

## Day 8 - Instructional/Educational Videos and AI

Welcome to day 8! Today we are exploring the intersection of video production and AI through looking at educational videos and the software *Synthesia*, whilst also considering the media-historical lineage in which these processes sit.

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AI in video production, while innovative, can be seen as an extension of an already familiar historical trend, where technology 'shifts' from physical hardware like magnetic videotapes or cine film, to advanced digital and computer-based programs. These historical trends and trajectories have seen video editing gradually move from humans to machines and software, raising concerns from practitioners about losing the 'human' touch, and an excess of non-human automation. However, in contrast early discussions of educational video show educators did in fact desire immediacy and automation.

Although a consequence of this shift in technology formats over history has been that 'agency' has been positioned mostly in the hands of the technology itself rather than in human involvement through film processes e.g. splicing and editing film by hand. This reframes the perspectives educators may want to take when using AI. Particularly as early discussions of educational video surrounded a desire of wanting immediacy and automation in analogue processes.

A classroom might be equipped with a box about the size of a home tv set, containing all equipment including the screen. The teacher simply inserts a cartridge about the size of a thin book, turns a switch and the picture and sound appear. It would be easy for a teacher to illustrate a lesson with pictures as short as one to five minutes, or as long as say, half an hour. (Keith, 1963, p.677)

As I would argue in this legacy, educational AI video software such as Synthesia (the software we will examine today) offers a quick and efficient way to create straightforward educational videos for students, despite potential concerns around its immediacy, and the extent of its capabilities. Historically, practitioners and educators have often embraced new technologies with enthusiasm and excitement, as seen with the adoption of early video tape in the early 1980s by amateurs used to photochemical film:

It is in so many ways like starting with 8mm all over again, inventing new ways of pushing the medium as far as it will go. (Reid, 1983, p.617)

So, rather than focusing solely on concerns about AI video production, we should consider the affordances and limitations of this technology, as well as its benefits for

individuals and groups. Reflecting on comments from thirty years ago, the ability of AI to produce videos almost instantly would have seemed like science fiction.

Afterwards I asked him just how far digital imaging might go. Might there be generated actors, sets and locations? “I don't think in my lifetime,” he answered. “I think they will make movies that way, but not all movies will be made that way. No matter what you do you need actors. No matter what you do, it's always going to be cheaper to go out and photograph something than to create it in computer - at least for the foreseeable future.” (Tom Leeson, in conversation with McKernan, 1993, p.14)

## Activity

Go to the *Synthesia*, an AI powered video creator, and create a free account. Once created, try to produce an educational video related to your subject area following the guided prompts.

Here's the example video I created. AI framed this around **Exploring AI and Nostalgic Media**.

<https://share.synthesia.io/cbccf25a-b644-44cd-a32d-a1c41b92b1b8>

## Alternative tools

You might also want to try one of these tools:

- [HeyGen](#)

## Discussion

Join us in the Teams space to share your AI-generated video and reflections. If you don't have access to the space, email us at [teachingexchange@arts.ac.uk](mailto:teachingexchange@arts.ac.uk) for the attention of Hannah.

- What did you think of your educational/instructional video?
- Were you concerned about your lack of agency or humanistic involvement in the process of production?
- Did you notice anything unusual about the video?
- What are the limitations of software like *Synthesia*?
- Would you be happy with your students creating AI-generated videos. If not, why?
- Are there educational circumstances or conditions where these videos might be beneficial?

## References

- Keith, C.R. (1963) 'Motion Pictures for Education - Should They be Tied to Amateur Movies?', *Journal of the SMPTE*, (72) pp.677-678.
- McKernan, B. (1993) 'Video as we know it', *Videography*, 18(5) p.14.
- Reid, A. (1983) 'Attractions of Tape', *Movie Maker*, 16(10) pp.617-8.