NNIPCamp Oakland, Friday, November 10th, 2023

Session 3 –Artificial Intelligence

Led by Robert Beiser of Microsoft

Notes by Kathy Pettit and Emily Verburg

Present: Trish Abalo, Alex Akaakar, Victor Amaya, Robert Beiser, Jason Cheung, Danequa Forrest, Ethan Hug, Matthew Janetti, Rohan Katti, Amanda Phillips de Lucas, Katie Pritchard, Ross Reilly, Natalie Rodrigues, Brandon Stanaway, Marissa Sandblom, and Haleigh Tomlin

Robert - MS Justice Reform Initiative (JRI) is working with some of the community grantees and this is a conversation at the table. Lots of folks in community-based organizations are using advanced data analytics by using AI.

* Natural Language Coding
* AI based analysis – to review handwritten and typed documents – they have all these material that they need to analyze.
* Storing collaborative data in an secured environment that the AI can do internal analysis without a public AI engine. Microsoft has a new product - “co-pilot” enterprise solutions. It knows what you put in + anything on the internet (with any corresponding bias).

One question: are people using it - do they want it?

Amanda: Is the enterprise data training the Microsoft model?

Robert: No, data and learning doesn’t return to the model. Like training video tapes.

Microsoft GPT models for products are being concurrently updated: GPT, Bing chat, co-pilots (paid products)

What are the use cases?

Matthew – We are using machine learning, to try to create a better sampling frame of families with school-age children using public health data, school data for address, etc. If they are in multiple lists from different years, what’s the probability that a household has kids? We trained on 1st wave data (when we did knock on doors). It would have reduced false positive rate but also could bring biases. You would need to look at budget/tradeoff.

Brandon – we are developing a project to classify rental listings (scraped from Craig’s list). Is it a room in an apartment or an apartment building and are there duplicates? People in organizations don’t understand upfront costs. Does it make sense for NNIP to host GitHub page?

Amanda – There is a recently formed renters union. They are operating without data.

Robert - Microsoft is testing and developing repositories of prompts (rather than code). 40% of code is now written by natural language AI based prompts, with human review.

* helpful for building trust with the public, who often don’t trust the “black box” of the model. Repository could support democratization.
* large language models are more obscure than the basic analytic models. How to demonstrate the underlying logic to create trust?
* people are more skeptical when it comes to large social data sets than when they use AI in their day-to-day.

Amanda- Question of trust runs though all community work & translation work. How do we think of this tool in particular use cases, to facilitate trust in the tool towards specific goals?

* We need to be to explain how you got there.
* Is it easier to trust an AI model because it’s well-known? (vs elite knowledge) Hard to trust a group’s intentions.

Robert - Curious if community funders/groups would be excited or nervous to see AI in a proposal? I know of a local group that was able to get significantly more funding for a project that used AI because it was “innovative.”

Temperature check - are people excited about AI, seeing the benefits, having conversations with funders about it?

Marissa – We are thinking about possibilities related to AI for applicants answering the RFP and using AI to evaluate the RFP responses. There are groups who are fantastic, but don’t write good grants - do we penalize them or evaluate them on their ability write a good RFP vs do good work?

Robert: We are going to see biases in who is really good at prompt writing/using AI. Lots of open questions.

Matt - would it make it more difficult for new organizations to get funding?

Amanda – The process matters, but where will responders end up in terms of outcomes? We could use staff to have someone collect a year of rent data but what about using a tool to gather 20 years of data? It would be a better use of resources and could make the case to use in a partnership.

Katie – I’m betting on a strong push on the part of funders to be impressed by people who know how to use AI. They want to encourage shiny new things and exploration.

Robert: Related to community surveys, you are spending more to get better data. How does it change data collection if you’re more efficient in gathering responses, but also working with a selection bias?

How are people responding to AI in communities?

It could take power away from big organizations – there’s an example of instituting centralized call center for the state for people applying for rental assistance. But this would take power away from local housing authorities, who were nervous about someone else deciding. It will be parallel for AI - who has decision making power?

Matt – there’s a temptation to believe that the “computer” is neutral but AI perpetuates racism and inequities because of racism and inequities baked into the data input> I hear the concerns from activists/academics about this reality.

Brandon – There is always the context of the bias in the questions we are asking. For example, the community says that the administrative data doesn’t represent their experience. So MAPC collects qualitative data but that can’t baked into the models.

Robert - Businesses have similar questions about using data that’s not going to benefit them. Thus, the branding of “co-pilots”, don’t want AI making decisions, need more nuance. Community partners don’t want AI to make recommendations.

A better case is routinized work - like reading a document.

America by Design – there’s a history of machine tools in the factory that created a management class to supervise the tool.

Amanda – A tool that means someone didn’t have to do data entry is better so they can spend more time around context. That is not displacement, it’s an opportunity to build out community side about using the data.

Victor – our work has us behind computer; I want to be in front of people. In 5 years, will AI be a normal thing? If our missions are rooted to be advocates for communities - how can we use AI to do that. I’m more afraid of people having biases instead of machines.

Brandon – there’s inputs of labor, capital, technological change - it could free up time. To grow our work in a way that doesn’t require more hours worked/more funding

We need ethical checks on processes at the beginning & the end, what’s the right questions to be asking to create a useful tool?

How can we structure conversations going forward?

* possible NNIP role - throw its hat in the ring putting forth an ethical framework for use of AI.
* General principles not helpful - moving beyond general principles of “equity”.

Amanda - Ethics come through practice (not top-down). Ethics that we’d bring would be different than those of our partners. What does “Do no harm” even mean under capitalism?

Katie - American evaluation association is discussing whether you need to disclose that you use AI in your analysis.