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What's AI and Why Should SMPTE Care?

According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, artificial intelligence (AI) refers to the branch of computer science dealing with the simulation of intelligent behavior in computers; the ability of a machine to imitate intelligent human behavior.

When I think of AI, the vision that comes to mind are science fiction movies where machines think like people, usually in an attempt to destroy the world. The concept often seems remote, where technology would not have a personal impact. Well, it turns out I am wrong.

If you are using a smartphone, you are probably encountering AI. If you are calling a customer service number for technical support, you are likely interacting with AI. If you use Apple Siri, Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, or Microsoft Cortana, you are interacting with AI. There are many examples of AI in our daily lives, including video games, self-driving smart cars, purchase predictions, fraud detection, movie and music recommendation services, and smart home devices (lights, security, and air conditioning). The reality is that anytime you use the word “smart,” you are interacting with AI.

So, how does this relate to media technology? Well, newsgathering is just one, among many AI examples. According to *Wired* magazine, the Associated Press, Yahoo!, and Fox use AI to write simple stories

like financial summaries, sports recaps, and fantasy sports reports. These are not hard-hitting stories, but rather content that does not require a lot of analytics. By focusing AI on the simple stories, it frees up new organizations to focus its humans on the in-depth investigative pieces.

As media technology moves more toward an internet-based world, this opens opportunities for working “smarter,” integrating AI to make decisions once reserved for humans. Gathering more statistics results in the production of more metadata and provides greater ability for AI to integrate into our work and personal lives.

As I researched for this column, I learned that AI is applied in other ways in media. For years we have enjoyed recommendations as we search for content online. In fact, Amazon became famous for its ability to target recommendations to shoppers, accurately, and others are competing. Netflix created an AI program, Meson, that provides users with suggestions of what to watch next.

The ability to recommend is getting better and better. IBM Watson was used in analyzing horror movie trailers to learn what content kept viewers on the edge of their seats; the hook that

engaged them with the movie. The resulting analysis provided human editors just the right cuts to produce a spectacular trailer of the film *Morgan*. In other examples, machine-learning processes are being used to analyze movie plots and correlated box office performance to determine future box office successes.

Is AI scary? Anything new can make us nervous, but until we know more, it will be difficult to predict what impact AI will have on

the media technology sector. I suggest that the best of technology still relies on the human interaction and how best to incorporate it into any given application. I hope that the technology experts are

working on harnessing the power of AI to enhance the media landscape that results in an improved entertainment experience.

As far as SMPTE is concerned, it will be interesting to see how AI impacts any possible standards work. But I could imagine a lot of interest in understanding machine learning, coupled with images. I certainly expect some fascinating work on the horizon.

Let us see what happens!



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