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10/12/25

Independent Project

1000 Word Update:

Intro:

So far, I have done tons of research and evaluated the sources I have available for free. Oddly enough, I found plenty of sources, both scholarly and not, about AI. Because it is so relevant right now, tons of new data and opinions are being formed. I've also found plenty of eBooks on storytelling, which helps prove my point about human empathy and connection through storytelling. I'm not feeling very concerned about a lack of sources like I was originally worried about. I have also started writing my rough draft. I don't have a whole lot done, but a good start. Getting the rough draft done is my goal during break, so I can really begin refining my research. Lastly, I have made my first attempt at creating my AI audiobook. It is not perfect yet, but having one draft helps me to know what I must improve on before the final submission.

What's next:

My next step is really kick-starting my writing. I've done plenty of research and altered my ideas to find a cohesive project and creative outpost. I really need to sit down with all my thoughts and give the rough draft more thought. I plan on getting lots of work done with my writing while I'm at home with the help of my English teacher parents. Getting to run my ideas off them will help me focus my ideas better. And when I come home from break, I plan on beginning my audiobook recording with Gabbi. So, I can collect data from people listening to both of my audiobooks.

Synopsis:

I plan to write a well-informed qualitative research project about the importance of storytelling in the digital age. I plan to create my own data through the production of my own audiobooks. One audiobook is being made by AI using an animated voice. And another audiobook recorded by a human voice actor. I will use both the data from having students, family, friends, and random people give me valuable opinions about how each audiobook made them feel, and I'll explore this data in a meaningful way that expresses my concern that automated voices lack depth, making it difficult to connect to the story being told. Not only will I be creating my own system for data, but I will also use plenty of already curated research.

Articles, newsletters, books, eBooks, and scholarly works to prove my point. As children, we grow up hearing stories, whether that be fiction, fairytales, or a story our families told us about their day. It's a crucial point in development that forces our little brains to use our imagination. Without stories, children's minds wouldn't connect to their surroundings. I do not believe that society will throw out all forms of storytelling and reading. But it has most definitely changed in the past two decades. The internet has only been getting more powerful and more integrated into humans' day-to-day lives. It was first designed to help us become more knowledgeable in a more convenient way. But recently, we have become lazy and codependent on the use of technology and the internet. Especially since the development of AI. On a very surface level, AI is useful and incredibly convenient when searching for a simple question. The issue is that the internet has been around for 40+ years now. We rely on the information and the quickness which has led to a dangerous upbringing of AI. It is being used too frequently and without remorse. It's become a cheaper, faster way to turn in assignments or a reason to save money within a big corporation. So, in an ever-growing, technologically advanced society, it is corrupting our jobs/workforce and making people dumber. It's forcing a chain reaction to happen, and eventually society won't need jobs, AI can do faster and cheaper. This takes me to my idea of human connection in storytelling, because we have chosen to keep advancing technology, society must adapt. For example, audiobooks. It's a new way to listen to books when one might not have the time or energy to read. But because of AI, now even this is becoming a harder field to work within.

Human connection happens through human communication by listening to stories and histories. Watching films and reading books. If we do not act against AI, we will never connect to another real piece of literature again. Culture will vanish, and society will become dull without proper stories being told by humans. AI will never have a soul, so art will become meaningless. This cannot happen. I plan on proving all of this through my research and data within my paper.

Collaboration:

I plan on using Gabbi as my voice actor in my real audiobook. Gabbi's whole project is about AI and voice acting. So, it only seems fitting to have Gabbi record my audiobook as a true voice actor. In a field that is being taken over by AI for its fast, cheap, and effective nature, it makes sense to prove my point as well as their point that, without voice actors, there will never be a true sense of connection. AI will never have the authenticity a human voice has, and AI will always mess up pronouncing words and will always sound uninteresting. Listening and understanding stories is how we learn empathy, trust, and human experience, which helps us to understand the facts of the world, and if we resort to a fake, automated voice that lacks depth, society will regress. Using another actor with a different culture and lifestyle from mine will not only strengthen my point but also help me connect to their culture and way of life beautifully and naturally. This emphasizes my whole belief on human connection.

Conclusion:

This project is not trying to rid the world of AI or technology, as there are plenty of reasons it's helpful. Especially within research and helping those who are less fortunate. This project is designed to emphasize how shallow society will become if we forget how valuable listening and connecting to stories is. And Audiobooks just happen to be an interesting and effective facet to uncover all the truths of AI. Society must remember to make true connections and continue to fight to be remembered. Don't let history be forgotten...keep reading and writing and telling stories. Watching movies and plays. Or go watch a ballet or go to a comedy show. Each one is a human begging to be remembered by telling their story or someone else's.

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Almeda, S., Netzorg, R., Li, I., Tam, E., Ma, S. and Wei, B.T., 2025, June. Labor, Power, and Belonging: The Work of Voice in the Age of AI Reproduction. In *Proceedings of the 2025 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (pp. 1238-1249). Available at <https://dl.acm.org/doi/full/10.1145/3715275.3732082>

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Bentivegna, F., 2025. Making kin in the technogloom: attempts at finding AI voices. *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media*, (pp.1-15). Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14794713.2025.2515751>

E-book:

Boden, M.A., 2016. *AI: Its nature and future*. Oxford University Press. Available at https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=yDQTDAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=AI+&ots=T2jj4E74Mc&sig=qCIXYluPETm9OCZx5cJ8tH_JTCY&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=AI&f=false

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Lin, X. and Tao, N., 2024, November. Audiobooks in the cultural metaverse: Reimagining new quality productive forces and the future of the audio culture industry. In *International Conference on Metaverse* (pp. 124-133). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland. Available at https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-031-76977-1_10

E-book:

Meretoja, H., 2018. *The ethics of storytelling: Narrative hermeneutics, history, and the possible*. Oxford University Press. Available at https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=o8M9DwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=storytelling+throughout+history&ots=_d72IJ8jlx&sig=ZeBzX5W9qTfWpLcOW6G8pS0d7qg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=storytelling%20throughout%20history&f=false

E-book:

Pennington, M.C. and Waxler, R.P., 2017. *Why reading books still matters: The power of literature in digital times*. Routledge. Available at <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9781315210247/reading-books-still-matters-martha-pennington-robert-waxler>

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Rollins, C., 1957. Storytelling: Its Value and Importance. *Elementary English*, 34(3), pp.164-166. Available at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41384579>

E-book:

Schatt, D. and Ryan, P., 2021. *Story listening and experience in early childhood*. London: Palgrave MacMillan. Available at <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-030-65358-3>

E-book:

Sherman, J., (2008). *Storytelling: An encyclopedia of mythology and folklore*. Routledge: Myron E. Sharpe. Available at https://maypoleofwisdom.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/an_encyclopedia_of_mythology_and_folklor.pdf