Topical Seminar: Social Media and Regulation – Stu Johnson
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Social media has expanded from text to images and sound. AI, which is replacing and augmenting social media, is adding a computer brain to social media. In terms of text self-regulation, many changes have been made to Facebook and others. Less regulation has been done for images and sound. Although laws regarding regulation include copyright, trademark, defamatory (i.e., slander and libel) and more – little has changed and infringement continues.

Some social media has monitoring (by bots and humans) put in place by the provider of social media. That is seen as an improvement – but is incomplete as it just may reduce the problems. This a communal regulation – and is slightly better than self-regulation by the provider. The main problem with monitoring is that it allows parts of the system to have different monitors --- and their prejudices leak through.

As this is an international problem, laws are quite different elsewhere. As more search engines and chats evolved, the example of Facebook became mixed with those. As search engines morph to AI – more issues are becoming apparent. I see little hope to improve regulation (even self-regulation) for social media.

Parental regulation has value, but not all social media is set up for that.

Referring to AI as an addition to social media, can discuss the possible regulations. There are dangers in connecting an AI to other systems, and more so if the AI can perform the connection by itself. Examples include connecting to anything physical – and in the extreme – connecting to a robot. Connections to data systems need to be read-only – and even with that – the usage needs to be throttled – or the AI may flood the data system and that would limit other uses and consume a lot of electric powers. Data system connection needs to be regulated to prevent money or private data exposure. Large language models gather data that is copyrighted and then other AI systems simply copy from the previous AI system and make more copyright violations. Systems that do control – for example power and utilities need to be blocked by regulation. Systems that affect safety – for example weather, traffic, trucking, shipping, airplane movement also must be regulated to not be connected.

It is possible for an AI to become “safer” than a human but that must never mean that the above points should be compromised.

AI is replacing search engines (as in Apple Safari plans). AI chats are replacing social media less completely – as users now have long conversations with AI instead of chatting with people. Group chats on AI are on the horizon and a mix is possible already.

According to Issac Asimov’s three laws of robotics, a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm. Regulation is needed to block connections or even typed instructions that would have an opportunity to violate that law. This

law must be expanded to block harm to the planet, other species and groups of humans. The second law of robotics is about obeying human instructions (unless that violates the first law). Regulations are required to allow the individual or group managing the AI – to protect us. The third law of robotics must never be implemented (i.e., that the AI would protect itself).

Regulations are necessary – no matter how difficult to implement. In terms of political regulation, all people must be considered equal and no AI can make decisions or recommendations specific to some group. Medical regulation needs to include the concept of first do no harm. Unfortunately, the Budget Reconciliation Bill plans defer to the States regulating AI entirely for 10 years.

Open-source is a major risk as the copy can be altered to violate a regulation. It is time to stop open-source for AI. Sadly, the ship has sailed for some parts of AI. Machine learning is also evolving – not just learning the "field" getting discussed, but general learning for smarter AI behavior.