

The Importance of an MSc in Artificial Intelligence to Media and Storytelling

INTRODUCTION: REFLECTING ON AI AS INSPIRATION

With over thirty years of experience in media technology, including two decades as a Chief Technology Officer (CTO) specialising in video streaming, I was recently inspired to pursue an MSc in Artificial Intelligence (AI). In April, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) asked me to speak as part of MBRF's KnowTalks, where I explored the impact of technology on storytelling across creation, distribution, and engagement (MBRF, 2023). During my research, I discovered OpenAI's generative AI, ChatGPT, which was near its peak of exponential growth (Carr, 2023). Instead of just speaking *about* AI, I could speak *with* an AI. That interaction solidified the importance of undertaking an MSc in AI at the University of Essex Online, where I aim to shape the future impact of AI in media and storytelling.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN MSC

The importance of any learning comes from the value, growth and innovation created from gaining the expertise. According to GOV.UK, the benefit of a post-graduate degree is only £6,500, down by £1,000 between 2021 and 2022 (GOV.UK, 2023). With thirty years of experience, however, the salary impact is negligible. The value a postgraduate degree brings is an industry-recognised certification of deep scientific knowledge and critical thought in AI. We grow when our unconscious mind combines new learning with existing expertise to innovate creative solutions (Ingold, 2017).

While the coursework component of an MSc enables growth, the real value to industry is the applicable innovation in research.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN MSC IN AI TO INDUSTRY

Applicable innovation requires understanding both AI and the sector. Javad Khangosstar, Big Data and Analytics Solution Manager for Virgin Media O2, recently spoke on the difficulty of recruiting enough staff who had expertise in both telecommunications and AI (Ingold, 2023). For ChatGPT, Weimann-Sandig (2023) also identified that subject expertise was necessary to both generate and refine effective prompts and ascertain the quality of the results. Similarly, I expect that combining this MSc in AI with my industry expertise will enable me to further identify areas for innovation in media and storytelling to help my industry make and save money and to shape its future growth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF AI TO MEDIA AND STORYTELLING

McKinsey noted that the most job ads were for Applied AI, with an economic value of up to \$26 trillion, and generative AI was the fastest growth area at 44% year-on-year (Chui et al., 2023). Partly due to concerns around AI (such as generative AI and deepfakes) replacing jobs and impacting pay, the Writers Guild of America (WGA) and the Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) are striking against the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) (Isidore, 2023). Consequently, AMPTP member company Netflix received backlash after posting a \$900,000 ad for an AI product manager (Klippenstein, 2023). From its perspective, however, Netflix is trying to turn around its declining year-on-year revenue growth, and is already using AI for analysis, personalisation, and storyline investment (MBRF, 2023).

THE WIDER IMPORTANCE OF AN MSC IN AI

The strike exemplifies some of the contradictory viewpoints held about AI. Both sides want to make money. The broader debate encompasses AI ethics and law. For instance, Microsoft's VALL-E, which replicates a voice in three seconds, includes an ethics statement about gaining approval (Microsoft, N.D.). Recently, Google updated its privacy policy confirming that its AI models are trained on public data, which raises legal and copyright concerns for large language models (LLMs) (Germain, 2023). Addressing the effect of AI on society, including ethical, legislative, security, bias, transparency, attribution, sustainability, safety and other impacts will require the ongoing collaboration of experts both within companies and as part of industry-wide regulation (Leslie, 2019). An MSc in AI helps to create the depth of understanding needed to mitigate the risks inherent in innovation.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, AI's significant recent growth has made it more important to many in industry, including myself. To fully understand AI's transformative impact, I realised I needed to do an MSc in AI. Firstly, to understand the constituents of AI more deeply at a technical level. Secondly, to combine that understanding with specialist industry experience to understand its relevance. Thirdly, to identify gaps and create opportunities for innovation to help industry make and save money. Finally, to shape responsible practices that consider both creator and corporate and use AI-driven innovation to positively transform media and storytelling. An MSc in AI is essential to gain the depth of knowledge for innovation while safeguarding all stakeholders.

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