Day 15 - GenAI Ethics, Bias, and Disability Representation

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Hello everyone, and welcome back to "5 Minutes of Digital Inclusion"! Today, we're diving into a really important topic: the ethical considerations surrounding Generative AI, or **GenAI**, especially when it comes to **bias** and the **representation of disability**.

GenAI offers such exciting possibilities, doesn't it? But it's absolutely crucial that we acknowledge its potential limitations and biases. AI systems learn from the data they're fed. And if that data reflects existing societal biases, the AI will very likely perpetuate them. It's a bit like a research project built solely on outdated or unrepresentative survey data – the conclusions, no matter how sophisticated the analysis, will inherently reflect those initial biases and not the full truth.

Let's consider this bias. If AI models are trained on datasets primarily featuring non-disabled people, for instance, they might struggle to accurately or respectfully depict people with disabilities. This can lead to **stereotypical or inaccurate representations**. And that's simply not good enough, is it?

This has significant implications for **disability representation**. If GenAI tools primarily create content that reinforces negative stereotypes, it further marginalises and excludes. We absolutely must strive for **accurate, respectful, and empowering representation** in all forms of media, including AI-generated content.

Beyond representation, we must consider **access and equity**. GenAI tools aren't always equally available to everyone. The cost, the ongoing digital divide, and even a lack of digital literacy can create further disparities. We need to champion equitable access so that everyone can truly benefit.

And then there’s the use of GenAI in **decision-making processes**, particularly those concerning people with disabilities. If an AI tool used for, say, employment assessment is biased, it could lead to incredibly unfair and discriminatory outcomes. We wouldn't want that for ourselves, so why would we accept it for others?

So, what can we actually **do** to address these ethical challenges? Because it's not enough just to talk about them, is it?

Firstly, **awareness is key**. We need to understand the potential biases in AI and their real-world impact.

Action for you: Next time you use a GenAI tool, pause and consider: *What biases might be embedded here? How is it representing different groups?*

Secondly, **critical evaluation is essential**. We should critically appraise GenAI outputs and **actively challenge** any content that perpetuates negative stereotypes.

Action for you: If you spot biased or poor representations, use feedback functions in AI tools. Speak up in your university and online communities!

Thirdly, and this is a really practical one for all of us, our **prompting really matters!** How we phrase our requests to GenAI can significantly influence the output.

Action for you: Be specific and inclusive in your prompts.

- Instead of a generic: "Generate an image of a student studying,"
- Try: "**Generate an image of a university student with dyslexia using text-to-speech software to read an academic paper, showing them engaged and focused.**"
- For text, instead of: "Write a short story about a lecturer,"
- Try: "**Write a short story about a visually impaired lecturer who uses haptic technology to deliver engaging lectures on sustainable architecture, focusing on their innovative teaching methods.**"
- The more detail and diversity you request, the more likely the AI is to incorporate it respectfully. Your prompts are powerful tools – use them wisely!

Finally, **collaboration is absolutely essential**. We need to work together – researchers, developers, policymakers, and crucially, people with disabilities themselves – to ensure GenAI is used ethically and responsibly for the benefit of all.

Action for you: Seek out and support initiatives working towards ethical AI. Share what you've learned today with colleagues and friends. Every conversation helps!

By being mindful of these ethical considerations and taking these proactive steps, including how we craft our prompts, we truly can harness the power of GenAI for good, creating a more inclusive and equitable society for everyone.

Thank you for joining me today. What's one action you'll take this week to promote ethical AI and better disability representation? Let's keep this vital conversation going!

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