

LASTWORD

Jumping on that trend



WITH JANINE ADAMSON

“ Well I must say, I didn't expect to receive anywhere near as much feedback on last month's column as I have – it would appear my fellow stegosauruses (stegosauri?) and I are not yet extinct! Thank you to everyone who passed on positive comments or even merely thought them, it proves that in some instances, it pays for me to stand firm.

However, it also suggests that February's column will be a hard act to follow. Cue the tumble weed... I jest.

Anyway, I shall move

swiftly onto my next indulgent rant – AI-generated imagery. A few weeks ago, my social media channels were flooded with cartoonish caricatures depicting individuals at work, accompanied with the phrase 'jumping on the latest trend' (or words to that effect).

I hope you can hear my eyes roll. Now, I'm not personally criticising anyone who partook in this digital craze, I simply question how harmless such activities can be.

Having hatched in 1987, I quite literally 'boomed' alongside the internet – I remember 'Ask Jeeves' fondly, I was an early adopter of Myspace, I recall when Facebook had a predetermined 'is...' before every status update.

And while I'm undoubtedly too jaded for TikTok or Snapchat – one has to type the line somewhere – I'm broadly accepting of

the direction of travel.

However, all of these 'same but different' AI images make me feel a little, well, dead inside. I can spot an AI-generated poster or advert a mile off – and they are everywhere. Even our local common plot has one as part of its recruitment campaign for volunteers.

Firstly, there's zero creativity in any of it, because surprise surprise, they've been created by a computer not a human. There's no flair or individuality, it's all very one-dimensional. I'd actually rather see the digital equivalent of a child's hand-crafted Easter bonnet, if it means Gerald from the common plot has made it himself in Publisher. I understand not everyone has the skills, but hopefully you take my point.

Secondly, I cringe at the quantity of finite resources we're wasting through recreational AI.

For useful purposes as we're increasingly seeing in agriculture, fine. Using AI simply so Karen at number 43 can depict herself cutting someone's hair, no.

There's a blog on gov.uk explaining it in detail, but essentially AI uses an inordinate quantity of water to cool computers at the data centres, as well as indirectly for electricity generation and during hardware manufacturing. And we're doing this for the sake of a viral cartoon?

Thirdly, and maybe I'm overthinking this one, is it not all just a data mining exercise? Willingly handing over information about ourselves, as well photographs revealing our physical appearance, to feed powerhouse AI? Something inside me says this won't necessarily end well.

AI will likely revolutionise our existence and I'll look very stupid in 10 years' time, but as with everything in life, I just think we should manage excess where we can. Ultimately, there's always a cost. ●

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YOUR EDITOR

Janine Adamson began her journalistic career writing obituaries for a local newspaper but fast found her stride within agricultural communications. Now, more than 15 years later, she finds herself at the helm of CPM. A proud Staffordshire girl from the Moorlands, Janine takes pride in tackling subjects which although aren't exclusively farming, affect everyone.