

The Future of AI Was Last Week

This Afternoon's AI Systems Will Be Two Generations Ahead of This Morning's

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Summary

This essay concerns the long-term study of AI systems or the *futility* of the long-term study of AI systems. The rate of change of AI systems is unprecedented and that renders the concept of a study obsolete. There are now hundreds of millions of persons on earth with the resources needed to build AI systems. Further multiplying the power of these numbers is the visibility of advances. The acceleration of acceleration of today's AI systems brings with it a change in the concept of thinking about the future. Techniques borrowed from the agile methods are good replacements for longer-term studies. A good technique is to set specific technology and capability triggers and monitor systems for when those capabilities arrive.

Acceleration of Acceleration

This essay concerns the long-term study of AI systems or the *futility* of the long-term study of AI systems. The rate of change of AI systems is unprecedented and that renders the concept of a study—at least what we used to consider a study—obsolete. This isn't speculation about the future of jobs and the effect of AI. There is already too much of that. This is also not about calling mimicry, i.e., what current large language models do, intelligent. The marketers have taken over the industry and there is no pushing back now.

In October 2022, ChatGPT fell on from the sky. No one predicted it. Reports from OpenAI later indicated that many OpenAI employees felt ChatGPT was an interesting experiment, but not a product—especially from a non-profit organization.

Nevertheless, ChatGPT arrived and everything changed. Both the brilliance and demise of ChatGPT was that it is based on the transformer architecture. That had been published several years earlier and noted widely. ChatGPT was a use of something well and widely known. It wasn't but a few weeks and a few hundred million dollars in compute expense later that all the big tech companies in the US, China, and Europe had their own question-answering and essay-writing large language models strapped onto chatbots.

The race was on. Answer a question. Turn a sentence into an essay of 1,000 or 10,000 words. Write a book a day. Turn a sentence into an image. Turn a sentence into an audio. Turn a sentence into a video. Analyze a document. Analyze a library.

There are now hundreds of millions of persons on earth with the resources needed to build AI systems. The resources include computers, knowledge, time, skills. Given these numbers, it is not surprising that new things come every day or several times a day. Further multiplying the power of these numbers is the visibility of advances. People read unpublished research on arXiv.org and download libraries of code from GitHub et al.

Behold a revolution in learning, collaboration, and innovation; one where barriers to entry are melting away and progress is accelerating exponentially.

Organizations are slow to change. The larger the organization, the slower the change. No organization is larger than the US government. Hence, recent attempts and resistance to change in the government is evident.

Have founders finished writing a business plan? A what? A plan that attempts to predict a week into the future is folly.

The State of the Art in AI

There are many excellent annual reports on the state-of-the-art in AI. Among these are:

1. [AI Index Report \(Stanford University's Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence - HAI\)](#)
2. [The State of AI Report \(Nathan Benaich and Air Street Capital\)](#)
3. [McKinsey Global Survey on AI \("The state of AI: How organizations are rewiring to capture value"\)](#)
4. [Deloitte AI Institute's "State of Generative AI in the Enterprise" series](#)

These annual reports are still worth the time to read. Are they, however, worth the time to write? The ink is not dry (does anyone still use ink?) before the reports are outdated. The organizations and individuals who publish these are providing a useful service to the rest of us and their continuance is recommended.

What, however, about the rest of us?

The New Concept of the Future as It Pertains to “AI Systems”

The acceleration of acceleration of today’s AI systems brings with it a change in the concept of thinking about the future. Long gone is the task, “Do a six-month study of AI systems today and create a five-year strategy for our organization.” Long-term AI research and development remain necessary. It is the long-term study of current chatbots et al. that is folly.

Instead:

- State what is desired from AI and other new automation tools. This requires thinking.
- Look for the desired. Perhaps converting a sentence into a two-hour movie means nothing to an organization. Look for what matters.
- State what isn’t desired at this time but might be important one day.
- Learn daily—perhaps twice a day.
- Adjust daily—perhaps twice a day.
- Adopt what is valuable AND keep enough resources in reserve to drop what is adopted and adopt something else. The ability to change is critical.
- Experiment before commitment.
- “Long-term” is now 15 minutes after this meeting concludes.
- Maybe this meeting never concludes.

A simple and one of the more effective ideas is to set triggers. Write something like, “When a system can perform this task using only these resources, we will use it.” Monitor the daily announcements of systems and what tasks they perform at what price points.

This may sound simple. This, however, isn’t easy. The tasks new systems perform can be amazing (Chiou, 2025). The urge to grab today’s system and invest everything in it is great. Still, there are glaring holes in today’s systems (Marcus, 2025). It is easy to invest and be devastated by an unexpected outcome.

It may seem contrary to rapid change, but patience is necessary.

References

Chiou, L. (2025, June 6), At Secret Math Meeting, Researchers Struggle to Outsmart AI. Scientific American. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/inside-the-secret-meeting-where-mathematicians-struggled-to-outsmart-ai/>

Marcus, G. (2025, June 7), A knockout blow for LLMs? Marcus on AI. <https://garymarcus.substack.com/p/a-knockout-blow-for-llms>