

Reworking and Reconnecting: The influence of artificial intelligence on the historical research process

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Historians of technology are keenly aware that new technologies cause disruption and this impacts their own research processes. Photography, tape recorders, scanners, optical character recognition and internet search engines have all had a transformative impact on the way we conduct our investigations. The latest disruptive technologies are artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT which offer not only the ability to collect new data but also the opportunity to reanalyse existing data sets. Historical data comes in many different forms: paper based; tape recordings; digitised; born digital. Making meaningful links across these diverse and disparate data sets is challenging and AI tools potentially offer the prospect of discovering new insights from previously unconnected sources.

Whilst AI tools bring the ability to rapidly analyse vast data sets, they contrast with the slow thoughtful in-depth research process followed by many historians. They also raise ethical concerns about using data out of context. Like the technologies that came before them, the use of AI tools impacts on the research process itself, offering opportunities but also raising concerns.

This panel welcomes papers that explore these themes and/or provide examples of the use of AI tools for research in our field, particularly when they reuse data or make new connections between existing data sets.

Those interested in participating are asked to prepare a one-page abstract (250 words maximum) and one page CV (300 words maximum) with current contact information. Please send these materials to the organizer no later than December 12, 2023.