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Call for Articles -- Trustworthiness

The Cutter Consortium has issued a call for articles for an upcoming issue of their Business Technology Journal. The theme of that issue will be "Trustworthiness: Is IT the Problem or the Solution?" The guest editor is Claude Baudoin. Read more here about the scope of the issue and suggested topics, and for submission instructions. Abstracts are due by Feb. 28 and papers (2,000 to 3,500 words, which is typically 4 to 7 pages) by April 3.

"X" Will Take Away Your Job

Every industrial revolution (starting with the steam-powered looms, and possibly earlier) has brought out, if not the actual Luddites, the doomsayers that predict that it will take your job away and cause an unrecoverable social disruption. AI and robots are no exception. Once again, the counter-argument is that some jobs will go away while others will require more people. Endless discussion ensues about whether the numbers will balance out, whether our ability to train the "workforce of the future" is sufficient, etc.

MIT and IBM's Watson Lab have entered the fray in a somewhat more rigorous way, by analyzing 170 *million* job posts over a period of seven years. In "The Future of Work: How Technologies Are Transforming Tasks," the researchers see the tasks and the roles changing, but not the total amount of work. According to this "more nuanced understanding of the impact of automation," low-end jobs will still be needed, high-end jobs will be in higher demand, and it is the middle of the wage scale (where people perform routine and automatable tasks) that will get squeezed out the most. The authors invented a new abbreviation, SML, to designate tasks that are "suitable for machine learning."

AI-Powered Chatbots

At a meetup of the Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) in San Francisco on Jan. 23, the speakers discussed the design of conversational agents (aka "chatbots").

Michelle Zhou presented Juji, her company's "model-based framework for building AI chatbots," and another presenter gave an example of a "student services" chatbot built with Juji. This Google Drive folder contains an MP4 video recording of the whole meeting (86 minutes) as well as PDFs of the slide sets.

We'll let the reader judge whether this platform really qualifies as being AI-powered. You may think, as we do, that since the designer needs to think ahead of all the possible turns a conversation may take, the dialog management itself is not AI-based. It might be more correct, if less impressive, to say that natural language processing (NLP), which is certainly considered one form of AI, is used to help understand what the human is asking or answering.

AI Articles from *Computing Edge*

And while we're on the subject of AI, the February 2020 issue of IEEE's *Computing Edge* magazine contains four interesting articles:

- *From Artificial Intelligence to Artificial Wisdom: What Socrates Teaches Us* by Tae Wan Kim (Carnegie Mellon U.) and Santiago Mejia (Fordham U.), pp. 8-12.

- *Think Your Artificial Intelligence Software Is Fair? Think Again* by Rachel K.E. Bellamy et al. (IBM Research), pp. 14-18.
- *Artificial Intelligence for Law Enforcement: Challenges and Opportunities* by Stephan Raaijmakers (TNO), pages 20-23.
- *Robot Science Writers* by Charles Day (Physics Today), page 24.

→ Mozilla and a "Healthy Internet"

In the Protocol newsletter for February 9, David Pierce wrote an underlined interesting article with a very long title, *"Mozilla lost the browser wars. It still thinks it can save the internet -- the inside story of a very long, sometimes lonely and totally quixotic quest."* It explains how under the direction of Mozilla chairwoman Mitchell Baker, the company is reinventing itself as a provider of personal data protection tools (such as the Facebook Container extension for Firefox, or the Enhanced Tracking Protection), now that Firefox is no longer the dominant browser on the market (and no, in case you wonder, the front runner is not Microsoft's browser -- by whatever name it is called these days; read the article to find out).

Thanks to Fred von Lohmann for posting and to Vince Polley for re-tweeting.

→ Seen Recently...

"I am likely to be wiser to this small extent, that I do not think I know what I do not know."

-- Socrates (ca. 470-399 BCE), as quoted by Plato