

Meeting summary for Public AI Seminar (01/23/2024)

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Quick recap

The meeting revolved around the discussion of the potential of AI in society, particularly in the context of Zoom meetings, scientific tasks, and basic science. The participants explored the challenges of integrating scientific knowledge and the importance of making scientific literature more open for AI-mediated models. The conversation also touched on the role of the government in developing new AI capabilities, the potential of AI to improve user experience in large meetings, and the need for transparency and accountability in the use of AI by the state. Towards the end, the discussion shifted towards the political considerations surrounding the development and implementation of AI, including the importance of addressing public concerns about change, framing AI as part of a growth agenda, and involving civil society groups in the process.

Summary

AuroraGPT: Multilingual AI for Scientific Tasks

Rick Stevens discussed the AuroraGPT project, a multilingual AI model aimed at assisting scientific tasks, in collaboration with international partners. He also mentioned experiments with multimodal data and the development of an open science foundation model trained on non-classified scientific data. Rick further discussed the team's shift towards more multimodal experiments in the coming years and the computational resources required for training such models. He also revealed plans to make the models developed available to the community, although the exact details are still under discussion. Lastly, Rick mentioned the creation of the Trillion Parameter Consortium, a separate initiative aimed at facilitating the sharing of data, techniques, and evaluation methods. Govind Shivkumar expressed appreciation for the proactive approach and inquired about opportunities for engagement.

DOE's AI Development and Ethical Considerations

The discussion covered the Department of Energy's (DOE) efforts to develop new AI capabilities for basic science, new energy technologies, and national security. It was clarified that the Trillion Parameter Consortium is not a platform for sharing compute across different countries, but a community with substantial compute resources. Questions were raised about governance,

openness, and access to the initiative, with responses indicating that initial access would be given to partners building it, and other labs having access as part of the broader AI standup. The importance of models like Aurora Gbt for building out evaluation and assessment capabilities and conducting systematic experiments in evaluating models was highlighted, along with the ethical considerations and potential uses of their data model. Interest was expressed in the model's compute and potential to democratize AI. The high cost of providing public access to infrastructure for AI training and potential research to lower these costs were also discussed.

Open Access to Scientific Papers for AI Models

The challenge of integrating scientific knowledge due to the lack of open access to scientific papers was discussed. The importance of making scientific literature more open for AI-mediated models and for maintaining a global memory of scientific work was stressed. The government's role in mandating and resourcing the development of large language models and other modeling capabilities was suggested, along with the need for collaboration with industry to solve problems related to productivity and innovation. The importance of moving beyond easily accessible open science data and incorporating information from figures, equations, and tables, as well as structured scientific data was emphasized. Questions were raised about the training data and data augmentation methods, with information on ongoing research being shared. Discussions also focused on how to make scientific data more accessible and interpretable for machines.

DOE Mission and Policy Concerns Discussed

The need to encourage faster progress and align the Department of Energy's (DOE) mission with the needs of the country was emphasized. The gap between technologists' ambitious visions and civil servants' legislated mandates was discussed. Reassurances were given that open collaboration and balance between the private and public sectors are important and should not be the exclusive domain of tech companies. Concerns about potential government policy changes and their impact on scholarly communications and activities were expressed, with reassurances provided about the importance of open collaboration.

Proposal and Political Implications Discussed

In the second half of the seminar, Hannah O'Rourke took over the discussion, focusing on the political implications of BritGPT. She emphasized the importance of understanding the current political landscape, which includes a lack of technical knowledge among lawmakers and uneven lobbying efforts. Hannah also noted that discussions about AI are not popular election issues for most politicians. She concluded by discussing the key political resources that the Britt Gpt proposal is drawing on, including a sense of national reconstruction and a need for the state to play a stronger role in the market.

AI Development and Political Considerations

Political considerations surrounding the development and implementation of AI were discussed. The need to align AI with specific missions or public aims and goals was highlighted, as well as the importance of considering the origin of data used in models and the possibility of international systems to regulate this. The significance of observing how AI is being used in different sectors to guide national policy was noted.

AI, Growth Agenda, and Public Service Innovation

The importance of addressing public concerns about change in relation to AI was discussed. AI was framed as part of a growth agenda, emphasizing the need for work education and reskilling in preparation for economic shifts. The significance of building relationships with government staff and creating news headlines for visibility and leverage was highlighted. The need for concrete use cases for AI in public services was noted as currently more crucial.

AI Perceptions and UK Government Projects

The team discussed perceptions of AI and its role in the UK, particularly in government projects. Concerns about AI surveillance and decision-making were noted, along with the need for transparency and accountability in the use of AI by the state. The importance of involving civil society groups in the process was emphasized, as well as the need for politicians to acknowledge the potential negative impacts of AI and to lay out a vision for its improvement of society. The current political climate that favors maintaining the status quo over risk-taking was also discussed, suggesting that civil society groups could play a role in preparing the public for AI and creating consensus for its use.

AI's Impact on Society: Investment, Stakeholders, and Concerns

The role of AI in society, specifically in economic, social, and political spheres, was the focus of the discussion. The need for more public investment in AI technology was highlighted, along with the importance of understanding the views of different stakeholders when implementing AI. Taxation as a potential way of reclaiming collective value from big tech companies was suggested. Concerns were raised about the potential negative impacts of AI on libraries and institutions, and the need for a left-leaning approach to AI was expressed.

AI: Shifting the Narrative Towards Positivity

The need for a strategic shift in the discussion around artificial intelligence (AI), moving away from fear and towards positivity, was highlighted. The potential of AI for preservation rather than stasis was suggested, and the importance of civil society and grassroots engagement in the face of the private sector's advanced progress was emphasized. The focus on preparing for inevitable change rather than waiting for politicians to take action was proposed, with interest expressed in hearing more about similar discussions in different countries.