

Artificial Intelligence and Literacy

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I have read with interest other submissions that concern the potential problems and benefits with the emergence of Generative Pre-Trained Transformer of Artificial Intelligence. To date I have not read any submissions that point to what I consider to be one of the major potential problems with this technology (though I hope others have already made this point).

If programs such as ChatGPT were to work as advertised they would, potentially, mean that students (at both school and tertiary level) would no longer need to either read or write effectively. The AI would read the texts they have been asked to read for them. The AI would answer the questions asked about these texts for them.

This, in effect, could lead to widespread functional illiteracy, where students become unable to read or analyse writing at anything other than a basic level. They would become, quite possibly, adept at using tools to read for them, but their own relationships to those texts would, in effect, be purely phatic. They would seem to understand but would not understand. They would lack the capacity to understand written texts of any complexity.

This to me is not a threat for a distant future where AI takes hold, self-replicates and destroys humanity. It is an immediate potential threat to the fabric of our society.

I ask that this be taken into account in any recommendations concerning the use of AI, and necessary limits on its use, at Australian universities.