

A growing trend in 2022 has been the future of AI and content creation. The TLDR version of it is; what algorithms did for content discovery, it will soon do for content creation.

To illustrate this point, everything you're seeing and hearing now is written and produced by an artificial intelligence with guidance from a human. The voice is AI generated. The script was improved and guided by an AI editor. The video cuts were chosen or generated by an AI. The images were either chosen or generated by an AI.

To fully understand the weight of this AI revolution is difficult because of our historical position. Just imagine in 1996 predicting Google Search or a Facebook Feed and all their second order consequences. Just as it would have been impossible then to imagine these unknown unknowns, we in 2022 can't fully understand what artificial intelligence will do for content creation.

It does beg a heartfelt question though, will bots replace journalists? While it's never advisable to make certain predictions, I'm going to give you a definitive answer of, no. Instead, interfacing with an artificial intelligence will become a specialized skill. Just as "Social Media Editor" was a wholly unique job title, new roles will be invented and defined by a new class of journalists who will leverage this technology in ways we can't predict.

This has happened before. Other fields have gone through technological transitions and it has actually created more jobs, not less. Before the typewriter was invented in the late 19th century, the quill was the main tool used to produce documents. Today the keyboard is a simple tool, but for the first 100 years of its existence typing was a specialized skill only mastered by some. Still, the typewriter became the center of a new systematic approach to office management.

Even in the middle of the 20th century, typing was a sought after skill. My mother was secretary. She went to a trade school where she learned shorthand, office management and how to type. In her prime my mother was amazing on the keyboard. She looked like a classically trained pianist performing a concert. My father, on the hand, would peck at his keyboard with two index fingers, head pointed down. Interfacing with artificial intelligence will be analogous. Many will peck, but some will learn the nuances of the interface and become maestros.

Does this mean that an AI editor could do the work of many journalists? Would this result in layoffs? Perhaps. Another outcome would be an increase in reporting jobs spread out in more locations rather than a centralization of reporting jobs in urban metro orgs. As the story goes, the invention of the ATM brought similar fears to bankers, that they were going to be replaced. Instead ATMs lowered the cost of opening up new branches. In turn, banks saw an advantage to opening more storefronts in more locations, leading to more bank teller jobs in total.

Let's end with the following from Nathan Bachez CEO of Every Incorporated. "Writing gave words permanence. Typewriters reduced the friction between having a thought and transferring it onto a page. Computers reduced the cost of editing thoughts after you type them. The internet made it possible to send your words anywhere, instantly for zero cost. And now AI will help you think through ideas more completely as you type them. Thank you and onward!