

EDITOR'S DESK

BY EDWARD J. DEFORT

Even Einstein Got Lost

Seems we can't get through a day anymore without hearing about AI, artificial intelligence. In reality, the AI spectrum is so broad that it really needs to be narrowed down some. After all, AI applications are incredibly diverse and span nearly every aspect of our lives. It's essentially the attempt to simulate human intelligence in machines by using complex algorithms and massive amounts of data.

It's not surprising that AI has become such a hot topic, and while we are still understanding its many applications, researchers suggest this is just the tip of the iceberg.

I've lived in the Princeton, New Jersey, area for quite some time, but over the holidays, I decided to take the Princeton Holiday Tour. It turned out to be the basic Princeton visitors tour, except the driver and narrator wore Santa hats.

At first, there wasn't much I didn't know – from Grover Cleveland's house to Albert Einstein's to Robert Oppenheimer's, but the guide did share a couple things I was unaware of.

The first was why so many homes had red doors. Turns out that was a sign of the times when residents had paid off their mortgage. The guide also shared that Princeton police would often be called about Einstein wandering the streets of Princeton because he had gotten lost on his way home from the university.

The tour took us onto the campus of the Institute for Study, which is described as Princeton University times

a thousand. One of the premier centers for theoretical research, it attracts brilliant minds from around the world in such fields as mathematics, natural sciences and social sciences. The guide shared that the institute had recently focused its research on climate change. In 2024, its focus is the impact of AI.

Where would we be without our virtual assistants Siri and Alexa? Social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram use AI algorithms to recommend content you're likely to find interesting based on your past behavior.

Say you need a new wallet; your online search gives you a list of viable options and you choose one. But for weeks afterward, you get wallet suggestions, which makes you wonder if AI really is that intelligent. After all, how often do you need a new wallet?

We hear a lot about self-driving cars, which are powered by AI. Look, I don't like other drivers, so I am certainly not thrilled about *no* drivers. AI has had a dramatic impact in healthcare as well, as it's used in medical diagnosis for personalized treatment plans. AI also helps manage financial risk, detect fraud and make investment decisions.

Applications of AI more specific to funeral service are covered in these pages, including crafting obituaries and developing targeted marketing plans that resonate with potential clients.

AI should be seen as a tool to augment the work of funeral directors, not to replace them and human interaction. By thoughtfully utilizing AI, funeral directors can provide families with personalized, dignified and meaningful experiences.

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