

AI News Digest

01/12/2026 - 01/18/2026

WEEKLY DIGEST: EDUCATION & LEADERSHIP

AI's Impact on Education and Social Dynamics

This week, discussions around the intersection of AI and education highlight the challenges and opportunities presented by generative AI and data analytics. From a social media wargame revealing AI's potential to influence elections to a partnership between Purdue University and Google aimed at enhancing AI education, the landscape is rapidly evolving. Additionally, concerns about AI literacy among educators and psychologists underscore the need for a more human-centered approach in data analytics. As AI continues to reshape societal structures, the implications for education and leadership are profound.

KEY FINDINGS

- ✓ A social media wargame demonstrated AI's influence on election narratives.
- ✓ Purdue University partnered with Google to enhance AI education.
- ✓ Low AI literacy among psychologists may lead to cognitive deskilling.

IMPLICATIONS

- Educational institutions must adapt curricula to include AI literacy.
- Partnerships between academia and tech companies can drive innovation.
- A focus on human-centered data analytics is essential for effective AI integration.

Key Metrics: 108 teams from 18 Australian universities participated in the wargame.; The Purdue-Google partnership spans multiple years.; The educational tool developed at UCC was tested with over 200 participants.

1. World-first social media wargame reveals how AI bots can swing elections

Category: Research

Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Computer Science, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Generative AI Misinformation, Digital Literacy Enhancement, Election Manipulation Techniques

Impact Score: 28.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 5

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 5

Practical Impact: 5

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article discusses the findings from "Capture the Narrative," a social media wargame designed to explore the impact of generative AI on misinformation and public opinion during elections. In the simulation, 108 teams from 18 Australian universities created AI bots that generated over 7 million posts, significantly influencing the election outcome between two fictional candidates. The results demonstrated that even small teams using consumer-grade AI could effectively manipulate narratives and sway voter perceptions, highlighting the urgent need for enhanced digital literacy to combat misinformation. The study underscores the potential of AI-driven misinformation to disrupt democratic processes and the importance of understanding its mechanisms.

<https://techxplore.com/news/2026-01-world-social-media-wargame-reveals.html>

2. Using causal AI to amplify sustainability in the textile industry

Category: Research

Departments: Computer Science, Engineering Education & Leadership, Political Science & Public Administration, Industrial, Manufacturing & Systems Engineering

Topics: Causal AI, Sustainability Communication, Social Media Engagement, Textile Waste Management

Impact Score: 27.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 5

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 5

Practical Impact: 5

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

Researchers from Constructor University have developed a framework aimed at enhancing how responsible brands communicate sustainability on social media, particularly in the context of the textile industry's environmental challenges. Published in IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management, the study utilized causal machine learning to analyze various types of sustainability content across social media platforms, revealing that short-form Reels significantly outperform longer formats in driving audience engagement. The framework suggests a two-stage campaign structure, using Reels for initial awareness and longer content for education, thereby optimizing organic reach while minimizing marketing costs. This approach not only aims to improve communication strategies but also seeks to activate systemic changes in the textile ecosystem, aligning with upcoming regulatory measures on textile waste management.

<https://techxplore.com/news/2026-01-causal-ai-amplify-sustainability-textile.html>

3. Free tool can reduce harmful engagement with AI-generated explicit images

Category: Education
Departments: Educational Leadership, Political Science & Public Administration, Computer Science
Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, Deepfake Awareness Education, Non-Consensual Content Mitigation, User Engagement Reduction

Impact Score: 26.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4	Educational Value: 5	Innovation / Novelty: 4
Practical Impact: 5	Interdisciplinary Potential: 3	Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

Researchers at University College Cork (UCC) have developed an online educational tool, "Deepfakes/Real Harms," aimed at reducing engagement with AI-generated explicit imagery, particularly non-consensual content. The 10-minute intervention, tested with over 2,000 participants, effectively decreased belief in common myths about deepfakes and lowered intentions to engage in harmful behaviors associated with this technology. The study highlights the importance of educating users about the real harms of AI identity manipulation and emphasizes that addressing this issue requires a collective effort from all stakeholders, including internet users and regulators.

<https://techxplora.com/news/2026-01-free-tool-engagement-ai-generated.html>

4. Fictional prototypes of AI-human coexistence and relationality

Category: Research
Departments: Philosophy, Political Science & Public Administration, Psychology, Educational Leadership
Topics: AI Ethics, Trust Dynamics, Emotional Engagement, Coexistence Models

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4	Educational Value: 4	Innovation / Novelty: 5
Practical Impact: 3	Interdisciplinary Potential: 4	Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

This article explores how fictional narratives shape emotional, relational, and moral readiness for coexistence between humans and AI, categorizing narratives into three phases: Instrumental, Relational, and Autonomous. It highlights that trust in these narratives is relational and evolves through interaction, emotional continuity, and shared experiences, rather than being a static quality. The analysis identifies distinct coexistence models for each phase, ranging from functional complementarity in the Instrumental phase to emotional engagement in the Relational phase, and respect for autonomy in the Autonomous phase. The findings suggest that readiness for AI coexistence is contingent on recognizing the dynamic nature of trust and the complexities of emotional relationships with AI.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-025-02830-9>

5. Reflexive ecologies of knowledge in the future of AI & Society

Category: Research

Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Philosophy, Communication, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Generative AI Challenges, Interdisciplinary Knowledge Integration, Responsible Authorship, Transparency in AI

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 3

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article discusses the journal AI & Society's unique approach to fostering interdisciplinary connections across various fields, including science, philosophy, art, and design. It emphasizes the journal's commitment to reflexivity and the idea that friction between different modes of knowledge can lead to new insights and transformations. The text highlights the challenges posed by generative AI systems in writing, advocating for a responsible approach to authorship that acknowledges the interplay between human creativity and technological tools. Ultimately, the journal aims to maintain a space for diverse ecologies of thought while promoting transparency and shared responsibility among contributors.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02859-4>

6. All my students have mastered Wren and Martin

Category: Education

Departments: Educational Leadership, Engineering Education & Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics & Safety, AI-Generated Writing Detection, Prompt Engineering, Assessment Criteria Shift

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 5

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 3

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article discusses the challenges educators face in detecting AI-generated writing among students, highlighting a shift in assessment criteria due to advancements in AI literacy. The author notes that students have begun to "humanize" AI-generated text, making it difficult to distinguish between genuine and AI-assisted writing. As a result, traditional metrics for evaluating writing skills are becoming obsolete, with emphasis shifting towards prompt engineering and the ability to manipulate AI outputs. The piece raises questions about the effectiveness of current detection methods and the implications for future educational practices in a world increasingly integrated with AI technology.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02857-6>

7. The end of cognitive meritocracy

Category: Policy & Ethics

Departments: Political Science & Public Administration, Sociology & Anthropology, Computer Science, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Cognitive Hierarchies, Social Inequality Mitigation, Human-AI Value Relationship

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 3

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 5

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 5

The article critiques the societal hierarchy that privileges higher cognitive abilities, such as abstract reasoning and analytical problem-solving, over manual and sensory skills, arguing that this structure institutionalizes inequality based on heritable traits. It highlights the disruptive impact of artificial intelligence, which is increasingly capable of performing tasks traditionally associated with high cognitive demand, thereby challenging the meritocratic foundations of human worth. The author warns that if AI systems perpetuate existing cognitive hierarchies, they could exacerbate social inequities by determining access to opportunities based solely on cognitive profiles. Conversely, the article suggests that if AI surpasses human cognitive abilities, it may prompt a reevaluation of the relationship between intelligence and human value, potentially leading to a more inclusive understanding of diverse human capacities.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-026-02856-7>

8. Purdue-Google Partnership to Advance AI-Enabled Education and Research

Category: Education

Departments: Educational Leadership, Computer Science, Engineering Education & Leadership

Topics: AI Education, AI Workforce Development, AI Curriculum Integration, Cloud AI Tools

Impact Score: 25.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 5

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 5

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 3

Purdue University has entered a multi-year partnership with Google Public Sector to enhance AI education, research, and workforce development across the campus. The collaboration includes access to Google Cloud's AI tools, Tensor Processing Units (TPUs), and a new AI Hub, which will facilitate hands-on learning and innovation. Key initiatives involve the establishment of an AI competency graduation requirement and the integration of advanced AI technologies into the curriculum. This partnership aims to position Purdue as a leader in AI-driven research and industry collaboration.

<https://campustechnology.com/Articles/2026/01/12/Purdue-Google-Partnership-to-Advance-AI-Enabled-Education-and-Research.aspx>

9. Why Human-Centered Data Analytics Matters More Than Ever

Category: Applications

Departments: Computer Science, Political Science & Public Administration, Engineering Education & Leadership

Topics: Human-Centered Data Analytics, User-Centric Model Design, Contextual Decision-Making, Actionable Insights Development

Impact Score: 24.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 3

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 4

Practical Impact: 5

Interdisciplinary Potential: 4

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

The article emphasizes the importance of Human-Centered Data Analytics, arguing that despite the increasing investment in data and AI by organizations, many analytics initiatives fail to achieve lasting impact due to a lack of focus on human context. It advocates for a shift from a purely data-driven approach to one that prioritizes understanding the end-user's needs and social context, thereby enhancing decision-making processes. The author shares personal insights from their career in analytics, highlighting the necessity of designing data models and metrics with the user in mind, rather than solely focusing on business KPIs. This approach aims to ensure that data-driven insights are meaningful and actionable, ultimately benefiting both individuals and organizations.

<https://towardsdatascience.com/why-human-centered-data-analytics-matters-more-than-ever/>

10. The competence paradox: when psychologists overestimate their understanding of Artificial Intelligence

Category: Research

Departments: Psychology, Political Science & Public Administration, Educational Leadership

Topics: AI Ethics, Cognitive Offloading, Professional Deskilling, AI Literacy in Psychology

Impact Score: 24.0

Rubric Scores

Research Relevance: 4

Educational Value: 4

Innovation / Novelty: 3

Practical Impact: 4

Interdisciplinary Potential: 5

Ethical / Policy Implications: 4

Emerging research indicates that low AI literacy among psychologists may lead to significant professional costs, particularly in the form of cognitive deskilling. Studies in related fields, such as medicine, have shown that reliance on AI systems can diminish practitioners' clinical skills, as evidenced by gastroenterologists and radiologists experiencing declines in diagnostic accuracy when not using AI support. For psychologists, the risk of deskilling may be less visible, as their clinical judgment is based on subjective information that is difficult to benchmark, making it challenging to recognize when their skills are deteriorating. This phenomenon, termed cognitive offloading, can result in a gradual decline in independent reasoning and expertise due to the habitual reliance on AI-generated recommendations.

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s00146-025-02814-9>