



# Computers Are Easy User Group

Abort,  
Retry,  
Ignore....

Founded 1984 ARI is the  
Official Newsletter of  
Computers Are Easy User Group

May 2024  
Volume XXXX Issue 5

\*\*\*\*\*

PER GLENSIDE Library (Masks are optional)

INFORMATION for Saturday May 25th start time in person at  
Library Board Room is 9:30am or at home Zoom is 10:00am.  
This will be a hybrid meeting.

There will be a meeting invitation e-mail Thursday evening  
before the Saturday meeting.

Our May presentation various short  
video presentations

CAEUG, P.O. Box 3150,  
Glen Ellyn, IL 60138

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***Thank you! to all who paid the  
low \$20.00 dues for 2024!***

***Your support helps pay for our PO Box and  
APCUG membership and CAEUG website***

Confirmed  
meeting dates

**2024**

**May 25**

**June 22**

:: ::

Hybrid  
Board Room  
in person  
OR Zoom

:: ::

Check  
website for  
dates and  
meeting info

:: ::

Mailing address:  
CAEUG  
P.O. Box 3150  
Glen Ellyn, IL  
60138

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Join CAEUG meeting in Library or from Home,  
Stay Safe! Update information on our website at

<https://www.CAEUG.net>

## CAEUG OFFICERS

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V.P. (Programs)

Secretary      Position OPEN

Treasurer

Newsletter

Board Member

Webmaster      John Spizzirri

webmaster(at)caeug.net

The Glenside Public Library address is at 25 E Fullerton Avenue, Glendale Heights, Illinois. The meeting(s) are not library sponsored. Individuals with disabilities who plan to attend this program and who require certain accommodations in order to observe and / or participate in the program are requested to contact CAEUG president, at least five (5) days prior to the program, so that reasonable accommodation can be made.

## Members Helpline

Any member can volunteer to be on the Members Helpline.

Hardware problems, Win 7, Win 10, Linux and Virus Removal

- John Spizzirri

## About DVD of the Month

Unfortunately, the DVD of the Month is no longer creating an income center for the club. August 2022 will be the last issue of the DVD. Starting in September, I will feature a review of a freeware program in the ARI... Some of these programs may be elaborate and complicated others may be very simple. I may include screen shots if that can be accommodated.



## Lamp Post 268 May 2024 by John Spizzirri

The bald eaglets at Decorah, Iowa ( 1 ) are eight weeks old. The eaglets will fledge in two to four weeks. Now they are trying their wings with periodic exercises. The adults are still feeding them and the food is quite plentiful. The South nest ( 2 ) still has one egg that from the pair of

Canadian geese that has not hatched. It is due to hatch at any time now. The clutch of five eggs hatched and the goslings jumped off the edge of the nest. They are learning to swim in the pond near the tree with the nest. It appears that all the goslings survived the fall.

- 1) <https://is.gd/BOa2M6>
- 2) <https://is.gd/YAuMF0>

The Northern Lights (Aurora Borealis) cam at Churchill, Manitoba, Canada ( 1 ) had a really good show the night of the 11th and 12th. If you missed it, there are highlight pictures (you have to scroll quite a way down). The polar bear site ( 2 ) does not have highlight pics. If you stay up really late or get up early, try the Alaska Borealis cams ( 3 ). Two places to try offer various cams from around the world ( 4, 5 ). To check on the space weather (for aurora forecasts) try here ( 6 ) and NASA ( 7 ).

- 1) <https://is.gd/3RjcRQ>
- 2) <https://is.gd/ezocHn>
- 3) <https://auroranotify.com/aurora-links/>
- 4) <https://seetheaurora.com/webcams>
- 5) <https://lightsoverlapland.com/?p=79>
- 6) <https://www.spaceweather.com/>
- 7) <https://www.swpc.noaa.gov/>

Malwarebytes reported ( 1 ) in late March that there was a major data breach at AT&T ( 2 ). I did not pay too much attention to the announcement as these are a regular thing with the anti-virus companies and the breaches are usually a year or two old. In early April Malwarebytes reported the AT&T breach stating that the company confirmed that 73 million records had been stolen and leaked to the dark web. The cracker that was selling the information that included SSN, Full Name, Address, Email Address, Date of birth, AT&T Account Number, AT&T Passcode, and Phone number claimed it was stolen three years prior to the release. AT&T is trying to side step saying it does not know if it lost the data or one of its vendors lost the data. What brought this to my attention is a letter I received in snail mail in early May from AT&T. I am an AT&T home telephone and Internet customer mainly because I have no other choice. The letter, unlike most letters I received from AT&T, starts with 'Notice of Data Breach' then the salutation Dear John instead of Dear Customer. This piques my interest. In the second sentence AT&T admits that "some of your personal information was compromised". In the next two sentences they are offering me free Experian's IdentityWorks credit monitoring and identity theft protection. From there they go on to say they 'determined' there was a 'dataset released on the dark web'. The release was done June of 2019. If you got one of these letters, I suggest you go to the Experian IdentityWorks credit monitoring web site ( 3 ) to sign up for the free identity protection even though it has been on the dark web for four and one half years. If you want to check to see what can be known about you, Malwarebytes has a site to check it out ( 4 ). Enter your email address. Malwarebytes sends a code back to that email address that must be entered on their site to release the information. You might be surprised.

- 1) <https://www.malwarebytes.com/>
- 2) <https://www.att.com/>
- 3) <https://is.gd/ktKnbt>
- 4) <https://www.malwarebytes.com/?p=102025>

Arstechnica ( 1 ) reported (on May 15th) that the Federal Bureau of Investigation ( 2 FBI ) and the Department of Justice ( 3 DOJ ) seized BreachForums. BreachForums was a web site run by crackers that sold

data stolen from various corporate data sets including SSNs, Full Names, Addresses, Email Addresses, Dates of birth, and Phone numbers of U. S. citizens. If you have a company that you think was compromised, the FBI provides this web site ( 4 ) to add to the complaints against BreachForums. This was the second time BreachForums was taken down. About a year ago it was taken down with the operator, Conor Brian Fitzpatrick, arrested and convicted (pleaded guilty) to multiple charges. He was sentenced to 'supervised release' for 20 years. BreachForums was restarted by another cracker at another host and URL. We will wait to see what happens to this new cracker.

- 1) <https://arstechnica.com/?p=2024837>
- 2) <https://www.fbi.gov/>
- 3) <https://www.justice.gov/>
- 4) <https://breachforums.ic3.gov/>

With all the data breaches ( 1 ) over the last few years there are measures you can take to protect yourself. First, you must harden your browser against cyberattacks. There are a number of web sites that outline the methods of strengthening your browser ( 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 ). My credit union ( 10 ) has a site that provides many tips for other types of scams to avoid. The Brave browser ( 11 ) is locked down to start. You might want to try it.

- 1) <https://is.gd/m788yp>
- 2) <https://www.fb-pro.com/?p=6249>
- 3) <https://www.computerworld.com/?p=508927>
- 4) <https://www.sapphire.net/?p=1426>
- 5) <https://bityl.co/PyLg>
- 6) <https://www.techiexpert.com/?p=46388>
- 7) <https://is.gd/xCZPtF>
- 8) <https://is.gd/vu9xbS>
- 9) <https://www.osibeyond.com/?p=2850>
- 10) <https://is.gd/QKYIkS>
- 11) <https://brave.com/>

David Vigneault, Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service ( 1 ), stated in an interview with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation ( 2 CBC ) that the government of China may acquire personal information using artificial intelligence via TikTok. He is trying to dissuade Canadians from using TikTok ( 3 ). I was tipped to this story by The Verge site ( 4 ). The CBC mentioned the U. S. Congress attempting to ban TikTok. All this is emphasis on not using the product is TOO LATE. China already has the data. Every new user that signs on is spied on immediately. If the National Security Agency ( 5 NSA ) can do it, so can they. The Chinese are not stupid.

- 1) <https://is.gd/t7zIVV>
- 2) <https://www.cbc.ca/>
- 3) <https://is.gd/dA75KM>
- 4) <https://is.gd/FeXVIH>
- 5) <https://www.nsa.gov/>

The HowtoGeek web site ( 1 ) published an interesting article about Windows XP. It sang the praises of the OS. It did not require high power hardware. It consolidated older versions of Microsoft ( 2 MS ) OSs. Windows 10 and 11 have incorporated features of XP that have not been functionally replaced. Even though it has been discontinued for over ten years, there are at least 5.5 million users. It seldom crashes unlike Vista, 95, 98, 3.11, 2000, and NT.

- 1) <https://is.gd/EMqiRO>
- 2) <https://www.microsoft.com/>

***Between you, me and the LampPost. That's all for now.***

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**Another Look at Artificial Intelligence**  
**By Joel Ewing, President**  
**Bella Vista Computer Club**  
**Bits & Bytes**  
**February 2024**  
**<https://bvcomputerclub.org>**

(For a general description of artificial intelligence, also see the article "What Is Artificial Intelligence" in the April 2019 edition of the BVCC Bits & Bytes at <https://bvcomputerclub.org/PDF/B&B/2019-04.pdf>)

### **Background**

Although having a background in Computer Science, I do not consider myself an expert on AI; but like many, I have seen over the last decade the improved (but not perfect) ability of smartphones to translate the spoken word into written text, chatbots on the Internet and telephone call centers that can briefly make you think you have reached a human, and the fairly sophisticated behavior of "self-driving" cars, including some experiments with autonomous self-driving vehicles in restricted environments.

When in full "self-driving" mode, a Tesla car can recognize enough of the environment around it to sense and follow lane markings, sense other vehicle types and their relative speeds on all sides, interpret speed limit signs, stop signs, stop lights, a variety of warning signs, speed limit signs, adjust speed for sharp curves and slower vehicles, to make decisions on passing slower vehicles. When navigation mode to a

destination is engaged, an extensive road map database allows it to know when to turn and what lane it needs to be in for the next turn, to suggest the optimal super-charger stations for long trips, and to automatically pre-condition the battery temperature for optimal charging speed before arriving at a charging station to minimize charging time. Yet with all that sophistication, Tesla's most important safety features are (1) monitoring the human driver for alertness and (2) alerting the human driver to take over if the road conditions go outside the bounds the automation can reliably handle. This is great for removing much of the tedium of long-distance driving on consistently marked interstate highways but not so useful in city driving, where road repairs, obstructions, and local driving customs tend to demand more human interaction.

The topic of AI was recently raised in a professional computer-related online discussion list I follow. I have also been involved in a church-related Religion & Science group meeting on Zoom over several years that have discussed, among other topics, whether humans are the only life forms on Earth that are sentient or aware, AI, and whether machines could ever cross the thresholds of self-awareness and become sentient and direct competitors of humans, possibly even a threat. Some of the following thoughts come from those discussions.

### **AI Current Capabilities**

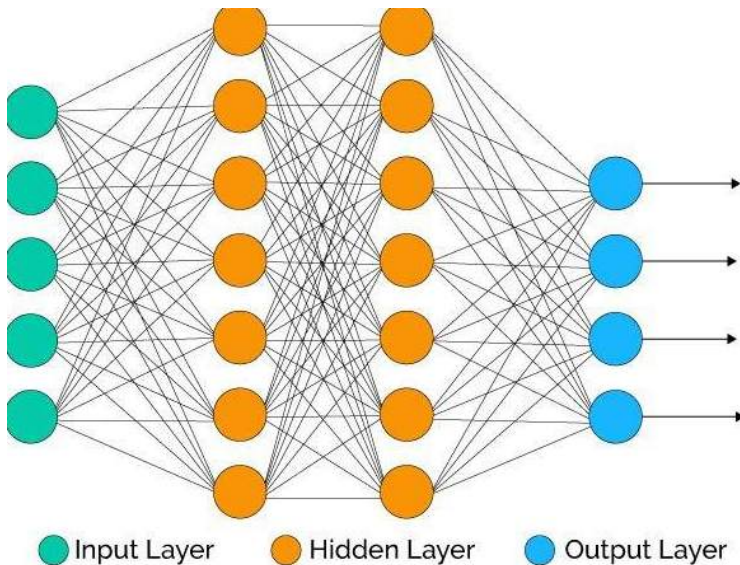
AI may easily surpass humans in the ability to analyze and deduce conclusions from a large amount of data and propose actions – it already has done that in some areas that are sufficiently limited in scope.

AI is already being utilized to assist in medical diagnosis, such as interpreting medical scans, where large scans may need to be analyzed tediously to look for small anomalies.

Many Internet search engines utilize some AI techniques to improve the quality of the results. Some of the more interesting recent free Internet search additions are ChatGPT, BardAI, and BingAI, which can accept queries in natural language and return paragraph responses that appear appropriate, almost human-like. It is possible to request responses that are in the form of specific types of poetry (ChatGPT) or to request the creation of an image featuring certain objects (BingAI).

Without getting too much into details, at least two main techniques are involved under the covers for the deep learning of advanced AI: trained digital neural networks and large databases created by analyzing many natural language sources of information. Digital neural networks attempt to emulate the brain's design on a small scale. The idea is that you have a large number of nodes (neurons) that are interconnected to nearby layers of the network, but that each of the interconnections can be adjusted by giving a "weight" to each of the connection paths to determine what strength of incoming signals is sufficient to activate the neuron. To "teach" a neural network, you must supply many different combinations of input signals (on the left), for which the desired output (on the right) is known, and modify the weights so





that the correct outputs are obtained for as many as possible, hopefully, all, input value combinations. This is a computationally expensive and, thus, energy-intensive process, but once the best weights are obtained, it is easy to replicate the neural network. The illustration on the right only has 23 nodes. A useful neural network may have thousands of nodes.

Neural networks are particularly useful for cases where no clear written rules exist for arriving at the outputs, like pattern recognition of images and sounds, interpreting the ambiguous parts of natural

language speech and text, and predicting large social system behavior like the stock market. While it can be hoped that a new combination of inputs not used in the training process will also produce reasonable outputs, this is not guaranteed and is heavily dependent on how the training data was chosen. Another drawback of neural networks is that there is no way to explain how they arrived at any specific output from some specific input.

It is clear from ChatGPT's behavior that it has access to a very large database of contemporary and historical literature. Whether that does or should include those materials that are still under copyright protection is still debated as to whether that violates fair-use restrictions. To be of greatest use, the natural language must be parsed to determine what is being discussed (nouns) and related descriptions (adjectives) and actions (verbs) and deduce further relationships. From that, it is possible to produce indexes and statistical probabilities of relationships. Applying a similar parsing to information requests, it is possible to either find sentences or paragraphs that are relevant to the query or (more difficult) possibly construct "original" relevant sentences based on known associations with the topic of the query.

### AI Limitations

One problem that needs to be addressed is that there is a considerable amount of data loose in the real world that is misinformation, and too much garbage-in still produces garbage-out. Many humans have problems telling the difference between fact and fiction and between reality and conspiracy theories. Humans have biases in their data choices, yet humans will be choosing the data sources to program future AI. This will inevitably cause some problems.

Every year, you find people, sometimes prominent people, that stumble across a

parody or satire written in the style of a news article, mistake it for real news, and make a fool of themselves by calling others to take action against the alarming "news" they have just uncovered. Such humor is usually so over-the-top as to be easily recognized as humor by normal people aware of current events, but still, there are always some that take it as factual, even if it is located on a website like "The Onion" that is well-known for only publishing imaginary news releases.

One needs to understand that while AI can provide useful guidance within the realm for which it has been trained, it is not infallible. If you ask a neural network to categorize an unexpected combination of inputs, it may make an incorrect identification. If you ask an AI system trained from analyzed text about a topic that lacks accurate information, it may make incorrect inferences from data it thinks is similar because it appears statistically related. Even if it has processed relevant information, it may not be able to accurately interpret context, implicit relationships, and time ordering of relationships. If you just ask an ambiguous question ("Show me something like X"), the AI may not understand the distinction between creating something fictional that looks like "X" versus finding an actual fact like "X."

There have already been at least two instances reported in the news of a judge berating attorneys for submitting supporting briefs referencing legal precedents that didn't exist because some AI system created a plausible fictional reference to support their legal argument.

The general public is already displaying an indifference to the limitations of AI and abusing AI: asking questions of AI apps in areas for which the AI is poorly trained and trusting without verification of fallible responses as being authoritative because they are produced by a machine. Some newsworthy cases of this abuse have been reported when fatalities result after owners of cars with AI autopilots requiring supervision find ways to entrust the AI with unsupervised autonomous driving, and a crash occurs when the AI encounters situations it is not designed to handle.

### **Could AI be Dangerous**

Some theorize that if we could build a neural network of enough complexity — many orders of magnitude larger than possible today — at some point, a threshold might be passed, and that creation might become self-aware and possibly worthy of being called sentient. What discoveries such a tool could make and create! The problems are multi-fold: If it has more knowledge than any human and can exercise creative thought faster than any human, its analysis of human history may lead it to the conclusion it should be the master, not the slave, of humans. This has long been a persistent cautionary theme of science fiction writers. In the fictional Dune prequel "The Battle of Corrin," where sentient machines and humans have long been at war, there is a fictional quote from the sentient robot Erasmus: "Humans were foolish to build their own competitor — but they couldn't help themselves." If we were to succeed in creating machines that could truly approach the complexity and creativity of the human mind, might they not also be subject to some of the same dangerous mental instabilities as human minds when confronted by conflicting "facts" or subtle



design deficiencies? Fatal problems like those afflicted the fictional HAL 9000 in "2001: A Space Odyssey" and the M-5 Multitronic computer in "The Ultimate Computer" Star Trek episode. I don't think we are at any risk within my lifetime of finding a way to cross that threshold, but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't be concerned that AI in its present state has the capability of causing harm.

AI-based tools used by financial institutions to evaluate whether to approve or deny credit requests have been found to exhibit bias against granting loans to those in minority groups. The AI tools were programmed using data about loans which had been approved subject to historical biases against minorities. Without great care in programming, AI can be used to justify that there is no bias, when the reality is that the bias was included in the AI programming and is just more hidden.

Another way we are already seeing AI being abused is by its use to create and spread misinformation on the Internet. While not perfect, it is already good enough to produce deep-fake video and audio and false news reports and control bots on social media networks that spread messages to promote and amplify division and hate. There is some hope that it may be possible to employ AI on the other side to detect and suppress such abuse, but that does require corporations to accept that responsibility.

Another area that should be a serious concern is the possibility that AI could be given the power to make and implement life-and-death decisions without adequate human oversight or just to propose actions that humans might blindly follow in a life-or-death situation. The science fiction genre is full of plots suggesting how badly this can go – possibly human enslavement or extinction.

When you grant AI the power to make decisions and take actions in the real world, most of us want "intelligence" involved, wisdom, and morality. Most of us want decisions made by others that impact our lives to be constrained by a moral compass of what is right and fair. We have no idea how to build that awareness into AI, and since there is no universal agreement on whose standard of morality to use, that may be an impossible task. Even if there was agreement on how to define morality and how to embed that concept into AI, do we trust fallible humans to consistently implement that design without error?

A legitimate concern is that if future AI regulation or its enforcement is inadequate, some individual or corporation with more power and money than wisdom may go rogue, ignore whatever AI restrictions are in place or commonly accepted, and create a dangerous AI device because of a belief it will enhance their short-term profit.

We need to be very cautious about what kinds of decisions and actions we entrust to AI in the short and long term. We also need to research how best to enforce that caution. Perhaps future AI, appropriately applied, might even become part of the solution.