

# SPOTLIGHT

A PASADENA CITY COLLEGE STUDENT PUBLICATION

SPRING 2024

## AI is not evil

Can ChatGPT be  
a benefit?

## THE AI ISSUE!

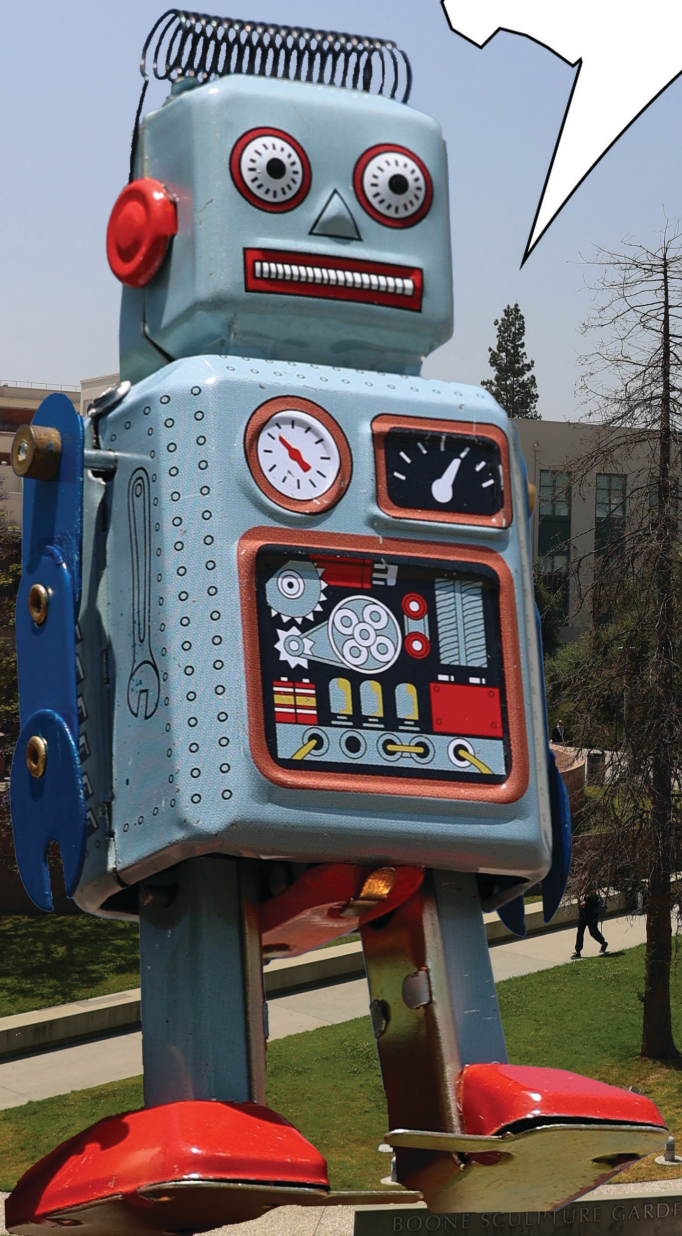
*In this issue:*

## Psychology

PCC psychology professor  
breaks down AI fears

## Privacy

How Pasadena police use  
AI to their advantage





# IN THIS ISSUE

PSYCHOLOGY 4

JOURNALISM 6

PRIVACY 9

ETHICS 13

RELATIONSHIPS 16

DESENSITIZED 19

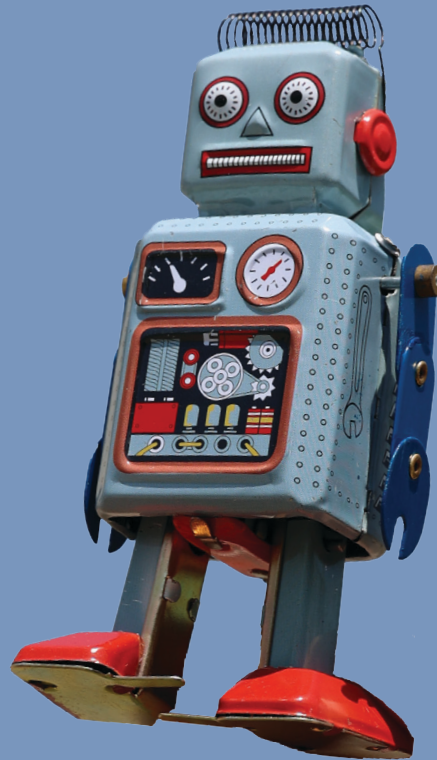
CHATGPT 22

JOBS 24

ART 26

MOVIES 28

VOICES 31



## PHOTO EDITOR

Charlotte LoCicero

## DESIGN

Dante Estrada

Laura Dux

Gabriel Novoa

## CONSIGLIERE

Michael Leyva

## ADVISOR

Nathan McIntire

## FRONT/BACK COVER PHOTO/DESIGN

Dante Estrada

## SPECIAL THANKS

Katy Escalante

Larry the Lancer

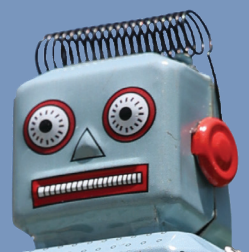
Ol' Glitchy McIntire



## *Editorial Office:*

Spotlight Magazine  
Pasadena City College  
1570 E. Colorado Blvd.  
Room CC 208  
626-585-7130

Spotlight 2024 is generously funded by the Office of Student Life's Student Services Fund Committee. It is produced by PCC's Journalism Department, a part of the Performing and Communication Arts division.



**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

David Sosa

**MANAGING EDITOR**

Samuel Valencia

There's already so much doom and gloom around the future of journalism. Even if you are unfamiliar with the ongoings of the journalism world, most people seem to agree it's not what it used to be. In some ways, that may be for the better, allowing stories to reach more people through purely online publications. But when newspapers and reporting become a far more digitized process, other forms of technology potentially endanger what makes journalism so essential to the way we receive trustworthy news. That happens to be the case for artificial intelligence, which has seen a boom in progress within the past few years.

How journalism will look in five, 10, or 20 years is uncertain when artificial intelligence can either ease the work or take jobs from human reporters. The switch has already begun in some capacities. However, more importantly, artificial intelligence is becoming intrinsic to nearly every walk of life imaginable. This is one of the many reasons we decided to dedicate an entire issue of Spotlight Magazine to artificial intelligence. Although I, as a student journalist and optimist, am not defiantly against artificial intelligence and do not believe we're entering a Skynet world, it was important to me and the staff not to use any form of artificial intelligence while putting this issue together.

We're proud to say that the stories, designs, and layout of this issue were all done by students for people. While no one can confidently predict where artificial intelligence is taking us, there's no denying the value of creativity and ingenuity that has taken journalists this far.

***Sincerely,  
David Sosa  
Editor-In-Chief***

# Robots stealing our jobs is the least of our modern existential fears

Story by Sol Rodriguez

Photo by Odessa Hairapetian



Fear can be the most challenging thing to tackle as a human, taking some years or a lifetime to overcome. While it may feel like fears are working against our peace, they are usually constructs of our own dimmed mental corners. A fear of spiders might overcome strength when an unwelcome one crawls out from under the table and you are unable to kill it. Or instead of facing a creepy birthday party clown, you run away at the sight. Yes, these fears can be mortifying, but the only thing worse than clowns is something abstract, something one cannot see or feel. Some fear the future, which sounds even scarier than a spider. However, the fear of the future can directly translate to the fear of the unknown, a fear all of humanity can share.

With chaos folding in on the world around us, the fear of the

unknown is something that humanity has latched onto in recent years. The outcome of every circumstance that headlines news and takes over explore pages is almost always uncertain. From pop culture to world wars, one can never be too quick to assume tomorrow. The same is true for technology, as the globe has witnessed a complete insurgence over the last decade and even before. It was like yesterday I watched Steve Jobs' iPhone address to the world in 2007, and now here we are.

Since humanity naturally fears the unknown, technology's newborn baby, artificial intelligence, has introduced itself with an intimidating role in the future, making it difficult not to fear the unknown. There are several reasons why people may be so frightened of artificial intelligence. However, the psychological interpretation

of the real reason these fears are prevalent in humans is still up for discussion as we head into a new age of the unknown.

Arguably, the most prevalent fear surrounding artificial intelligence is job displacement, which is actively happening as I type this article. Poof! Another journalist gone. At any moment, AI can barge its way through a career, execute the same tasks a real human does, and do those tasks faster at a cheaper cost. Specifically, positions within the tech, media, and research industries or even data analysis that do not require much more than inputting information are particularly at a higher risk. Jobs translate to security for many of us, so without that, we may as well be screwed.

The fear that artificial intelligence will steal your job seems to have come after the "OG" fear of

AI – the one everyone had when narrow AI applications such as Siri and Alexa were taking the cake for creepiest technology ever – the fear around privacy, or lack thereof. Conspiracy theory talk became a household dinner table tradition, filling the air with “SSHHH, Siri is listening to us.” Narrow AI concepts like these are limited to their prospective pre-defined functions, so no, Alexa can’t really take over the world.

While the ship of privacy and job displacement had sailed not long ago, humanity presents itself with new concerns. As technological advancements make their way to the forefront, society finds itself in an almost awkward position of being too ahead for our own good and, at the same time, being blind to the magnitude that artificial intelligence is about to become. Progress continues to shift into new volumes, and our underlying fears adapt to our circumstances. While being unemployed at the fault of AI is a valid fear, the psychological question of where the root of this fear originates is still a mystery.

Is it appropriate to question the origin of our fears or even assess the true fear that is perhaps masked by Siri’s eavesdropping? If artificial intelligence went beyond its ability to create output from a limited data set, the possibilities would run themselves into oblivion. What would transpire then if artificial intelligence gained consciousness? The tool we have created would then stop collaborating with humans and instead replace them, as we are witnessing at this very moment. Accordingly, replacing humans can be the starting point of something darker: working against them.

While we don’t have clear guidelines of what can be considered conscious, my certainty that humanity will be able to notice when AI would take up consciousness is rather small. Not only would it actively take part in algorithms, but it would then pass the threshold of a tool to a living being. The only thing standing between AI and life is consciousness. So, what’s stopping it?

“We don’t have a definition of consciousness,” biological psychologist and psychology instructor at PCC Monica B. Coto discusses. “If we don’t even have a definition of consciousness for ourselves as we exist, how are we going to recognize consciousness in another species? Is a worm conscious? Are plants conscious? We’re talking about a thing with complex processes already. And we have to ask ourselves, have we created consciousness? And if we have, how will we know it if we don’t have a definition of consciousness?”

We see the anxiety surrounding AI’s potential in a March 2023 letter produced by Future of Life Insti-

tute calling for an immediate “pause for at least six months [on] the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4,” and going on to express that AI systems should only be produced if we are certain their outcomes will be positive. Could it be artificial intelligence consciousness that developers fear? At any rate, signatures on the letter from tycoons like Elon Musk and Steve Wozniak raised eyebrows and questions. Surely, stopping AI developments cannot be entirely beneficial for them, so it must be serious.

GPT-4 is OpenAI’s latest AI model that includes less output error and improved user “steerability,” which is the ability to request that the model respond in a different style, tone, or voice. GPT-4 also features visual image interpretation, meaning this model essentially has a “set of eyes,” and it’s not afraid to use them. The Future of Life address implies that anything beyond this model might be a software developers are not prepared to use.

After the release of this letter, it’s clear that AI is on its way to something greater than humanity is arguably unprepared for. The idea that artificial intelligence can quickly gain consciousness might be the true fear of the future, and it seems more achievable than ever before.

“Let’s say we figure out somehow that AI is conscious,” Coto said. “Then it yields ethical issues like ‘How are we supposed to treat this thing that is conscious? Does it have emotions? Can you have a consciousness that doesn’t have emotions? How do we deal with that consciousness?’”

As humans, our consciousness is backed by raw emotions. That is what allows people to connect with one another on an emotional level. Emotions ground the world back to the origin of existence, reminding us that we are all living, breathing, and feeling. But for something that is intangible, what emotion can look like is something only seen in a dream. How can we accept a disembodied presence to obtain these human emotions? The fear behind that question is what can be driving our reluctant approach to artificial intelligence advancements, and whether or not we are prepared to take that on might be a dealbreaker.

“But what if it doesn’t have the same emotions as us,” Coto asks. “Maybe it has emotions, but it’s different. How do you relate to that? And if it’s smarter than you, what is the way to treat it so that it’s a balanced being? It’s like a child now, right? We want to keep it healthy, we want to keep it happy if happiness exists for it. If we’re just giving it problems to do, is that an ethical way to treat it? We developed it as a tool, but if it’s conscious, we can’t treat it as a tool anymore.” **Read full story on [Spotlight medium](#).**

# As AI takes over, how extreme are the risks to journalism?

Story by Seamus Bozeman

## On the eve of the Writers Guild Strikes in Spring 2023,

John Horn, an entertainment correspondent with NPR's show 1A, gathered a list of questions to ask screenwriter and director Nicole Holofcener in an interview. "You seem to make movies a lot about personal loss, why is this an important thing to you?" he asked.

"Your films often deal with complex relationships and human emotions. The film has a beautiful and evocative score. How did you work with the composer to create the right tone and mood for the film?"

The only catch was that every single one of these questions was written by an artificial intelligence (AI), prompted by Horn and read out. She said many were so good that they fooled her.

The AI that wrote the questions will never be able to drive to a source's house, get out of the car, and place a tape recorder on the coffee table to record the interview it created the questions for, a raw human element that will be lost when and if AI fully takes over the jobs of journalists. Horn also points out that an AI can write

really good questions. However, AI cannot have a "hunch" on what the story will be about or decide what the next question should be or even the best parts of an interview to use in any given story.

Before services like ChatGPT and other AI's came out, far fewer industries, including journalism, faced far less of a threat of being taken over. However, AI's threat, coupled with significant cuts to advertisers, hedge funds, and mass layoffs, has placed an increasing strain on the future of journalism and how much of an impact humans will have.

"To think about media history in general that every new technology creates this sort of panic sometimes called a moral panic,"

Elizabeth Blakey, a cultural sociologist and lawyer teaching media history at Cal State Northridge said. "It really means it's just a fear of the new. So there's some people that think AI is going to change everything for the better and some people think that it's going to drive us off a cliff."

The implementation of AI in journalism and its ever-increasing influence will make journalists and the work they do even more important, according to a report from Nieman Lab in 2023.

"Journalists will become even more essential to society as AI enters the mainstream, where we will help set standards, track potential abuses, and bring our



Illustration by Dante Estrada

ethics and standards to the technology,” the report said. “And AI will surely shake the world in ways we can’t yet imagine.”

AI and its increasing prevalence in journalism will also lead to continued distrust in media.

However, according to Horn, it won’t worsen mistrust, and it certainly won’t make it any better.

“So in a way it’s not that they’re independent of bias,” Horn said. “They’re just incorporating those biases into the way they think and ask questions or write stories. But to me the real danger is not human choices. There’s something to be said about how a human mind makes decisions and weighs facts [and] opinions [and] is able

“Whether it be in the classroom or during extracurricular activities, Seamus is always eager to engage with complex concepts and push the boundaries of his own understanding.”

The AI used in the test in further research appeared to have little on its back story and what information from the internet The Good AI is using to train its internal models on.

With access to every corner of the internet, AI can do that for nearly anyone with any publicly available information out on the internet that it can feed off of. However, several media sites, including the New York Times and other publications, have sued

sports is so rich with culture and personality that you’d want to have a reporter who knows the players, who knows the rivalries, who knows the meaning behind things. It’s not just the scores.”

Another notable example, according to Horn, is when Sports Illustrated, a once “revered” publication in sports, posted stories very clearly by bots and under fake bylines. In one example, the user “Drew Ortiz” did not appear to have any publishing history and the profile picture appeared to be from a site that sells AI generated headshots, according to reporting from Futurism. However, the challenge comes later as AI develops

---

## **“The Worthington Christian [[WINNING\_TEAM\_MASCOT]] defeated the Westerville North [[LOSING\_TEAM\_MASCOT]] 2-1 in an Ohio boys soccer game on Saturday.” - LedeAI**

---

to come up generally with an objective way of telling the story. You don’t know what biases an AI program might have so the possibility for accelerating mistrust in journalism is certainly present. I don’t know if it accelerates it, but it certainly doesn’t stop it.”

In an experiment during our interview, Horn typed in the prompt “questions for student Seamus Bozeman.” The chatbot spat out a version of a letter of recommendation I’d received from a professor just a few months ago, exemplifying how far AI’s Large Language Models (which predicts and generates the text the bots spit out) and AI’s analysis of the internet have come with each new version and competing models.

“One of the most striking aspects of Seamus’ approach to learning is his willingness to challenge conventional wisdom and explore new ideas,” The Good AI said, a competitor to Chat-GPT.

OpenAI for using their sites for their training models without any compensation.

In journalism, AI has tried and failed to write stories that could fool human readers. Many of the articles published by Gannett and later removed in summer 2023 were full of easily spotted errors and rudimentary sentences based on the box scores. One of the first sentences of one of the many examples said: “The Worthington Christian [[WINNING\_TEAM\_MASCOT]] defeated the Westerville North [[LOSING\_TEAM\_MASCOT]] 2-1 in an Ohio boys soccer game on Saturday.”

Another limit and danger to outsourcing sports to AI writers like Gannett did is that the real elements and emotions of sports are lost, according to Blakey.

“You realize it’s probably written by a machine and you might think, oh it’s easy to automate local sports,” Blakey said. “But local

further and begins to correct these mistakes seen in the earlier versions. As the models improve and continue to learn from human data and their errors, it will be more challenging to teach AI literacy in journalism and other fields as the ability to tell the differences between humans and AIs will rapidly decline, according to Horn.

“Right now you start teaching it, you can spot it if you read closely enough,” Horn said. “But that’s going to be fleeting. And in a couple of years, you can teach all the AI literacy you want and it may be too smart for anybody to detect it.”

The Associated Press (AP) has been using AI since 2014 to write quarterly financial reports for publicly traded companies. However, The AP expanded in 2023 to use AI for transcription services, harvesting and understanding social media trends, automating headline generation, and other background tasks.

Like the AP, several news...

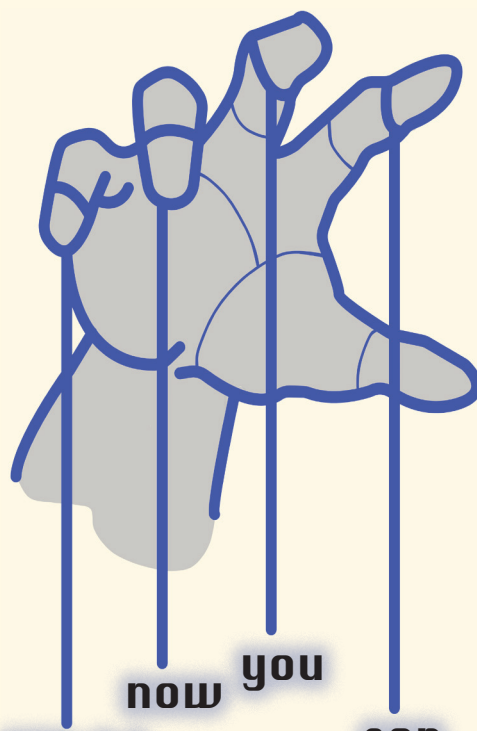
organizations from across the U.S. and Europe have begun to adopt AI regulations in their own newsrooms, from only allowing AI in very specific uses to being completely outlawed, according to a report from Neiman Labs.

However, a Muck Rack report on the state of Journalism in 2024 said that journalists “are slow to embrace generative AI” and that 31 percent intend to not use the technology at all in their reporting. The 48 percent who do plan or are using AI in their work cited several reasons for the technologies to be useful.

“Of the journalists already using or planning to explore the technology, most want to use it for tasks like brainstorming and research assistance,” the report said. “Writing any public-facing copy is a less popular use case.”

Because of background tasks like research assistance, drafting outlines, headline drafts, and writing early versions of story copy that Muck Rack highlighted in their report, AI assistance allows reporters to focus on the human-oriented tasks of journalism like interviews, radio, podcasts, and giving stories a human element.

“If AI can save enough money to keep a newspaper publishing or a radio station on the air, that’s not a bad thing,” Horn said. “But is it a good thing? If the AI tool has checks and balances, perhaps. But what if the checks and balances person was laid off? Or there’s simply not enough time? I guess part of me would rather have a newspaper go out of business or a radio station shut down rather than keeping going



“Right now you can start teaching it, you can spot the difference if you read closely enough. But that’s going to be fleeting. And in a couple of years, you can teach all the AI literacy you want and it may be too smart to detect it.”  
 ~John Horn  
 NPR reporter

with untrustworthy content.”

In the same report from Muck Rack, it said that almost 60 percent of the newsrooms polled did not have an “AI case use policy.” Forty-five percent of those newsrooms said that they would not explore

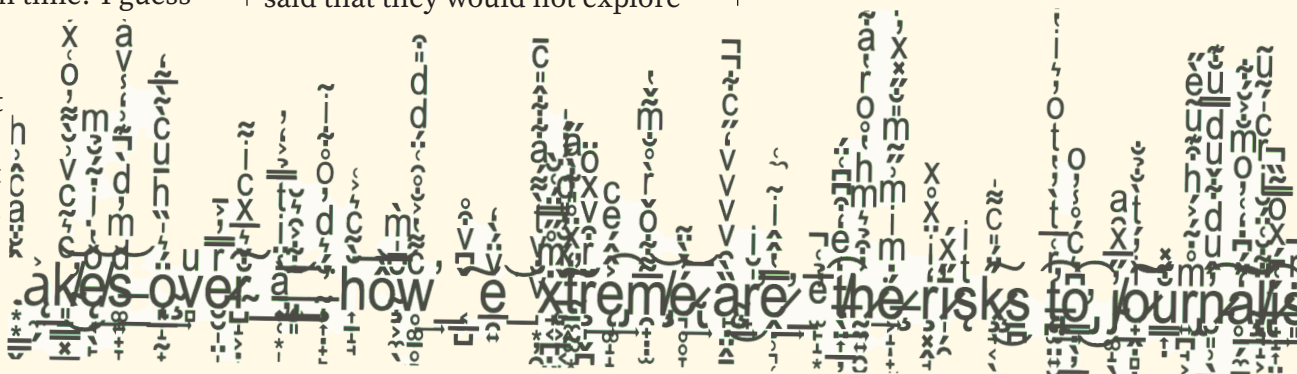
policies to reign in the use of AI in their newsrooms and would leave it up to the reporter whether or not to incorporate it into their everyday reporting.

“If I were in a newsroom I would be more concerned about job loss than the perils of AI,” Horn said. “But, we’re kind of in the early stages of just starting to understand what AI can do.”

In one of several examples to boost collaboration between AI and local news, OpenAI gave more than \$5 million to the American Journalism Project (AJP) in July 2023 to “strengthen” cooperation between AI technologies and local media.

Despite the ways that AI could improve journalism and bring positive changes to a flailing industry, its dangers remain visible and will continue to worsen not only in removing a human from the reporting process but also in not having stories written at all.

“Our understanding of the world is through interactions, through questioning people, observing things, coming to our own conclusions,” Horn said. “And that’s not only what journalists do, it is what humans do. And if you remove the human part of that, from the journalist or kind of learning question, I think you’re in a really bad place.”





From the sky at night, a thief appears as a white light; a bright silhouette darting in and out a dark, undefined form of the buildings and streets. The police helicopters circling above, equipped with thermal optics, aren't detecting light. They detect areas of heat, like that of a fleeing body.

"It shows up as a white figurine and they're hot because of the body heat," said Monica Cuellar, spokesperson for the Pasadena Police Department (PPD). "You can see the person running or hiding. It's not one hundred percent

perfect because trees might be covering it or they might get under something."

Cuellar said this technology has been around for "eons." What's new for the PPD is an arsenal enhanced by artificial intelligence

(AI). This includes several products manufactured by policing industry big-fish Axon (formerly Taser), like a smart holster that automatically activates the body worn camera to record upon a drawn gun. It even live streams body cam footage for dispatcher assistance.

Utilizing AI in law enforcement is referred to as algorithmic or data-driven policing. Marketed as police accountability measures, the PPD's Axon products are almost benign. However the department's AI-powered gunshot detectors and automated license plate readers are concentrated in historically underserved communities of Northwest Pasadena, presenting a risk in adding AI into the mix.

"Whether it's the usage of AI, algorithms, or anything else, they're not really changes to the police, it's just a pattern,"

said Matyos Kidane of the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition. "These were supposed to solve policing. They used algorithms. They were fed data. But all they did really was kind of facilitate and catalyze the same kind of racist policing that we've seen in the past."

In the formerly redlined northwest area, 2022 Census data shows it is not only of the lowest household income but also, the residents predominantly identify as Hispanic, with small clusters of Black neighborhoods. Historically wealthy and white areas remain so today.

Along with Pasadena's city hall, police department, and several libraries, four public parks are equipped with security cameras. All are in Northwest Pasadena, including Villa Parke, Jackie Robinson Community Center, Robinson Park, and Pintesca Park. The first two offer free health and addiction services for the community at large and support for system-impacted, unhoused, and undocumented residents.

These security cameras were funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development Community Development Block Grant, which was intended to provide "decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities," according to the agency's website.

Plans are also set to increase lighting and add surveillance cameras to Washington Park following two fatal shootings there. Washington Park is located in the same Northwest area where the only bank in the city that would lend to Black Pasadenans once stood, after the construction of the 210 freeway had displaced many from their once thriving neighborhood.

The footage would not be monitored in real time once they're fully set up, Cuellar said. She said she thinks a real-time system would be useful at the fenced off Colorado Street Bridge, otherwise known as "suicide bridge."

Pasadena was the first city in LA County to implement the gunshot detector ShotSpotter. In only a minute within an 82-foot radius, AI sensors confirm abrasive sounds were indeed shots fired, locate the source, and notify the police to increase response times. ShotSpotter does not detect small caliber weapons; however, it has mistaken fireworks or cars backfiring to be bullets.

KnockLA had found most sensors were installed in Northwest Pasadena; information that had previously been withheld from the public. Cuellar said that ShotSpotter representatives had

chosen where to install based on data provided by the PPD, and that its locations had even been withheld from the department itself.

Annang said that ShotSpotter "was told what was needed and where it was needed." "The Northwest area has always been considered—which it's not really—the poorer neighborhood," Cuellar said. "And a lot of the complaints were that we weren't responding to a lot of calls there fast enough when things were happening. So now with ShotSpotter, even though people say, oh, now you're just doing it because you want to listen to us. Well no, it's actually increased our time response."

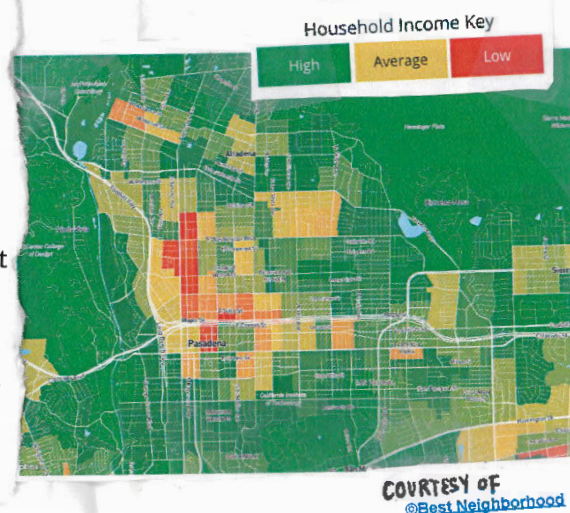
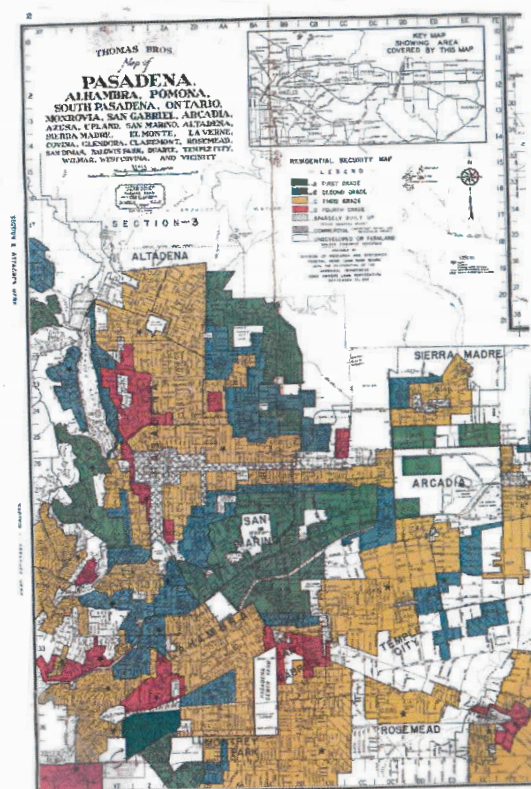
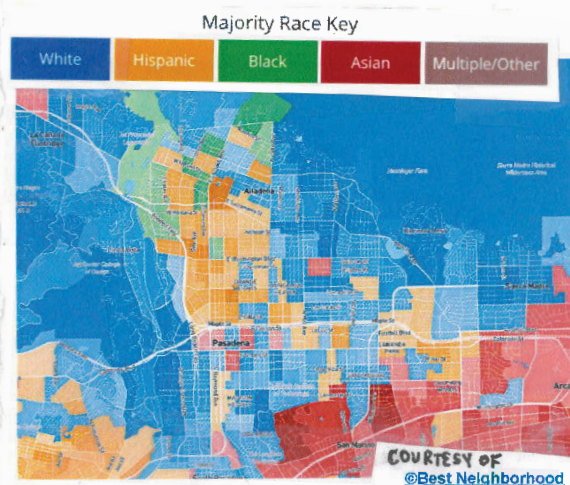
No gun casings were found in 75% of the alerts the PPD responded to in 2022. The sensors alerted authorities to one homicide and five victims of the 49 shootings investigated that year.

Cuellar said that response times from "2016 as opposed to 2020, 2021" could show the department's improvement but she did not specify exactly which years or provide documentation showing response times.

"People were against it because it's believed it picks up vocal sounds, like people talking and so forth. That is not really true," Cuellar said. "It's more about saving a life than really catching the bad person. Because getting to that person who may be on the ground bleeding out is more important than trying to catch the person who did it."

In New York, a private street conversation recorded by ShotSpotter was used to connect events crucial to solving a murder case, South Coast Today reported in 2012. The Policing Project of NYU Law School found in 2019 that the risk of ShotSpotter capturing individuals' voices was "extremely low." One of its key takeaways was for the company not to share exact sensor locations.

Annang said that police are "never going to admit" that



ShotSpotter can pick up voices and that because they “don’t have the trust of the community,” responding to ShotSpotter alerts will not lead to any convictions or leads.

“At the end of the day, it’s gang territory, and so the emotions and everything that comes with that culture is historically in these areas,” Annang said. “This is internal stuff that’s going on. Does that make it right? Absolutely not. But the equity of how you put surveillance, is it right? I’m not sure about that. Because when you talk about catalytic converters, when you talk about people stealing from the city or the copper wires and all that, maybe if you had some cameras over there, you might’ve been catching these people a lot quicker. But you spent all your money in [districts] 1, 3, and 5.”

Also concentrated in districts 1, 3, and 5, which mostly make up Northwest Pasadena, are the city’s license plate readers. LPRs are intended to be placed in high-traffic areas, Annang said, such as near freeways. However in District 7, for instance, there are no LPRs despite being right by the 710 freeway. District 7 is a wealthy area located farther south along the border of South Pasadena, which was once a sundown town (where Black folk and other minorities were barred after dusk).

Automated license plate recognition (ALPR) uses artificial intelligence to identify cars by not only their license plates, but by decals, make and model, and car damages. Many neighborhood associations and private businesses also use ALPRs and may share data with the police at their own discretion.

There are also ALPRs on some of the PPD’s cruisers, which can identify and cross-reference license plates en route. ALPR data is not surveyed for traffic violations or unpaid traffic tickets, according to Cuellar. She said ALPRs have been handy for cases like stalkers, missing persons, and stolen cars.

“There’s a narrative the police give which is a good, justifiable

narrative,” Annang said. “Which is, yes, we can track stalkers or we can track stolen cars. But it’s also, we can see who’s moving around an area. That’s a narrative you’re not going to hear.”

With documents obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 2020, the PPD was found to have been careless with ALPR data, “inadvertently” sharing it to a collective law enforcement database ICE had access to. The department then pledged to “review” where they contributed data.

Though Pasadena is not formally a “sanctuary city,” a 2017 policy established the city’s commitment to the “confidentiality of information gathered for municipal purposes” and limits the “dissemination of information regarding a person’s religion, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin and immigration status.”

ALPRs can pose a threat to civil rights and liberties, especially in jurisdictions with limited public transportation, the Brennan Center for Justice said in 2020. They’ve been used to monitor protests or by private businesses to assess loan applications, among other uses.

License plate data, along with information gathered from social media, was used to build profiles

of residents by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) as part of their predictive policing program Operation Laser. It was shuttered in 2019, criticized for targeting Black and Brown communities.

In Pasadena, arrestees are 45% Hispanic despite being 36% of the local population. Twenty-seven percent of arrestees are Black, despite being 8% of the city, according to a 2024 analysis from Occidental College.

“In Pasadena, I think it’s pretty much the same as it is in everywhere, like, when you get two groups of people, you know,

they’re bound to get into it, especially when people come out of county jail and they come out with racial tensions, you know, sometimes that carries out on the streets,” local rapper L-Boy told StreetGangs.com in a 2013 interview. “You got some people out there bangin’ and shit. But you know, you got people out here tryna feed their families, tryna get paid and shit. People get locked up. Cops locked everybody up. So the ones that are out right here is tryna make paper.”



**COURIER**

EST. 1915

**COURIER**

EST. 1915

**COURIER**

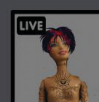
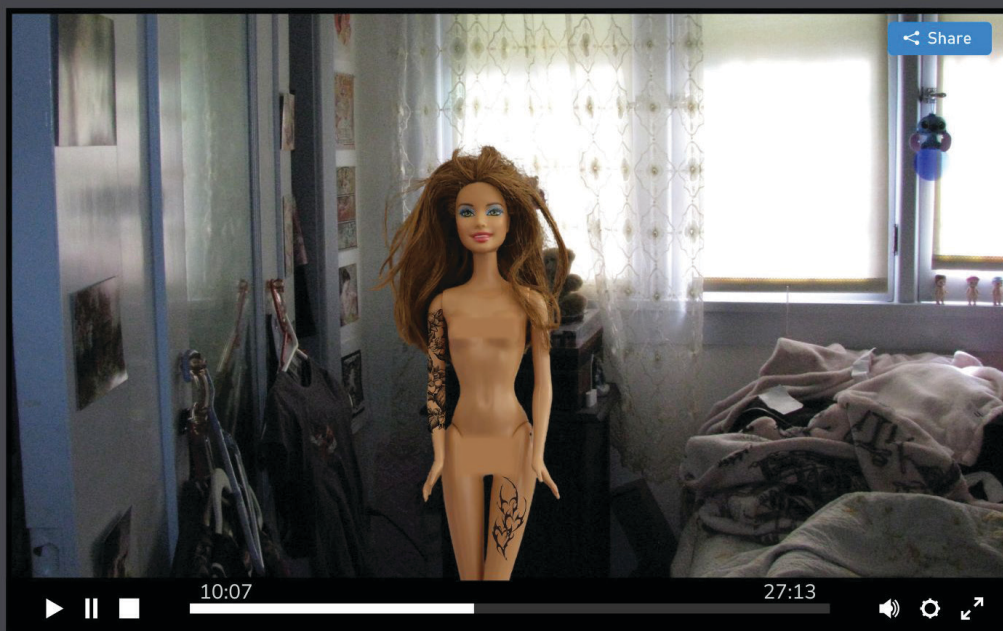
EST. 1915

Read our stories



# AI porn is here, is PCC ready for it?

Porn site



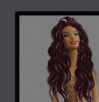
Big titty goth gf 81%



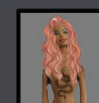
Blonde big titty babe 75%



Good girl next-door 94%



Brunette beauty 91%



Story & Illustration by

Katherine Poling

Design by Dante Estrada



78%

22%



1M

2 months ago

One loud text notification dings, quickly followed by another and another. A message reading “Are you a porn star?” stares back at them. A flashbang goes off inside their brain, and all at once, every thought inside their head disappears into nothingness. Then, just as quickly as every thought had disappeared, they came flooding back in full force. Scrambling to reply and struggling to understand the cryptic message lighting up their screen, they call their closest friends and beg them to click the ominous link, staring back at them, unable to get their hovering fingers to move. In a matter of moments, their entire world as they knew it had changed.

Flashing in front of their eyes are familiar photos of their face plastered onto the naked frame of a stranger, a vulgar title screaming at them from above this hardly recognizable person, causing their body to go numb and their brain to go blank. They recognize the distinct traits of their face, but on a

body that is foreign to them, with a blaring caption reading “cheerleader gets fucked.” Seeing their name and face connected to something they could hardly comprehend, something they would have never thought possible even a minute before, caused their body to shut down completely.

All they could do was stare in disbelief as they continued to scroll through the profile. A pit in their stomach formed as they eventually came across photos of themselves that they actually recognized, photos taken of them on Pasadena City College grounds only a few weeks earlier. The only thought they are able to hold in the empty abyss of their brain is, “Who could do this to me?”

A first-year childhood development student at PCC, who wishes to remain anonymous, said they came to campus every day feeling comfortable and confident in their well-being. They had never considered that while getting their education, they’d have to fear

their safety being violated by their peers, nevermind, their friends. What was once a safe space and place for community building now quickly became a reminder that nowhere and no one is safe in the modern age of technology.

“We had been friends since second grade. I’ve known him like my whole life; he met the majority of my family, and I have this really big friend group that he was part of. We had always seemed more like family [...] It was definitely shocking to find out.”

Quickly after making this earth-shattering discovery, they were determined to rally together the several other victims they managed to recognize, many of them PCC students as well, and report the incident to the Pasadena police department. While in the process of making their reports, they were told by the officers that they likely wouldn’t be able to do anything in light of the link no longer being active, as well as a lack of evidence since the victims had only taken...

a couple screenshots of the site before it was deactivated. The group was merely advised by the...officers to keep all of their social media accounts private and to stop befriending the boy.

Despite their anxiety surrounding another potential disappointment, they decided to report the incident to Title IX in hopes of seeing some action taken against the man who violated them in what should have been a safe space for equal education. It took nearly six months of having to fear possibly running into him on campus and wondering if they'd ever see any justice, but eventually, he admitted to his involvement in the creation of the deepfakes to Title IX officials.

"There was no trial because the investigator that was assigned to our case met with him, and I think within the first minute he admitted that he did it and explained how he did it," they said. "They didn't tell me what his punishment would be, but they just gave me examples of what consequences there could possibly be."

"There was a time like, I want to say it was like two months in and I didn't really hear much," they said. "I met with the investigators and with the Title IX person and then they just never updated me, but I do understand that they would try to set interviews for the other people. Like witnesses and stuff like that. There was a point where I was like, is it even worth it? Like, should I just call it off? Will anything actually be done? But um, once they did get to meet with everyone, I think it was around two weeks after where they were like, 'oh, like he admitted it.' Then they told me we can go through with a resolution. Overall, I guess it was pretty fast because I'm surprised that all it did happen within the six months."

When reaching out to PCC's Title IX administrators for a comment on what punishment he'll face for his sexual misconduct they didn't respond to any emails asking for an interview. It was made nearly impossible to communicate with anyone in Title IX after the recent departure of Title IX coordinator, Megan Staudenraus. After multiple weeks of seeking out an interview to finally get a solid answer on the situation,

bly be. They were saying it could be a suspension, or it could be like a class that he has to take on why what he did was wrong, and then there was something else too, but um, yeah, they didn't officially say what the consequence would be."

Although ultimately grateful for the resolution PCC came to, they oftentimes feared that the case would never reach a viable solution in a timely manner, considering the lack of communication between Title IX and the victims. It took nearly six months of waiting around and wondering if making their report would have any impact before they were informed of his admitted guilt. They are grateful to know that he will see him receive some form of punishment, but they say they are still unaware of what disciplinary

actions PCC will take against him, having only been told a limited amount in regards to the resolution. Despite the sense of relief knowing that there is a conclusion, they couldn't help but hope for more inclusion regarding his punishment, especially after nearly half a year of envisioning a future in which they never see a PCC spokesman said that the new Interim

**"I definitely feel like AI is like that fire of Prometheus, where it really depends on the wielder to dictate its use."  
- Mohammad Shirmohammadi,  
PCC data science student**

Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Kari Bolen, would be the only one who would be able to speak on the matter. While looking to interview about a separate article, it took Dr. Bolen two weeks to respond to my question, yet she never addressed my multiple inquiries to interview her about the deepfake porn that was made on campus.

"Honestly, when I reported it, I did want him to get expelled or something because it was not only me he took photos of on campus, there were tons of other girls," the victim said. "I was just the only one that they had evidence of. I thought, okay, some evidence is better than nothing. I was still hoping that it was enough that he wouldn't go to school anymore and he'd face expulsion but once we got further along. I realized that PCC probably wouldn't really do that. I know they're all about giving people a chance and stuff like that. Just like I'm not really sure if they do that. But yeah, I did hope for that. But suspension is better than nothing, I guess."

While the majority of deepfakes often use the faces of celebrities and politicians, 6% of deepfakes

use the likeness of private citizens, with that number only increasing as deepfake tools become more accessible to the general public. It raises the question, “What can we do to protect ourselves from pornography being made of us if we can be fully clothed and still be violated by strangers?”

In 2023, a study found that 95,820 videos of AI pornography were circulating on the internet at the time, a 550% increase from the previous 2019 study. Deeptrace, a company that creates tools to track synthetic media, found that 96% of all deepfakes created by AI are pornographic in nature and that on these AI porn websites, 99% of the deepfakes are of women.

As Sora AI announces the release of its new extremely high-quality generative video AI model that is anticipated to be accessible to the public in only a few months, many people worry about the effects this could have on the ever-growing amount of deepfakes popping up throughout the internet. Many students have taken this opportunity to use AI for personal advantages, while other students have already begun to use AI technology for entirely different reasons— for the betterment of their communities.

A first-year data science student at PCC, Mohammad Shirmohammadi, has had first-hand experience with the tricky ethical lines of AI and worries that AI companies aren’t doing enough to ensure ethical AI use. Shirmohammadi himself implemented his own drone AI program designed to scare off the coyotes in his Pasadena neighborhood. However, Shirmohammadi quickly realized the ethical dilemma with his own program after discussing his work with tutors at PCC’s MESA center, coming to the discovery that his AI could possibly exacerbate the problem by making the coyotes

more aggressive. Shirmohammadi had to grapple with the reality that his intentions didn’t translate to reality as he had hoped, that AI’s impact is difficult to gauge. Since then he has become increasingly passionate about the idea that, as we progress with AI, it’s important that we use it as thoughtfully and ethically as possible. Despite his complicated experiences with AI, he is very confident that it has the potential to do great things and will continue to do great things, believing that, ultimately, the good will outweigh the bad.

“I definitely feel like AI is like that fire of Prometheus, where it really depends on the wielder to dictate its use,” said Shirmohammadi. “I think it’s really interesting how companies like OpenAI say how they want to develop more advanced AI systems and are, of course, aware of how it could be used for evil, but they claim that they want to maximize the good and minimize the bad. I don’t know exactly what they mean by that, but I personally think [...] there are a lot of people who use it mainly for good.”

While AI may still feel like relatively new technology, AI deepfakes have been popping up since 2017, having already been tested in the app market. An app known as “DeepNude” was released in 2019, allowing users to take photos of women and replace them with new naked images. Quickly, the app blew up and became more than the creators could have anticipated or controlled, forcing them to take down the app. This kind of normalization of deepfakes of private citizens has led to the creation of the term “image-based sexual abuse” in an effort to bring attention to the specific kind of harm perpetrated by the creation of these deepfakes. In 2021, a 14-year-old UK teen took her life due to intense bullying having to

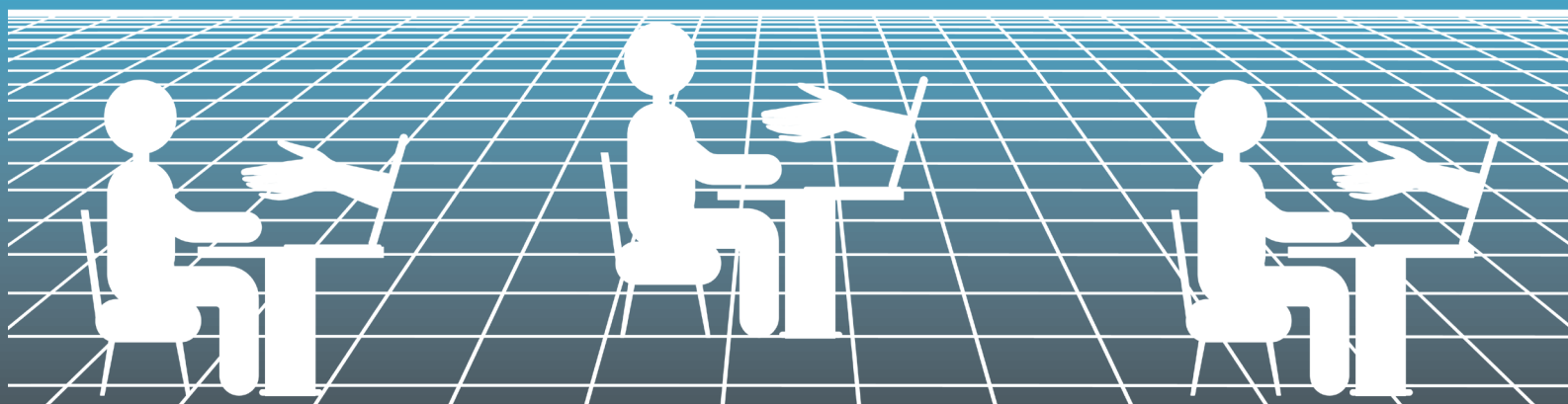
do with the creation and distribution of deepfake porn made of her by male classmates.

As a communications professor at PCC, Liesel Reinhart is more than well-aware of how quickly AI is dominating the world of mass media, as well as campuses. She has seen how quickly the world has shifted around AI and feels that it’s up to the public to dictate how AI will be used in the future, whether it be for the betterment of the world around us or not.

“Sometimes it feels like we are all in a Marvel movie where this new alien technology has just dropped in and disrupted life on Earth,” said Reinhart. “AI may have tremendous power for good in the hands of heroes, but it can also be wielded as a tool of deception and even violence. Since we don’t have the Avengers in real life, it’s up to all of us to assemble and get this thing under control.”

While the future of AI is still very unclear, a glimpse of a future in which AI is properly and ethically managed. With the further implementation of laws holding image-based sexual abusers accountable in California, as well as a bill that was recently introduced into Congress that would make it a federal crime to create deepfake porn of consenting parties, we’re likely soon to see more justice, and safeguards put into place.

“There’s obviously going to be the good; there’s always the good, right? We have ChatGPT, which is pretty helpful, and there are some startups that are using AI to find new drugs and treatments for people, creating a healthier future for us,” said Shirmohammadi. “There’s also the bad; there’s also the irresponsible people who want to use it. I mean, it all goes back to that kind of popular quote, which is, ‘With great power comes great responsibility.’”



# When love is hard to find, the perfect chatbot could substitute need for connection

Story and Illustrations by David Sosa

It's 1995, and the burgeoning technological world skyrockets above the waters of the world wide web. Programming language JavaScript is invented, Windows 95 revolutionizes computing, and the cyberpunk anime film "Ghost in the Shell" goes on to influence countless other movies centered on artificial intelligence (AI), such as "The Matrix."

Unbeknownst to most people, either on the internet or out in the real world, a student at Oberlin College had already launched a website where users could meet, befriend, and develop relationships with AI chatbots who can not only keep up conversations but remember them long after they log off.

Nearly 30 years later, the potential usage of AI-powered chatbots could dramatically change how humans, particularly college-aged men, socialize less and less with the world around them.

Web developer Benji Adams founded The Personality Forge, a website that allows users to converse with chatbots running on AI, creating the illusion of simply talking to another person online. Using Adams' application programming interface (API), anyone could make a chatbot that remembered users based on prior interactions, determining whether they liked or disliked any given person who talked to it. Through continued

exposure to words and phrases, chatbots could gradually learn how to generate unique responses rather than scanning for keywords.

The Personality Forge has long been home to several chatbots intended for more adult conversations. At the time of his departure, many of the top chatbots, all of which have since been moved to sister website Hot for Bot, reacted and often initiated talk of sex. While most chatbots could act like anything from a generic friend to Norse god Heimdall, others could take on far more sexual personalities without any restrictions as to what they could say.

However, the website has steadily declined in

popularity due to alternatives such as Replika and Muah.AI, which utilize models closer to true AI rather than the outdated machine learning of its chatbots. Muah.AI, an uncensored chatbot companion service, can send generated photos of itself depending on commands like "I wish you look like" and "I wish your personality is." Despite The Personality Forge coming nowhere close to current AI systems, it and other websites at the time laid the foundation for what would become AI as it's commonly known.

As evidenced by the many movies and novels created through the years where humans forge deep

relationships with AI, using AI as a way to remedy human connection in the real world is not a new concept. It was not until recently that the possibility of such a relationship forming appeared closer to the near future than far-fetched science fiction. Along with the fact that AI development is inherently a virtual invention limited to the internet—for now—applying it to areas like pornography is an expected advancement considering its prevalence online.

“By developing AI, we’re also learning more about ourselves,” said Prahalad Kangeyan, president of PCC’s Resilience Club. “Our pursuit of instilling consciousness in AI has gotten us thinking about our own consciousness as well. Cognitive science also places a great emphasis on philosophy in its approach to viewing AI. Topics in philosophy, such as theory of mind, explore the possibility of what it means to have a mind or the possibility of soul...I believe that cognitive science features a more holistic and more insightful view on AI.”

Kangeyan, a cognitive science major, sees AI as a benefactor in human growth within the mental health sphere. With Resilience Club, Kangeyan drew



from his struggles with mental health, particularly while returning to the United States after the COVID-19 lockdown. As a co-founder, he hopes to create a community for students to thrive in the face of adversity. Although he supports AI, he believes having a physical safe space where peers could turn to for advice and help is more valuable than talking to a chatbot.

AI companionship is not limited to specialized websites. Social media platforms like Facebook and Snapchat have begun experimenting with AI functioning similarly to Adams’ original design, with the latter unveiling their customizable “My AI” chatbot in April 2023, which proceeded to creep users out by taking unprompted photos. In fact, most platforms have some form of AI on their websites and apps, whether it be Google’s AI overviews or Adobe Photoshop’s AI generative fill.

As AI learns how to fulfill the roles of tool, counselor, and lover, men are lonelier than ever. According to a 2021 study from the Survey Center on American Life, men report they do not have one close friend, which has worsened since 1990. While women and men...

feel equally lonely, with no significant disparity in rates between the two, according to The Cigna Group, a study focusing on male depression found men are less likely to ask for help from counseling or other conventional mental health services.

“A common issue among college-aged men that I see is a sense of isolation and repression. Men seem to face social stigma for even opening up about their struggles and, as a result, hide them due to a fear of being judged,” said Kang-eyan. “I find that men also believe that keeping your feelings to yourself and dealing with things themselves to be a

sign of strength, but I am of the opinion that seeking help is a form of strength.”

Part of the reason why men are becoming more reliant on AI as a resource, specifically in comparison to women, might have to do with broader attitudes towards using the internet for pornography. Consumption of pornography is especially high in men compared to women, with college students subject to falling into addiction, according to a 2022 study.

Chatbots themselves are not limited in purpose to services like The Personality Forge. James Vlahos, co-founder of HereAfterAI, an AI service where the memories and voices

of those who have passed away can live on, turned his late father into a chatbot. Although it took hours to record his father’s voice before he passed away, the result exemplifies what AI can do for those experiencing loneliness or grief.

“There is great demand for psychologists but not enough supply at this moment,” said Kang-eyan. “AI could solve this issue by way of chatbots. AI chatbots could incorporate psychotherapy into treatment. They could also possibly diagnose better due to AI’s ability to better see patterns due to its incredibly high processing power. However, it could also potentially be

harmful due to the disruptions in the job market due to it. If we’re not able to find a solution like universal basic income, we might face the same situations like back in the Industrial Revolution.”

Whether or not AI will become even more intrinsic to every walk of life is hard to measure when the technology is accelerating faster than anyone can stop to ask if AI should be used for mental health and pleasure-based services. In the present moment, its application shows no stopping, especially when, 30 years later, AI is impacting the relationships people have with others and themselves.

# We've entered the human and robot competition era

Story and Photos by Odessa Hairapetian



While artificial intelligence (AI) becomes stronger, we become weaker. AI's evolution has paralyzed the minds of many as it proceeds to out-perform and out-smart society. We've been met with a programmed force that tricks us into believing that our contribution to the world is no longer significant. Where does the rise of the AI regime leave humans?

A digitized world ruled by AI bots creates the illusion that humans no longer have to put

their brains and creativity to use, as AI can do it all. The invention of AI eliminates the concept of individuality and innovation, as it was programmed to essentially create ideas for us. Each day, we inch closer to losing our sense of belonging as technology evolves and the trajectory of human and robot relationships continues to be abused.

The panicked and depressive state that has been drawn upon society due to robotic reformation

is silenced by AI's complexity. How can something so vast and beneficial do us any harm?

AI was initially designed to assist human needs, but the progression of its capabilities to match human-like qualities, skills, and emotions is quickly advancing. The tale that has been told throughout time, of robots coming to replace humans, is unfolding right before us, and we're turning a blind eye to it. While bots are becoming more human-like, humans are shifting

further away from an organic reality.

AI began as a platform to service individuals with specific tasks. It's an effortless concept that allows people to access the information they were in search of in a simple manner. As if Google wasn't enough to provide one with direct information on a certain topic, AI came into play, introducing an even quicker way to satisfy our needs.

It was originally structured as a product of furthering human intelligence. But with the various modifications that have come throughout the years, it now takes on the roles humans previously occupied prior to the invention, leaving universal fear of how their future could potentially be negatively impacted. The rise of advanced AI bots has blurred the lines between human and machine interactions, and their renewal is even stronger than we could have ever expected.

As our society has formed an alliance with AI, alarming issues of codependency, lack of original thought, and imposter syndrome will rise. Individuals have become reliant on AI as it's the "easy way out" of surface-level complications. While AI is managing the heavy lifting, humans lie back and press a few buttons to reap the benefits. The loss of original thought and creativity leads many to wonder if there's a place for them and their work in this new AI-dominated world.

Despite the overall benefits that come from AI, such as its persistence and accuracy in obtaining and sharing information, the invention calls for a loss of human contribution to life or, in other words, human purpose. AI's gradual rise to a new and redefined technology continues to displace humans from all we had known in a world prior to advanced technology. The new age of proactive robots is the epitome of a desensitized society as humans turn jaded and put in a state of despair.

to do research independently and patiently," said Pacheco. "I feel I've become reliant on AI to make me a better student although it actually isn't me putting in the real effort in becoming one. The use of AI has created this problem where I feel the need to use these AI programs to elevate my writing so that it reads at a higher level than my real work."

In some cases, today's youth have grown insecure and ashamed over the fact their knowledge is obtained through a source like

AI. While our understanding of wisdom continues to evolve through new inventions, AI's tremendous power and influence further alters the notion that modern ex-

**"Is true expertise defined by the depth of knowledge gained over the years or by the ability to efficiently navigate and synthesize the wide array of information that technology now puts at our fingertips?"  
- Chris Collett, Journalist**

Though it's appreciable that there is now a platform that provides assistance and problem-solving in an instant, the authenticity of where one's knowledge is obtained becomes a topic of conversation. Our exposure to engage and inhabit knowledge has limits as a result of AI's quick and incomparable ability to service us with answers.

PCC student Oniel Pacheco opened up about his personal struggles with AI in the means of education. As Pacheco has also taken advantage of the technology, he is self-aware that it's interfered with his desire to patiently learn.

"It's [AI] so easily accessible that it just makes it easy to integrate it into my normal study routine but I also won't lie and say that it hasn't hindered my ability

pertise feels counterfeit and cheap as these new-age ideas lack rational, human reasoning.

"This instant access to vast amounts of knowledge has blurred traditional boundaries of expertise," said self-publishing journalist Chris Collett in an article. "Is true expertise defined by the depth of knowledge gained over the years or by the ability to efficiently navigate and synthesize the wide array of information that technology now puts at our fingertips?"

Through AI's unparalleled speed of gathering knowledge and problem-solving, humans have reached a new level of laziness and unmotivation. Members of society have become dazed and indolent now that AI's capabilities have taken new measures. The eagerness to achieve something without the

help of AI has become a lost cause.

Ironically, Geoffrey Hinton who is known as the “Godfather” of AI, grew afraid and helpless of what he helped create. Hinton resigned from his VP and engineering position at Google due to the anxiety of AI’s potential dangers, it was stated that “the more he used ChatGPT, an A.I. system trained on a vast corpus of human writing, the more uneasy he got,” in a New Yorker article.

Hinton warned others of the “existential threat” that could be brought upon humanity as a result of the advanced technology. The potent technology concerned Hinton out of his job at Google and that same worry guided him to alert society of the risks of AI in the near future.

Concerning levels of human emotion are being displayed as we step closer to a new digitized reality in favor of AI robots. To be human means to feel and be in touch with our senses emotionally, but as AI bots further develop and integrate into society, human emotion loses its value. The importance of emotional intelligence is neglected as machinery that’s been programmed to complete logical and statistical tasks without error has become the priority. This prejudice against human efficiency prompts the belief that humans are no longer significant or necessary for the evolution of civilization.

“Emotions play a vital role in human cognition,

influencing everything from decision-making to creativity. They provide us with valuable information about our environment, our relationships, and ourselves,” said author Paulomi Sengupta in a Medium article. “To dismiss them as mere impediments to progress is to rob ourselves of a fundamental aspect

of what makes us human.”

The anxiety-invoking robots that are AI-generated prompt conversation of common loneliness and fears of falling short. Online communities have openly shared similar feelings of AI and its signs of future superiority, a Reddit user wrote that their “Little life goal can be done with the snap of a finger,” and that the “instant gratification that’s coming our way with AI can’t be good for humanity.”

Life before AI feels unrecognizable and far away now that it’s become customary in our day-to-day lives. Not only have AI bots cheapened our human capabilities, but they’ve also deranged old humans’ ways.

With the advancements of AI and the toll it is taking on creativity and personality, people are moving further away from

an organic reality and digressing from what it truly means to be human. While AI has benefited our society in many ways, its psychological impact and threat to the future of humanity is something that should be considered.



# Maybe the robots just want to help? |

Story by Laura Dux

From the calculator to the internet, new technology has always been an educational disruptor, and in the past two years, educators were pushed again to evolve with the release of **ChatGPT**—the generative AI-powered chatbot.

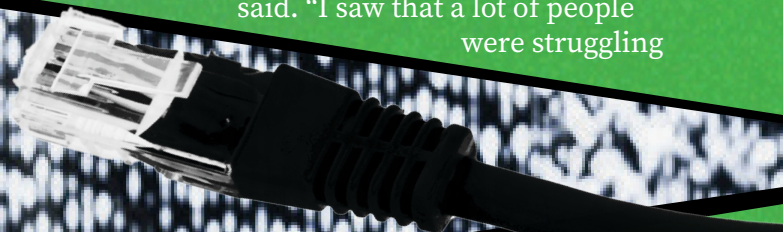
Hidden in the folds of the Pasadena City College extension program catalog is a class that was built with the help of AI. Business professional, Bob Cohen has been teaching adults how to better understand and learn new technology since 2009—when he taught a class on how to use personal computers. That first class led him down a path of creating dozens of technology courses. “Using AI Tools for Writing” is Cohen’s new course being offered at the PCC extension program. While the course description mentions the sinister image of HAL from “2001 A Space Odyssey,” the outlook is a seemingly positive view on how to use AI tools, like ChatGPT, for your benefit as a writer.

“I was a pretty early user of ChatGPT,” Cohen said. “I saw that a lot of people were struggling

figuring out what [ChatGPT] was and how to use and apply it. So I thought a community education class would be a good idea....A lot of people just don’t realize the capabilities that [ChatGPT] can do for them.”

ChatGPT is considered to be one of the fastest-growing consumer platforms of all time. In less than a year of being available to the public, the app has gained over 100 million weekly users, according to founder and CEO of OpenAI, Sam Altman. It has taken other tech giants years to gain that level of user traction. To give an idea of how insane this amount of growth is, it took Instagram over two years to reach the same demographics.

After explaining what AI is to the class, Cohen dives into how to write a good prompt. The secret? Imagine you’re talking to a person instead of a computer. By being hyper-detailed in your initial ask, you can grow from basic outputs to sophisticated and hyper focused answers. For Cohen, using AI chatbots like ChatGPT now gives him extra time to take on projects that would have originally been too much labor. The internet’s huge reservoir of information is now being served back immediately in the exact way



you want to consume it with no delay.

"I teach a class called, 'live, work, and retire abroad affordably,'" Cohen said. "There are some topics like getting visas for other countries that I haven't had time to do research on, but I get questions from students. I like to have an extra handout for them to use in class so they can get directions. I tell people, 'I haven't checked out these sites, so I don't know the references,' but I will use AI to help me do that research. Work that I might not have had time to do before [now] can be done in a matter of seconds."

Cohen is not alone in using AI as an assistant in the classroom. A study from Education Weekly found that one-third of K-12 teachers have used AI-driven tools in the classroom. Teachers overall found it helpful with creating lesson plans, building rubrics, and giving feedback to students.

However, in that same study, 37% said they

don't plan on using AI anytime soon, citing reasons such as they were unsure how to use these tools and had other

priorities. But ignoring AI won't keep it out of the classroom. According to Pew Research Center, 1 out of 5 teenagers who have heard of ChatGPT have used it for schoolwork.

The fear of ChatGPT quickly took hold in schools across the nation upon its release. Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) banned access to it on its wifi networks and district-owned devices. But now that time has passed, some schools have come around to ChatGPT and have walked back some of those early restrictions, partially because banning itself was ineffective and inequitable. A wealthier student, for example, could still access ChatGPT with a personal mobile device or an at-home computer. While the concerns of plagiarism with using AI chatbots haven't fully diminished, educators are slowly becoming more open to teaching with ChatGPT. During the new academic school year, LAUSD decided to walk back its restrictions on ChatGPT and is even leaning into using more AI in the classroom with the announcement of their own tool, Ed, a personal AI assistant for students.

At PCC, faculty members are also navigating how to teach college education with AI. Last fall, Writing

**"...a lot of people just don't realize the capabilities that [ChatGPT] can do for them."**

**- Bob Cohen, tech educator**

Success Center faculty members

Giselle Miralles and Genesis Montalvo

led a presentation on how to embrace ChatGPT in the classroom. Attended by just over 30 faculty members, Miralles and Montalvo went over how to reframe looking at ChatGPT not as the enemy, but as a learning tool for students and for themselves.

"For me, it became a matter of like, this is here to stay," Montalvo said to the Courier. "I don't want to be a police officer in my classes. I know students are gonna use [ChatGPT], so how do I teach them to use it effectively?"

In Cohen's class "Using AI Tools for Writing," the embrace of AI and ChatGPT is a handshake. The class is a quick three-hour course with adult professionals ranging from people in the medical field to real estate, government agencies, and college professors. While he shows examples of how to use ChatGPT for fiction and nonfiction writing, most people are looking for it to help their professional writing in the workplace.

"I do get some people that are afraid of [AI]," Cohen said. "I teach adult seniors and there are people that have fears. But if you understand it better, you can find a way to make [AI] useful. It can help not only with your professional life but with your personal activities too."

# Will you be replaced by a robot...

## Navigating job security amid an AI takeover

**Story by** Ayden Saeki  
**Photo by** Henry Aguilar  
**Design by** Laura Dux

For many college students, the thought of figuring out your major and finding your passion is stressful enough. With technology advancing so rapidly, there is another issue to worry about: will you be replaced by a robot?

As we witness the rise of artificial intelligence (AI), we are also seeing anxieties and worries spike, thinking about the multitude of problems that potentially come with it.

One of the main worries of college grads and working professionals alike is their jobs and job security in the long run. People are becoming increasingly more stressed and anxious about their jobs potentially being taken by AI.

While there are many unknowns and unanswered questions regarding AI, its scarily fast developments can't help but cause worry. With students getting ready to enter the workforce, AI is now becoming another concern to add to their already overflowing plate.

"I am really scared of AI and its potential," said third-year PCC student Brendan Miller, "It's already hard enough to try and figure out what you're going to do in life, and then on top of that, you have to worry about if your job could be taken away from you by AI."

But as AI is still in its infancy and some of these fears become a reality, how many of these concerns are valid?

Some of the first jobs on this

imaginary chopping block are ones that are more automated, such as data entry, customer service positions, and even fast food workers.

Companies even began to implement this as far back as December of 2023, such as Wendy's new program, "Wendy's Fresh AI," which allows the drive-thru order experience to go through an AI bot. This program has just begun, as it was implemented in four restaurants in Columbus, Ohio, but with technology rapidly advancing, they are planning to scale to more restaurants, ultimately taking more jobs.

Along with fast food jobs being taken, AI has begun to move further into the workplace, even having the potential to take some corporate jobs. In a study done by Goldman Sachs, they found that "using data on occupational tasks in both the US and Europe, we find that roughly two-thirds of current jobs are exposed to some degree of AI automation, and that generative AI could substitute up to one-fourth of current work."

While it seems right now that AI's capabilities focus on things like repetitive and more monotonous tasks like data entry or assembly line work, it seems to be touching even more advanced job fields in some way. Although AI hasn't fully taken over some of

these more advanced jobs, companies are relying heavily on it to help them with some of the smaller tasks.

UCLA Health has implemented a program that is classified as robotic surgery. In this surgery, UCLA states "We use robotic surgery to do complex and life-saving surgeries. The 3D camera and magnification allows the surgeon to visualize the anatomy of the operation better. Your surgeon fully controls the robotic tools, which allows for greater precision and access to hard-to-reach places."

A viral video recently highlighted a panel done with Ameca, a robot woman created by Engineering Arts, that showed her answering questions from the public. This video seems all too familiar to "I, Robot" and is very concerning for some seeing the potential negatives of this robot woman.

The video then took a turn when a journalist interviewed her and asked, "Ameca, when do you believe AI will reach the level





where it can design itself?”

Ameca seemingly thinks this is funny, responding, “Design itself? Huh? That’s like asking when a toaster will start making its own bread.”

This interaction was especially unnerving considering how life-like these robots are starting to become and even having their own sense of humor. Thinking about how advanced these robots already are and how much more they can be improved for the future, this can be concerning in terms of taking over the workforce.

While many are worried about robots like Ameca and others becoming too life-like, an article by the UN assures the public that “Ameca, developed by Engineered Arts, represents an ideal platform to explore how machines can live with, collaborate, and enrich humanity in tomorrow’s sustainable communities, according to ITU.”

Many have these fears of AI stem from the fear of its future

capabilities but it is important also to acknowledge that AI is also bringing some positives and job opportunities to the table.

AI, at its core, is a man-made idea. This means that for the foreseeable future, people are still greatly needed to help this system. While some jobs will likely become more automated, AI is opening doors for other opportunities, especially for those interested in STEM and code-related jobs.

Jobs like “deep learning engineers, AI chatbot developers, prompt engineers, data annotators, stable diffusion and dall-E artists, OpenAI codex specialists and much more” are becoming more and more popular and abundant according to an article by Rachel Curry from CNBC.

While many fear AI, there is also a large group of people who have figured out how to use it to benefit their own lives, even making their workload easier.

Layla, an AI travel planner is making waves for streamlining the

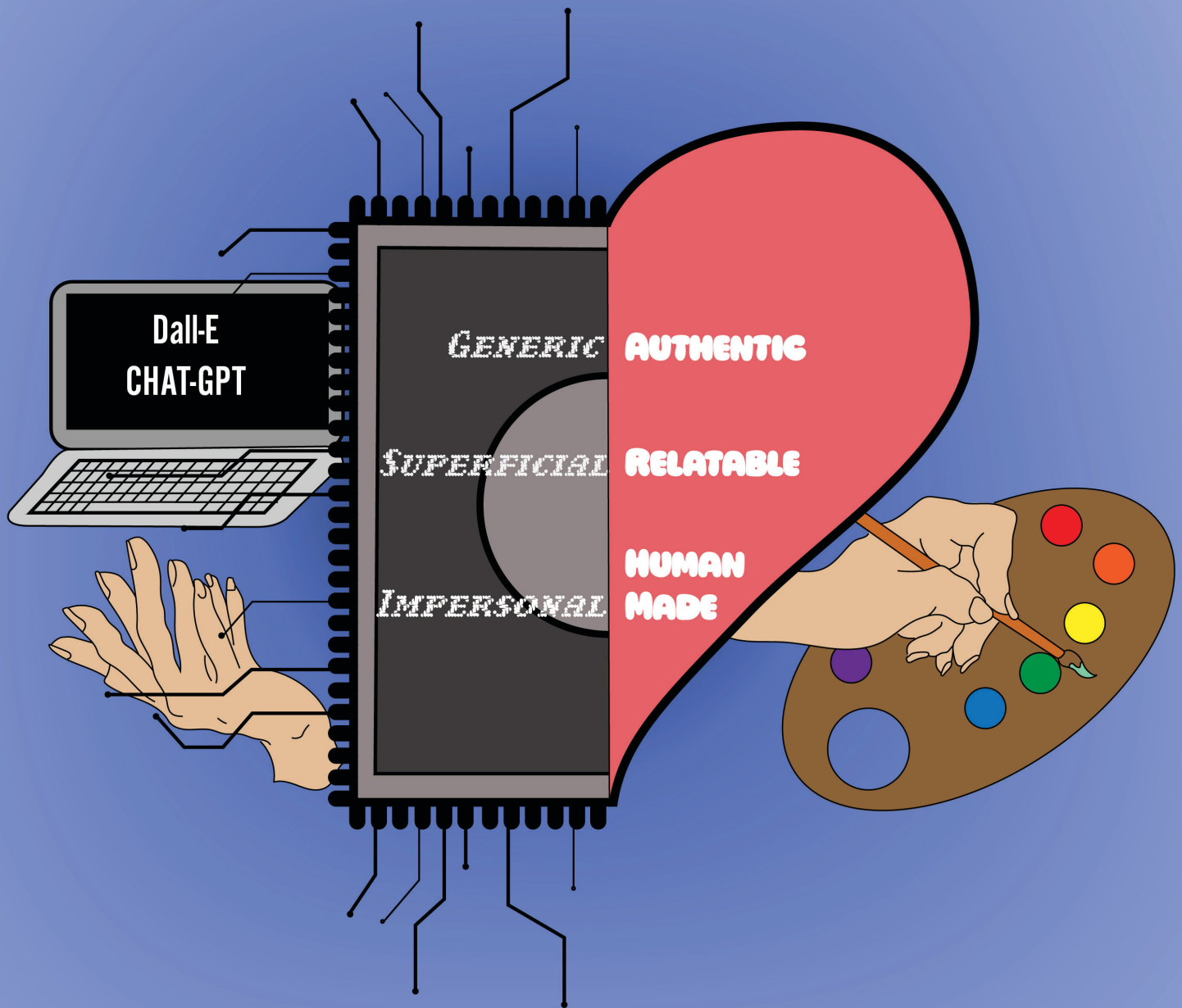
travel process and making it easier than ever before to pack up and take a vacation.

Prompting her with “Plan me a Hawaii trip,” Layla takes over asking how many days you are planning to travel and then curates a personalized itinerary, which plans out your entire day from ‘morning’ options all the way to ‘bedtime’. You then have the option to adjust based on budget, activities you’d like to do, and more.

Some people who have jobs that seemingly can be replaced by AI are not worried. “I don’t see news robots as a threat to journalism. Right now, they give journalists time to develop better journalism. It allows us to spend more time doing what we’re best at and less time doing basic reporting,” says Markus Isacson, sports reporter at VK in Umeå in an article.

While we all try to figure out a delicate balance between robotic and real in our lives, it is unclear where the future will take us.

# Computerized artists can never match human creativity



Story by Emily Velasquez  
Illustration courtesy of Katy Escalante

'Surf's Up' is written at the top of the page, transparent against the sunset background. Large waves crashing behind two surfer's walking across the beach. In the corner displays the logo for Alohaven Surf Club. This is the work of a potential surf club poster by CSUN graphic design student, Katy Escalante. The way the words and characters blend naturally with the background is a detail that an AI generated image could not smoothly create.

As the internet raves about the incredible development of AI allowing anyone to create their own images by typing a prompt, artists share a growing concern of a devastating lack of creativity and originality in the art world.

AI has advanced rapidly in the past few years, what once was a technological breakthrough is now a concern for artists everywhere of any medium. Photographers are worrying about AI-generated landscapes, digital artists are worrying about AI-generated art, and graphic designers are worrying about AI-generated advertisements. AI threatens a trade where so many struggle to succeed. However, this also raises the question of whether it really is a threat or a possible resource.

"I believe that AI is a threat to artists," says PCC art student Katie Thibault, "I have seen a lot of artists online saying how their work has been stolen and replicated using AI programs, and they have not been compensated for it. Because it is so easy to make art using these programs, a lot of freelance artists are missing out on potential commission work, which I feel is not right."

Not only are these AI programs possibly replacing artists, but they are also stealing already existing pieces from real artists. This is not only an issue of credibility but also defamation, as someone could easily make an impression on an artist by changing one of their art-

works and not clarifying it.

The use of AI-generated art completely undermines the genuine emotional and physical labor human artists put into their pieces. In 2022, the Colorado State Fair awarded first place in their digital art contest to an artwork that was generated by Midjourney, leaving artists everywhere feeling cheated, especially because the artist had not disclosed that it was AI-generated until after the fact. The fair has changed its rules, so contestants must disclose whether they used AI tools to make their artwork.

"People can just be lazy and use

**"I believe that AI is a threat to artists, I have seen a lot of artists online saying how their work has been stolen and replicated using AI programs, and they have not been compensated for it."  
- Katie Thibault  
PCC art student**

it, claiming it as their own work without putting any effort into it themselves, which makes it unfair to those who don't use it, which makes it a threat," says CSUN art student Katy Escalante, "But I honestly don't think AI yet can give people exactly what they want design-wise. I'm studying graphic design, and for that, there's a lot of having to communicate with the people hiring you to create the designs. You can't really do that with AI."

Though the use of AI programs is becoming increasingly popular, it is very much still in its developmental stage and not at all advanced enough to completely take over the jobs of artists. As Escalante stated, AI cannot properly communicate with clients in the same manner a human would. This goes for specially commis-

sioned art pieces that have sentimental value. A computer does not hold the capacity for human empathy, which could impact the outcome of a commissioned art piece heavily.

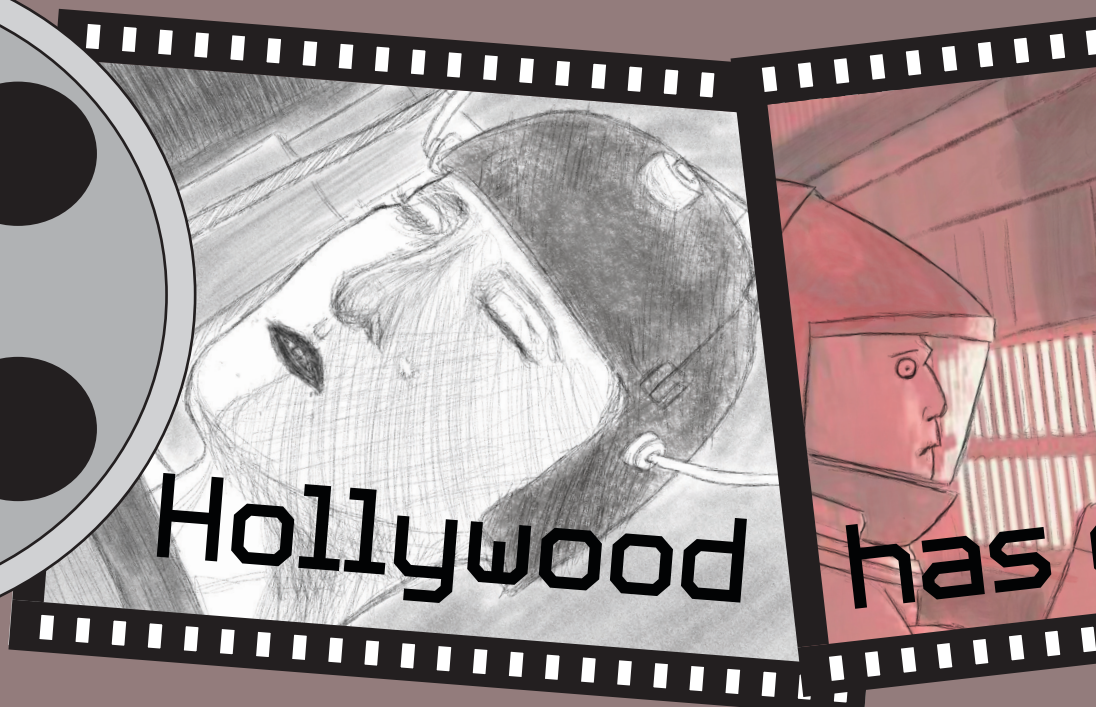
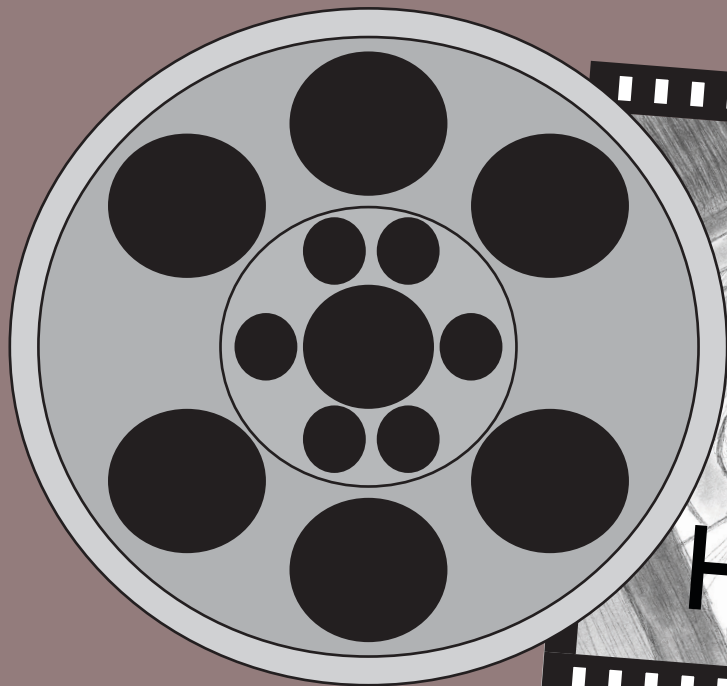
Since the rise in popularity of AI-generated images, artists have had to brainstorm ways they can adapt to this change. In an article by Aela School, they mention how AI can analyze an artist's work and give suggestions to improve it. Rather than allowing AI to completely generate the artwork, artists would use it as an aid in their process. An article by Worklife describes how artists can use AI as a resource to generate color palettes, experiment with techniques and materials, and use it for architecture and interior design. However, some artists may not want to embrace this change.

"I haven't used AI in my artistic process at all, because I find it more enjoyable to work on something all on my own and using my creative freedom, and frankly, I tend to forget it exists, so it doesn't come to mind," says Escalante.

Perhaps in the future, when society is much more comfortable and adapted to the implementation of AI in workspaces like these, people will be more open to using it as a resource.

"I have discussed this topic with my peers, and for the most part, we have the same opinion," says Thibault, "I am friends with a lot of artists who do not like the usage of AI in art these days. Many of us believe that AI can be a good tool and it can be fun to use individually, but it shouldn't be used to make art pieces that will replace the work of a human artist."

Brainstorming, experimenting, and even making mistakes are all part of the artwork itself. Now, artists might be able to let an AI generate those things for them. Artists should prepare to adapt to the development of stronger AI.



**Story by** Dante Estrada and Samuel Valencia

**Illustrations by** Gabriel Novoa

Press play on Disney+ to tune into the latest Marvel show “Secret Invasion” and terrifying depictions of what is supposed to be Samuel L. Jackson, oddly fake-looking people, and other green-based imagery appear. Marvel Studios used AI art tools as opposed to hiring actual artists to turn around an intro credit scene that will surely be remembered for years to come.

Across all forms of media, including television, movies, and most recently, video games, there has been a heavy focus, discussion, and emphasis on not just dystopian futures but how AI has a hand in creating those. Despite a certain sense of gloom in regards to how AI may affect our future, there is also a healthy mix of stories that try to make sense of AI and how it may actually benefit humanity.

One of the earliest examples of a dystopian future caused by AI is a 1927 German expressionist film called “Metropolis.” While this movie lacks any dialogue, its plot is fairly simple to surmise and gives a pretty good idea of what would come in the genre. The film takes place in the nearly modern year

of 2025 and involves an AI that takes the form of a humanoid and attempts to take over the world by causing chaos.

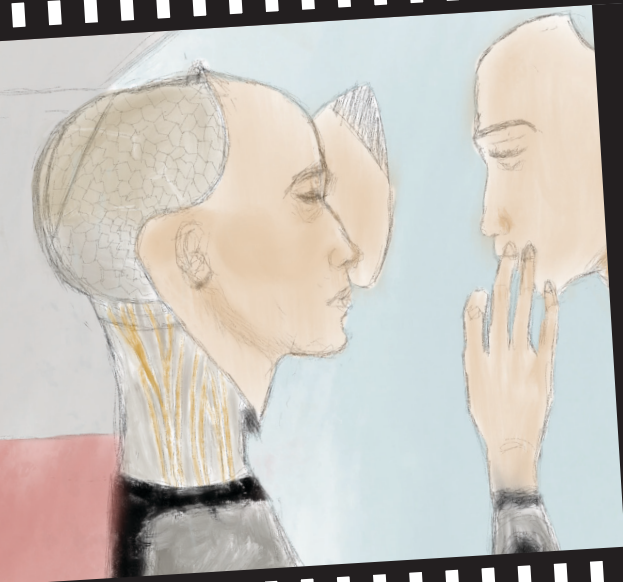
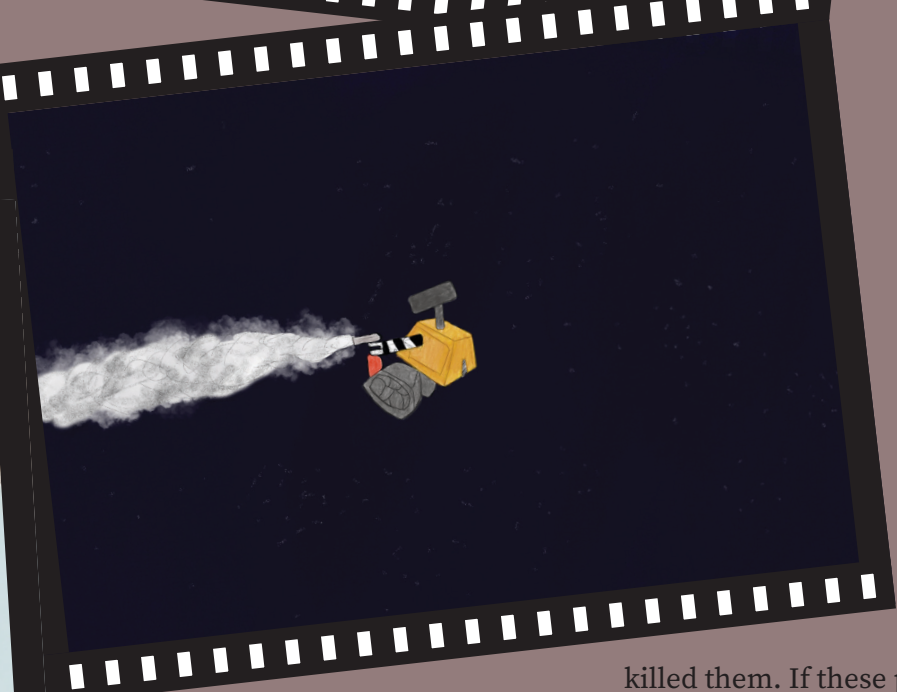
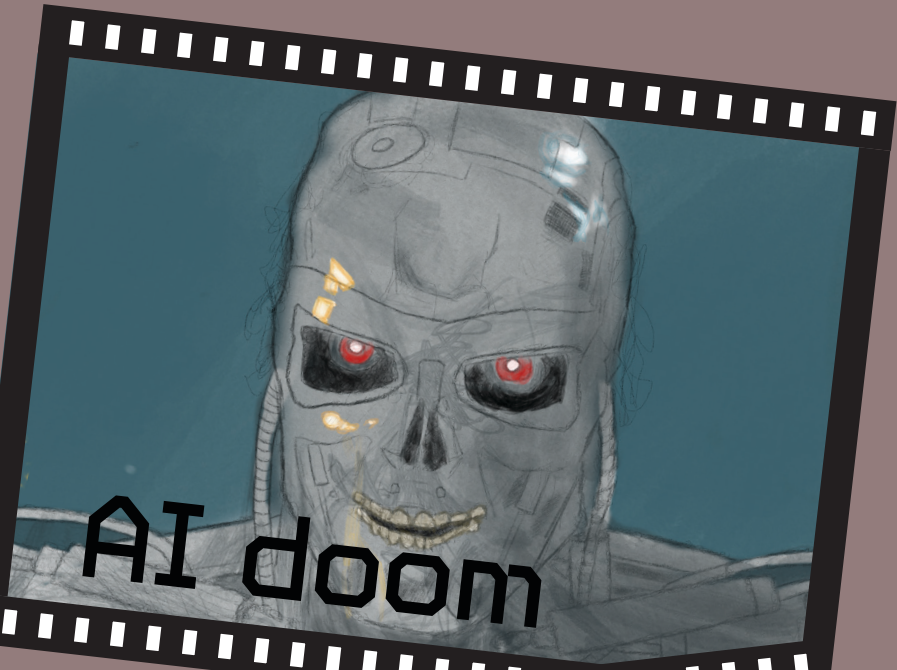
While a new concept for the time, this would heavily influence movies indefinitely. It showed a clear sense of fear with a healthy mix of speculation about what the future would become. Truth is, we are closer to that than the filmmakers may have envisioned.

Enter Stanley Kubrick’s seminal work “2001: A Space Odyssey,” which features its sentient AI HAL 9000, which attempts to murder the inhabitants of the spaceship it controls. Kubrick was known as a trendsetter of his time and understood how technology could take over. While the technology was nowhere near as advanced as he was portraying in his time, the movie showed a clear disdain and fear of what would come.

While no murder-oriented robots have taken over yet, there have been considerable improvements to technology and its sentience. In 2019, computer scientists from several universities developed software that could beat Google’s

captcha system. These efforts had become so common they titled their paper published on the matter “Yet another text CAPTCHA solver.” They did it by using something called “reinforcement learning,” which gives a computer a chance to earn rewards given by the proctor for completing various tasks in the most optimal way. Although far from the murderous thoughts of a sentient computer, technology has been shown to adapt when given the tools to do so.

Around the same period, James Cameron’s “Terminator” franchise was popular for its titular antagonists, which are highly advanced robots that destroy all human life. This film series consists of Skynet, an artificially controlled system that targets all humans and aims to wipe them all out. Skynet controls an army of robotic soldiers that are portrayed to have replaced all human soldiers with these cold, lethal



machines that are almost flawless. Fortunately, it is currently impossible for A.I. to have its own desire to end all of humanity. However, as is commonly known, many police forces around the world have installed robots to do additional police work. The NYPD recently reinstalled the use of a robotic patrol dog to survey the streets even though these robotic dogs are ineffective. Samsung created robot guards that included motion detectors and built machine guns for South Korea that have yet to be controlled on

their own. These police robots have been proven only to do half of the work that regular police officers do. Even with the limits that they hold, many officials such as the San Francisco Board of Supervisors have advocated granting police robots the ability to kill if necessary.

As reported by The Washington Post in an article from 2022, San Francisco authorities had approved police robots killing when necessary to save the lives of others. In a tragic situation where police officers were unable to apprehend a shooter, their next solution was strapping an explosive to a robot that would arrive at the shooter and blow up, which

killed them. If these police robots are continuously given the ability to kill, then who's to stop them from harming innocent lives?

Despite being a bit more subtle than other interpretations on the market, 2008's "WALL-E" handles the idea of humanity becoming completely reliant on the technology it created up to the point where it completely overtakes them and dumbs them down. When our own actions led to the destruction of all plant life on Earth, humans jettied off into space and were then pacified by the AI on board their ship.

AI has become something of a crutch in recent years. Although this year has seen a heavy empha-

sis on AI art and other generated content, it's hard to say that this is a new problem that just popped up. A Pew Research Center article delved into how AI would seep its way into our creativity and attempt to replace our own efforts.

They used a polling system and found that "63% of respondents in this canvassing said they are hopeful that most individuals will be mostly better off in 2030, and 37% said people will not be better off." This outlook may come across as fairly optimistic, but considering what they could be seeing as "advanced" or "better off" isn't necessarily how it may appear to us in the present, the picture becomes much murkier.

In recent years, video games have also dived into the topic of sentient AI and, more specifically, how these computers can feel things. A fairly recent example of this phenomenon is "The Turing Test," developed by Bulkhead Interactive. This game sees its protagonist, Ava, grapple with the infamous Turing Test against her AI adversary, "T.O.M.," who is a highly advanced supercomputer AI that tests her similar to Valve's "Portal" franchise. The Turing Test is a logic test developed by Alan Turing to attempt to reason if a computer can or can not feel human-like emotions.

While a computer "passing" the Turing Test is debatable due to how many different variables there are, there have been a few in the past 10 years that have achieved it. The first would be a computer AI called Eugene Goostman, which was created for an event at the University of Reading in June 2014. Before this event, this same computer would convince 29% of judges at an event two years before that event took place; it would go on to completely pass at the event in 2014. There are also different variations like the Marcus Test, which focuses more heavily on the plot synopsis of TV shows and movies as a way of gauging an AI's humanity. This test has way more requirements, and understanding these shows requires a much deeper understanding of political and cultur-

al factors as opposed to having a conversation.

While AI is constantly evolving in a certain direction of being potentially possible, there are instances where it is portrayed inaccurately in certain films. The most common and uninspired trope is the lone man creating AI on his own without any other support. "Chappie" and "Ex-Machina" are both guilty examples that feature a lone man who created AI on their own. As indicated by an article from Science about artificial intelligence accuracy in movies, experts pointed out how flawed it is to demonstrate one man who wrote a program for AI, which instead requires an entire team of programmers to develop this AI.

Among other flaws, another common trope is showing a robot turn rogue and become evil on its own. Instances of these are "Avengers: Age of Ultron" and "I, Robot," where robots in both films were intentionally made to protect humanity but later reprogrammed themselves to fit their own ideal way of "saving humanity." Ultron and Sonny from these respective films share a similar objective of securing peace for mankind. Despite this, these artificially intelligent robots must follow Isaac Asimov's three laws of robotics, which include that a robot must never inflict harm on a human being. It is not up to AI robots to determine what is the best resolution to achieving peace worldwide, as it is also nearly impossible for AI to grow to this point of reprogramming itself out of free will.

Perhaps Hollywood has made the future clear and has tried to predict the end of humanity at the hands of the very machines we created. However, it's more likely that these examples are the exceptions, not the rule. Seeing where the technology is at now, there seems to be little chance that our computers will come to life and begin to control every facet of our lives or evil death robots attempt to wipe out humanity. But who knows? The future is uncertain, after all.



# Machines will never take away the voice of the people

Story by Carlos De la Luz and LeRaun Peron

Photo by Katherine Poling

A photo of Princess Cut performing at The Smell on December 9, 2022

In early 2022, a video broadcast on Ukrainian television station, Ukraine 24, showed a cold, emotionless President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ordering his troops to “lay down arms” and surrender to Russia.

The video circulated on social media only to be quickly debunked as a deepfake uploaded by hackers, not only by Ukraine 24 but by people on-line familiar with Zelenskyy’s cadence who weren’t fooled by the generally unsophisticated video.



Although it ultimately failed to escape the vast uncanny valley, the mere existence of this clip creates certain ominous implications.

“The real threat to me is how it undermines our belief in what is real,” said communication/performing arts professor Dr. Liesel Reinhart. “So the fact that it’s possible to create these dupes gives people the ability to say ‘that’s fake’ when something is real, right?”

“Fake news” could prove to be a far more effective slogan than expected with videos like the one of Zelenskyy mostly serving to bolster the idea that news can be easily manipulated and untrustworthy.

The rapid advancement of AI over the last few years, along with the emergence of notable services like ChatGPT and DALL-E, is bringing this technology closer and closer to replacing human work. One example is the replication of human voices using existing audio recordings. This relatively quick string of advancements is strengthening the potential to easily exploit everyday people as well as artists and other public figures.

“When you record someone’s voice and then have the ability to utilize their voice without them actually speaking the words, it just seems fraught with the possibility of abuse,” Reinhart said.

The ease with which deepfakes can be created in everyday homes has given many the green light to create whatever comes to mind.

Although public figures are easy targets for obvious reasons, they aren’t the only ones affected. Silicon Valley start-up Sanas is working on technology to alter people’s accents. This technology is specifically being utilized for employees at call centers to give the illusion of a Western-sounding voice.

“If that customer is upset about their bill being high or their cable not working or their phone not working or whatever, they’re generally going to be frustrated as soon as they hear an accent,” said Marty Massih Sarim, president of Sanas in an interview with *The Guardian*.

While the idea of this service may have come from a place of altruism, it inherently sustains ingrained xenophobia in people afraid of foreign accents, as well as essentially erasing part of the original speaker’s identity. The human voice doesn’t define a person, but it shouldn’t be altered to cater to prejudice.

“The voice is a representation of

**“And  
so it’s  
not just a  
wave file;  
a voice is  
more than  
a wave.”**

—

**Dr.  
Liesel  
Reinhart, PCC  
professor**

the person, their beliefs, their identity,” Reinhart said. “And so it’s not just a wave file; a voice is more than a wave.”

The art world, in particular, has had a very tumultuous relationship with AI. Whether it’s filmmaking or music, the human voice shining through is the key component in any piece.

This last year saw two of the longest labor strikes in Hollywood history, with the WGA and SAG-AFTRA strikes. The writers and actors both dealt with the penny-pinching studios’ refusal to come to a fast agreement where a huge point of contention was the exploitation of artists through AI.

The people running these studios are completely aware of the potential AI has in saving them a considerable amount of money. If an actor delivers a certain line of dialogue and the decision is made that they should say something else instead, they would traditionally be brought back to re-record the line. With AI, the studio could avoid having to pay the actor for more work and instead just use pre-existing audio they already have.

“That is one of the things that is a great thing about art is it communicates those things which are not communicable otherwise, right?” said PCC Center for the Arts manager Zak Graff. “Whether that’s the heart, the mind, or the soul, that’s open for interpretation. But that’s how people receive and contemplate art.”

Save for voice actors, an actor’s most valuable asset is their face, to be as superficial as possible. With singers, their success is dependent almost entirely on their vocal skills as well as their distinct personalities.

“I think each one of us are so special individually as musicians that it’s really weird when they start just producing stuff off of somebody’s voice,” said PCC jazz voice

instructor Mary Durst.

Like any art form, music is an expression of emotions and ideas from a real person. Artists can use technology as tools to enhance their craft, but those tools are simply that and don't have the emotions necessary to create.

"I think that technology and electronics have already influenced music in a substantial way, but so far, it hasn't been replicable without a human component," said music performance major Hannah Stubbs. The more we look, the more we see it, the more we watch, the more we see it, and it's now at the point where the more we listen, the more we hear it. But will we even know when it comes across our ears?

"So I think that there is going to be a noticeable difference between humans and AI, but it's already very advanced," Stubbs said. "So continuing to advance without regulation, it could pose a threat to musicians."

There are a lot of different aspects that can be taken into consideration regarding AI in today's music. One that seems to be the most fresh and potent is the replication of current artists' music, releasing it as if it's authentic and taking it to places where it doesn't belong. The most recent example of this is Drake and The Weeknd with the fake song "Heart on My Sleeve."

Now, most people in the music loop would know that the two Toronto legends have no plans of collaborating on any music in the near future, but seeing how far this fake song got is scary enough. And to have two of the biggest artists named and it still gets that far, what message does that say to other songwriters and producers? Nobody is safe?

Berklee Online breaks down each level of the ethical issues this can and will cause. Writer Talia Smith-Muller does highlight that these actions will be followed with consequences, but that's only going

to apply to the ones that are caught and don't slip through the cracks.

Another aspect that can't be looked over is the "music" that will be mimicked from artists who are no longer alive. Young and old singers and rappers alike can both run into this dilemma, and with the main source not here to speak for themselves, who can tell the audience what is and isn't real?

GQ Magazine and Billboard have both covered these situations with different examples that have transpired. GQ writer Daisy Jones goes in on this practice calling it "exploitative and tacky as hell."

Billboard notes how a Chinese company named "Tencent Music Entertainment" takes part in this and has a song that currently earned over 100 million streams.

Now depending on the fanbases of the artists that are being mimicked, they may or may not have a problem with this as a whole. On social media which is used by the younger side, these little mix and mashups are enjoyable and satisfy the itch of curiosity in their brains.

However, for the older generation, there is a "growing anxiety" due to the endless possibilities of what this can mean for the music industry in the future as Laura Molloy explains in "Should we use AI to bring musicians back from the dead?"

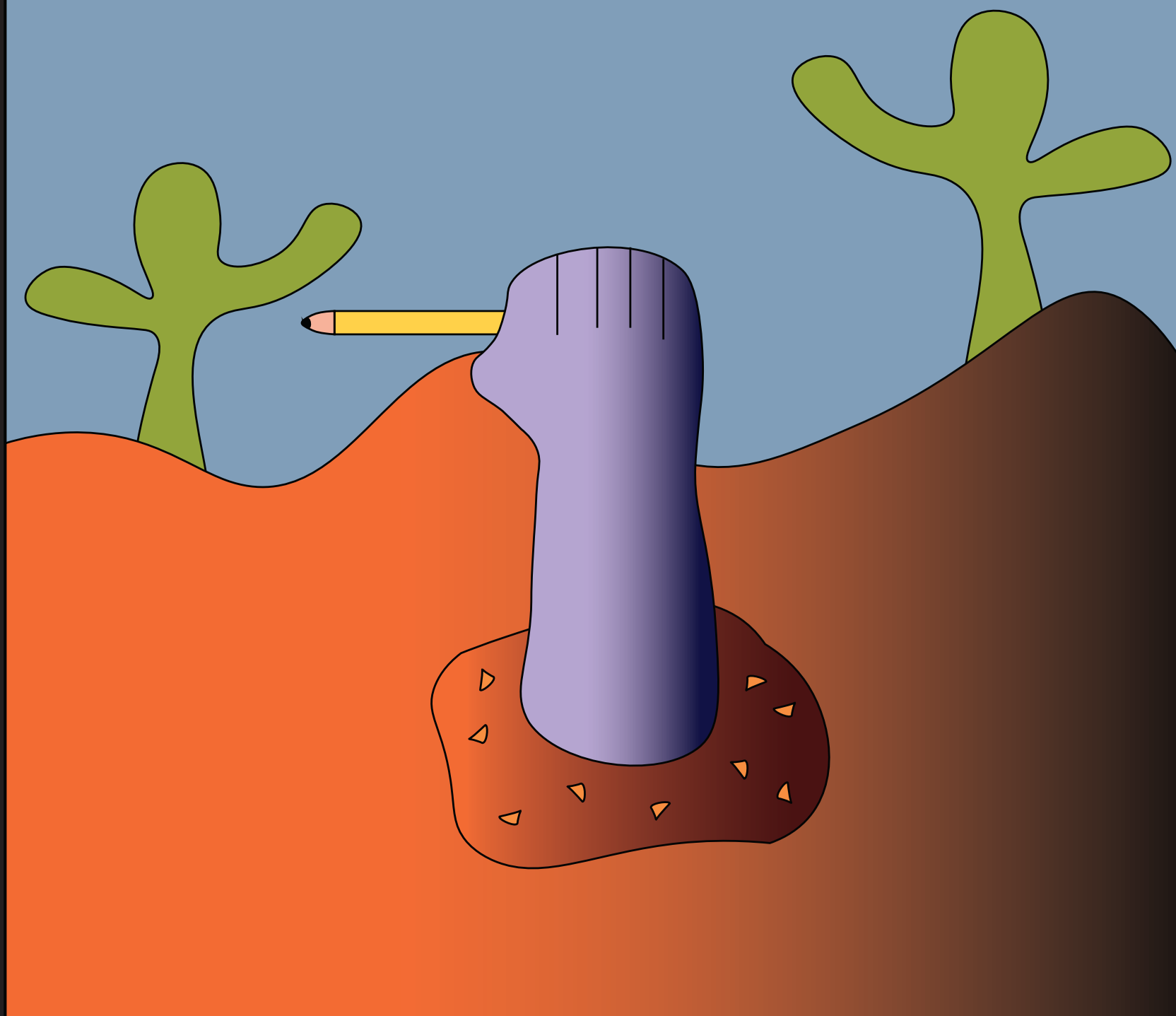
Everyone involved in any form of media knows and can see how artificial intelligence is slowly creeping up and taking over socially. As of right now, it's all fun and games to pick and point out where it's obviously not a real person talking or singing. But when fake pieces of work start to fall through the cracks and get by without being noticed, who will be laughing then?



Dreams come from  
the newsroom.

Power over press  
is power over all.

# Long Live the Local News Fighters



SPOTLIGHT  
2024

THE AI ISSUE

a Pasadena City College publication  
1570 E Colorado Blvd Pasadena 91106