

23018 Bard & ChatGPT prone to errors

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Experts have warned that large language models, which are the basis for Bard and ChatGPT, are prone to errors because of the way they are built. These models are fed datasets comprising billions of words that train the AI to generate plausible-sounding responses to queries. Operating in a way akin to predictive text, they build a model to predict the likeliest word or sentence to come after the user's prompt.

"ChatGPT is a phrase predictor," says Dr Andrew Rogoyski of the Institute for People-Centred AI at the University of Surrey. "It's a system that has memorised a billion books so that it can guess what comes after the question you ask it. Everything it says is essentially a rehash of something that has been said before, by a human. It's not remotely intelligent. There are much smarter, and more useful, AI systems operating robots, diagnosing disease, or steering a car."

However, the phenomenal interest in ChatGPT, which signed up more than 100 million users in two months, shows considerable public appetite for an AI-enhanced search experience. Fans of the chatbot have praised its ability to summarise documents, tidy up prose and write code (among many other things), while journalists given early glimpses of the new AI-powered Bing have been impressed.

The FAQ page on the new-look Bing is also upfront about potential errors, stating: "AI can make mistakes," and: "You may see responses that sound convincing but are incomplete, inaccurate, or inappropriate."

But if public interest in chatbot-enhanced search, as shown by the success of ChatGPT, is maintained, then Microsoft has a big target to aim at. Google dominates the global search market with a share of 91%, with Bing at just 3%.

According to Microsoft, every percentage point gained in market share – presumably from Google – represents an extra \$2bn in advertising revenue for the company, referring to the lucrative business of ads placed in search results. This week Microsoft said Bing's AI-boosted ability to understand queries with "greater depth" and gain insights into users with "deep conversational engagement" would be a draw for advertisers. Google obviously agrees.

There is a big gap to bridge between the companies: in its most recent quarterly results, Microsoft posted revenues of \$3.2bn from search and news advertising, while Google generated \$42.6bn in search revenues. Chatbots also require a lot of processing power, so there are also cost implications for any AI-powered market grab, as well as defending a market-leading position.

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