new insights always pop up, and some specific areas which could be further elucidated could be that of the general public’s view of GAI used for art, and specifically more research on how practitioners of art are faring work-wise in this new landscape (preliminary information from the above sources show that in most cases, artists are struggling, with some being down as much as 50% of their previous commission workload, losing out on valuable business since the advent of AI).

As for specific methodology, making use of some form of “post-crawler” would be exceedingly helpful in aggregating and anonymizing the results, however currently my intended approach is to simply scour a minimum of three different spaces as well as I can to get a broad sense of what

the overall discourse looks like. Currently, my plan is to at least look at anywhere from 3 to 5 threads on each of the mentioned Reddit communities (ideally ones with lots of discourse), and to take a look at the aforementioned YouTube video comments so they might be added into the overall study. This will likely be time-consuming, and I may have to make concessions on the amount of “scrapable” material for the sake of project time completion.

The intended audience of this research would be those who are interested in understanding the ethical dilemmas and current community solutions to these dilemmas which are posed by GAI. This could be artists, it could be people of the general public. Essentially, people like me who know about GAI but who would like to see more of the various aspects of this situation.

How can we, as researchers, as artists, as community members, and as political agents keep the value of human creativity intact with so much moving against not only what it means to create art, but what it means to be human and express humanity? What sort of financial burdens are we placing on ourselves and our artists with the advent of this sort of technology and practice? Hopefully we, as the living breathing humans that have lives to live, can come to a consensus on the proper steps needed to move forward.