



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI):

Opportunity and Challenge for
the Church: Facilitator's Notes

Session 2 – Using your personal data

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Background Reading: [Artificial Intelligence Report \(churchofscotland.org.uk\)](http://churchofscotland.org.uk) Big Data (Page 3 & 4)

Discussion:

This process is simply to stimulate discussion about the opportunities and challenges that artificial intelligence brings to all our lives. It's not directed to a conclusion. Instead, its objective is to help us ask questions about something that shapes all of our lives and our thinking.

Read the following paragraphs:

The lifeblood of AI is big data, but when these are the personal data of the billions of people who use the internet every day, issues arise about how the information is used. Face recognition is a useful tool to unlock smartphones - but when employed for population surveillance by police forces around the world it can be a different story altogether.

Digitised data from entire libraries, countless emails and social media content are available to AI developers.

Play the video: Session 2 - Data usage – what are you sharing?

Read the Bible passage

Psalm 139: 1-4

O Lord, you have searched me and known me.
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;
you discern my thoughts from far away.
You search out my path and my lying down,
and are acquainted with all my ways.
Even before a word is on my tongue,
O Lord, you know it completely.

Read the following paragraphs:

We share our personal data with every web page we visit, every time we shop online, each internet search, each “like” or “share” on social media, every question offered to a digital personal assistant or as our phones track our location.

While we enjoy the many benefits of using the likes of Amazon, Google and Facebook we would also like to know what is being done with the data held about us (and by whom), and ensure that our smartphones and laptops do not become surveillance devices used by companies entirely for their own profit, or by governments to control their people.

Personal data is profitable for companies who sell advertising which targets selected groups of consumers, especially now that machine learning algorithms can make highly accurate predictions about the personality, economic status, lifestyle or likely political or religious leanings of any individual, using readily available data such as internet browsing history or “likes” on Facebook.

Recent research revealed how a major social media company's dataset provides, with analysis of a few hundred “likes”, better knowledge of your personality than your spouse has of you.

Begin by asking each participant, individually or in small groups, to answer the following question:

1. How much awareness is there amongst users of social media platforms of how those platforms function, manipulating the user and how they monetise them for the sake of advertising revenue? E.g. Our information on Facebook and our searches on Google and Amazon are all used to target advertising to our personal interests.

Read the following paragraph:

Digitised data from entire libraries, countless emails and social media content are available to AI developers. One of the largest collections of data, GPT-3 (Generative Pre-trained Transformer version 3 developed by the US company Open-AI) has access to almost all of the text found on the internet.

Ask the following questions:

2. Is our personal data used ethically and kept safe and private when we share information on Facebook, Google,

Amazon, and the like? Do you read terms and conditions with opt in/out tick boxes? They are often long and if we say no, we are then unable to access the site or service any further. Is this right?

3. Is our privacy adequately protected by the large tech companies who collect and profit from the personal data of everyone who uses the internet? E.g. GDPR, ethical standards, data held in other countries with different rules.

Read the following paragraph:

When a computer running machine learning algorithms is used to analyse medical scans or predict the shopping habits of a retail customer, the computer must first “learn” to recognise patterns from sets of training data. Machine learning is only as good as the data they are trained on, and data is blind to the human stories behind the statistics. Human biases and prejudices around gender, race, religion, lifestyle and postcode can become embedded and hidden in population data, so that when these data are the basis for generating profiles of jobseekers or loan applicants, or employed by law enforcement to screen for likely criminal activity, the results can be profoundly discriminatory and a risk to human rights. Fairness in Machine Learning is an active area of research which aims to develop software which can detect and eliminate such hidden biases.

Ask the following questions:

4. Are you concerned that hidden biases relating to ethnicity, gender, social attitudes and religion can become embedded in Big Data and so influence job applications and bank loans etc.?
5. How do we respond to the use of sophisticated AI surveillance tools in policing and the persecution of religious groups by governments? E.g. facial recognition for police surveillance, asylum seekers identification within UK, airport CCTV/anti-terrorism surveillance.
6. How do we as Christians respond to this?

Reflections

Structural changes in the economy resulting from the pandemic include the increased in-home working and the acceleration in online shopping, in particular Amazon. These are issues that will affect the economy not just in the UK but internationally. This will be approached differently in different countries, depending on differences in economic leverage, in particular the US which tends to dominate in certain areas.

Prayer

All-knowing God,
into whose presence we commit our lives,
who we are, what we think, what we do, what we have,
we offer this to your kingdom purpose
because we trust you
and have seen what that means in the life of Jesus.
May we exercise judgement and caution
with the data we share,
thinking carefully about who we trust
to have our best interests at heart,
how our lives are commoditised by companies,
and speak up when we see inequality increase
as a result of the use of 'our' data.
Amen.