What is Artificial Intelligence?

TwoSmartFarts have been asked this question several times in the past few months as the two of us have been in computer technology for more than 100 years collectively. We have been involved in data collection, business applications, manufacturing and distribution, hardware, software and network technologies. The quick answer to the inquisitor is "the answer is in your question, "it is "artificial" not real intelligence. The long answer involves examples and analogies.

In the 70s I developed an order entry system for a food distribution system for public and private feeding establishments. When order was being place, by a human on the phone back then, the system would prompt the order taker to prompt the customer to suggest complimentary products such potatoes if he ordered a steamship roast. Maybe suggest an item from the customer order history that he forgot or hasn't ordered in a few cycles. Sound familiar? Yes, Amazon does the exact same thing – a lot more eloquently with today's technology. This isn't artificial intelligence. It is pre-determined by the application designer using data tables and rules – the infamous algorithms.

Back when Fred Flinstone went to college in the 60s and 70s, he would go to the library to research information for a term paper. He would pull a book on the subject and read and take notes to support his thesis. As a good student he would pull out another book by a different author and conduct the same investigation. If the results were much the same off, he went for dinosaur topped pizza and beer. But, if they differed he would have to get a third author's opinion. Hopefully it yielded a two out of three result and pizza was imminent. Now sometimes Fred's intuition told him he thought the minority author may be right. The dilemma would force more research and probably no pizza and beer.

Back then the process was simple, and the student determined maybe there was more to learn. Today a simple query with associated parameters would yield results similar to Fred's experience – maybe. If the search algorithm only looked for similar author opinions, then Fred would not know about the third opinion. If the search algorithm looked for opposing opinions Fred may only see two authors and not know there was third opinion that matched another. It is the construction of the algorithm defined by a human to present the search results. It will have the bias of the human designer built into the algorithm. Of course, the algorithm could present to Fred the books of every author on the subject query and let Fred pick and choose as he did in the library.

Let's go back to Amazon. The customer was looking for wall paneling. Amazon presents the wall paneling from a "favorite" manufacturer first. Favorite is the one who paid the most to advertise. The search algorithm had the "favorite" added to the query

parameters. Again, bias by the human who defined the search algorithm. Nothing artificial about intelligence.

What has greatly improved in the past few decades is the presentation layer of the search results. Not only pictures of products (again from a table associated with the product), but the composition of a query text answer. Depending on Fred's native language on the query the construct of the answer is in his native language. Again, this follows predefined language rules.

There is bias in the answers delivered. During the Covid government shutdown many people searched for information regarding the virus and the remedies. These answers were often biased in favor of the government's opinion, not necessarily medical science. Once again not an intelligent answer, but an Artificial Intelligent answer.

The use of legitimate search engines has been a great boon to everyone – where is the nearest gas station or restaurant; who hit the most homeruns in 2025; where is Latvia; how do I make Mac & Cheese. But, the result is based on data tables already available. The algorithm knows your current GPS location, or you provided your zip code. The baseball stats are maintained in many Major League websites or databases.

Now can a data query make decisions? Yes. A production line making pies can view the crust of pies in the oven and adjust either the temperature of the oven or speed of the conveyor line. But the decision is still based on human defined factors. This step used to be done by a human baker, now cameras trigger the same reaction.

The challenge has always been when you cannot foresee an event how do you program the software and hardware for it? Today it is done by compiling history of the events and reactions and using that "table" to make a choice. Not helpful in a jet fighter at Mach 1to help determine friend of foe. The wrong decision based on data history could lead to war.

One thing that computer algorithms lack is what is termed Lateral Thinking. This is thinking outside the box. Looking at problems or situations and applying reasoning that is not in the usual pattern of problem definition. In addition, AI systems lack experience knowledge from multiple fields of discipline where a human can combine unrelated ideas into a solution. This is Real Intelligence based on human knowledge and reasoning.

What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence is a marketing term not a science term. Artificial intelligence used to be "automation" as in the pie baker above or telephone voice response – press 1 if you can, else press 2.

So, when I say the answer to your question is in your question, I enjoy the look of their apparent intelligence.

TwoSmartFarts.com = October 2025