

The Roots of this Tree are Rotten!

Resisting the Capitalist Push for GenAI

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Abstract

The rapid rise of AI integration into our lives this past year has been startling. At all levels of the academy, educational organizations are announcing partnerships seemingly without any critical consultation or thoughtful deliberation. These expensive alliances are coming at a time of extreme budgetary contraction. Why are universities investing massive amounts in contracts with private companies when budgets are so tight? Who benefits? The call of “Will our students be ‘AI’ ready?” drowns out the more important question: “is AI ready for our students?” Research shows that Gen AI tools are often “confidently wrong,” offer up biased and racist responses, extract a devastating toll on the environment, provide venues for bad actors to exploit vulnerabilities, and harm critical thinking and analytical skills through repeated use/reliance.

While some educators talk about “ethical use of AI,” we argue that there is no ethical use possible when looking at all parameters. Even before addressing the resultant systemic issues, the tools themselves were created using stolen content and are currently being argued over in 54 legal cases (and counting).

AI “helpers” have been inserted into many products without a stated desire or demonstrated need for them. Are they actually helping? Or are they instead creating an added layer of obfuscation between a human and the information sources they need? In *The Roots of this Tree are Rotten!* we look critically at GenAI and give some options for how to resist, opt out, and push back on the narrative that “everyone is using it.”

Print Instructions

We’ve provided a print version and an online version. For the print version, please flip on the short side.

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