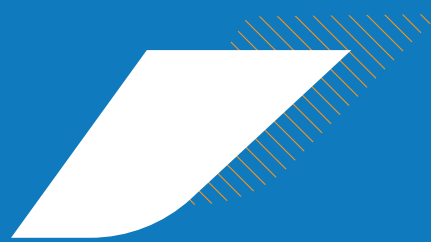


SUMMER 23



Artificial Intelligence and the Open Road

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The Green
Future of
Web Design

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Becoming
a Digital
Nomad

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Can AI be
Creative?



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A FORCE
TO BE
RECKONED
WITH!

WELCOME

In this, our second Summer edition of the Accent Magazine, we take a look at what some of the team have been up to outside of the (home) office, we say hello to Faith – the latest member of our .NET team, and we put the spotlight on two projects that have kept us busy over the past few months. In keeping with the summer vibe, I also share my limited experience of becoming a digital nomad.

The main focus of this edition is however artificial intelligence. Accent has been at the forefront of using the latest technology in creative design, web design, and software development for over 30 years. We have embraced new technologies, from floppy disks and laser printers, photo manipulation and 3D modelling, through 'The Internet', to API and mobile app development. That's not to mention the plethora of programming languages en route. For Accent, artificial intelligence is the next (big) thing in a long line of technology to embrace. As you might expect, we take a look at the potential impact of AI in software development – both as a tool to aid development, and to add intelligence into our solutions. But Dave also talks about his work to date on using AI in the creation of original art, and Stuart even gets ChatGPT to interview Charles Darwin on the subject of AI!

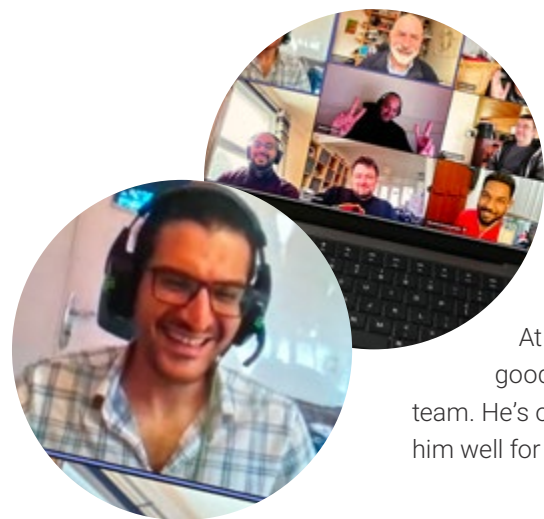
I hope that you find some interest in this latest collection of our stories and musings. But, more importantly, that you simply have a great summer! 🍷



Wishing you the very
best in all that you do

Geoff



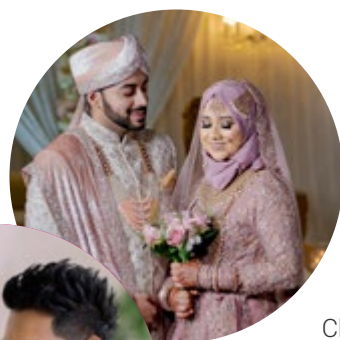


AUF WIEDERSEHEN REZA

At the end of March, we were sad to say goodbye to Reza, a valued member of the .Net team. He's off to pastures new in Austria, and we all wish him well for the future.

FEAR DOES NOT EXIST IN THIS DOJO!

Since our last magazine, Dave and Karen have continued their successes in the Karate Dojo. Dave graded to Shodan Black Belt, and Karen is on a gold-winning streak in competitive Kata.



WHERE THERE IS LOVE, THERE IS LIFE

Champagne corks have been popping for the Accent team. Niroshan recently married in Sri Lanka, and Abdul celebrated his wedding in both Canada and London. Huge congratulations to you both!



SNAP HAPPY

Craig and Karen have been out and about with their cameras. Craig loves shooting night scenes along the Thanet coast, and Karen has been chasing waterfalls in Northern Ireland.



INTRODUCING FAITH



Faith is a true programming enthusiast with proficiency in a range of languages, including C# and SQL. His enthusiastic learning mindset always seeks ways to streamline and optimize code.

When Faith isn't hard at work crafting elegant code, he loves to venture into different dimensions through the pages of fantasy novels or by immersing himself in the worlds of games like DOTA2 and LOL. Music is also a big passion for Faith, and he's currently honing skills in FL Studio with a dream of one day becoming a DJ.

Faith is a multi-dimensional individual with a natural talent for both programming and creativity and brings a unique perspective to everything he does. 📌

A TALENTED .NET DEVELOPER WHO EXPLORES DIVERSE REALMS.



INSTANT ACCESS TO PROPERTY DETAILS



SPOTLIGHT
AGENCYQR

Agency Express is the largest provider of property board services in the UK, servicing over 62% of all estate agencies.

The company's award-winning SignMaster software was developed by Accent, and includes a web-based application and separate mobile apps for estate agents and operators. The system manages over 100,000 instructions every month and deals with everything from geolocation of addresses, allocation of jobs, and operators' route optimisation to stock control and invoicing.

In the latest update to SignMaster, we added the management of AgencyQR boards, which allow prospective buyers instant access to individual property details by simply scanning a QR code.

ENHANCING EXISTING FUNCTIONALITY

The beauty of having a completely bespoke system is that it can be developed to do exactly what the client wants, without limitation on process or possibilities. Accent's team first built a prototype to show how the AgencyQR functionality would be integrated into both the desktop system and the operators' mobile, allowing the interface to be refined and approved before development began.

CUSTOMER CONTROL WITH VISIBLE RESULTS

The resulting system allows estate agents to request AgencyQR boards to be added to property boards, and to specify the web address of the property details. Once erected, potential customers can scan the QR

codes on a smartphone and be taken directly to the property details. Furthermore, estate agents can see which of their properties include an AgencyQR board and can view live statistics showing how often each is scanned.

ACCESS ON THE MOVE FOR OPERATORS

Agency Express' operators organise their daily job lists via the SignMaster Operators App, which now includes notifications to include AgencyQR boards. The app also allows the operator to scan the AgencyQR boards once put up to link them to the property details.

SECURITY, RELIABILITY & REUSABILITY

The system is built so that the QR codes are self-checking for reliability and are also non-sequential for added security. The AgencyQR boards are also reusable, and are reallocated as properties are removed from the market.

PHASED DEVELOPMENT & CONTROLLED ROLLOUT

Working Agile, Accent's team released the functionality in phases as the system was developed. This allowed important functionality to be released sooner, and for feedback to be gathered as development progressed.

We also released the updates to select groups of operators, so that the updated app could be extensively tested before being rolled out to all 200 operators. ■



“The QR Code software Accent developed for us has taken our platform to the next level. AgencyQR boards create a seamless gateway to potential customers passing properties, and allows our estate agency customers to view stats in real-time. Accent helps us unlock the potential of our web-based applications and are not just developers but strategic partners that are instrumental in our business growth.”

Naomi Eaton QFP, Agency Express Head of Marketing and Customer Experience

If you've got ideas for software tools to help your company, or want to expand the functionality of an existing system – you know where we are.

THE GREEN FUTURE OF WEB DESIGN



SPOTLIGHT GREENTOURS WEBSITE REFRESH

Greentours is a company based in the United Kingdom specialising in natural history and wildlife tours. They offer tours to various destinations worldwide, focusing on flora, fauna, and landscapes. Their tours are led by expert naturalists who guide participants in exploring and learning about the destination's natural wonders.

As an advocate for the environment, Greentours required a website with a small carbon footprint as the website undergoes a complete aesthetics makeover with new functionality.

STAGE 1: ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING

The first phase of the website redesign has been a thorough audit and planning stage. Assessing the current design's strengths and weaknesses and defining the purpose and goals of the new design is critical. From these findings, the creative and technical team started crafting an outline for a modern user interface (UI) that focuses on simplicity, intuitivity, and aesthetic appeal.

THE MODERN UI: BRIDGING AESTHETICS AND USABILITY

Gone are the days of cluttered web pages with jarring visuals. Today, the focus is on minimalistic, intuitive design with easy navigation. In this website revamp, the team is bringing in elements of modern UI that emphasise usability and accessibility.

Typography, colour scheme, button design, iconography, and micro-interactions are being reimagined for enhanced user experience. Special attention is given to visual hierarchy, fostering a straightforward and intuitive path for the user through the website's content.

STAGE 2: BUILDING A RESPONSIVE DESIGN

As internet usage has increasingly shifted to mobile devices, a responsive design is no longer an option—it's

necessary. Responsive design ensures that the website looks and performs optimally on all devices, whether desktop, tablet, or smartphone.

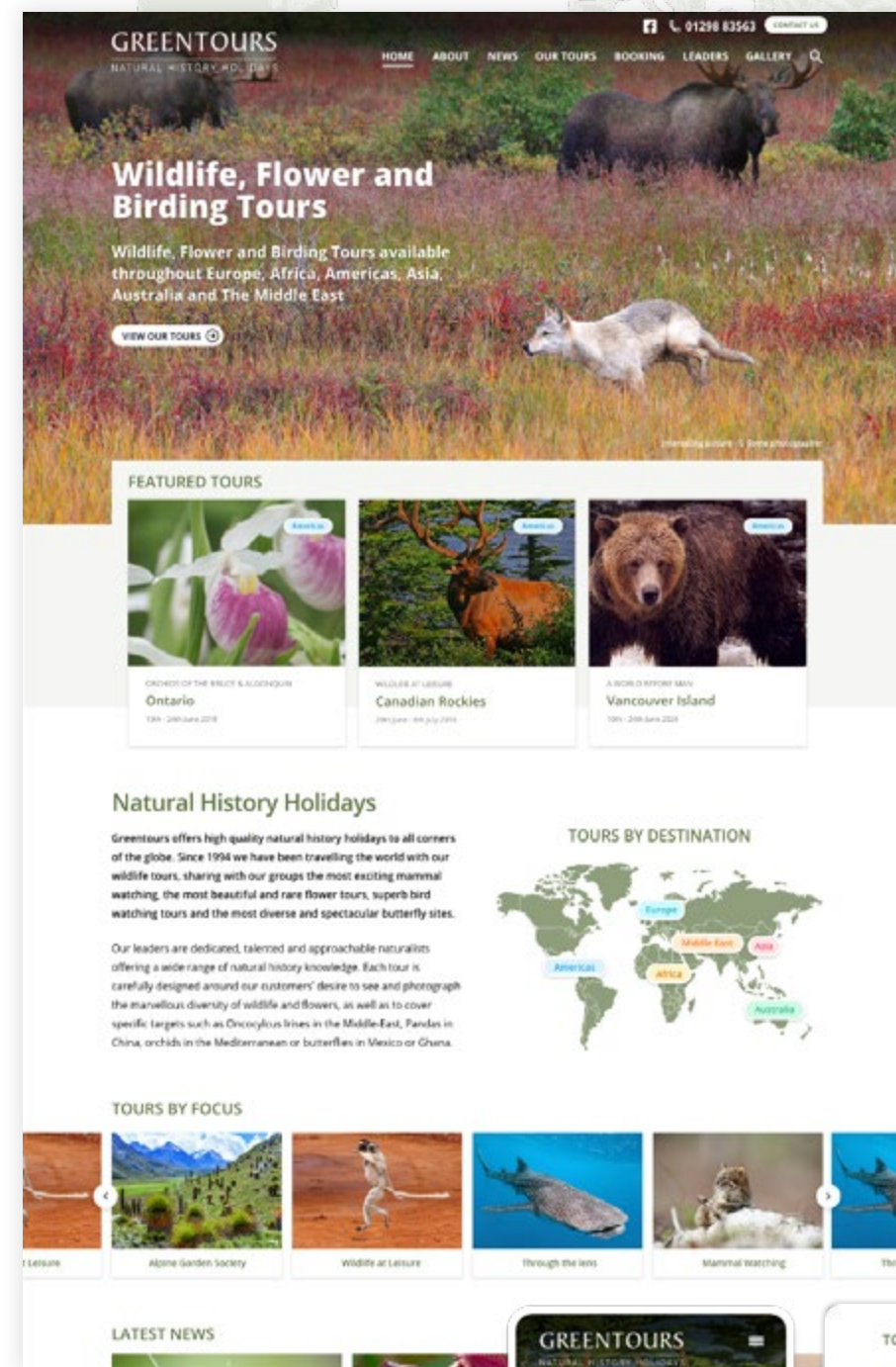
For this redesign, the development team is working tirelessly to create flexible layouts and intelligent CSS media queries that automatically adjust to the viewer's device. The aim is to provide a seamless experience across different screen sizes without compromising design and functionality.

STAGE 3: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY HOSTING

A vital yet often overlooked aspect of a website's carbon footprint is its hosting service. With the heightened concern about climate change, selecting an environmentally friendly web host has become a priority for this project.

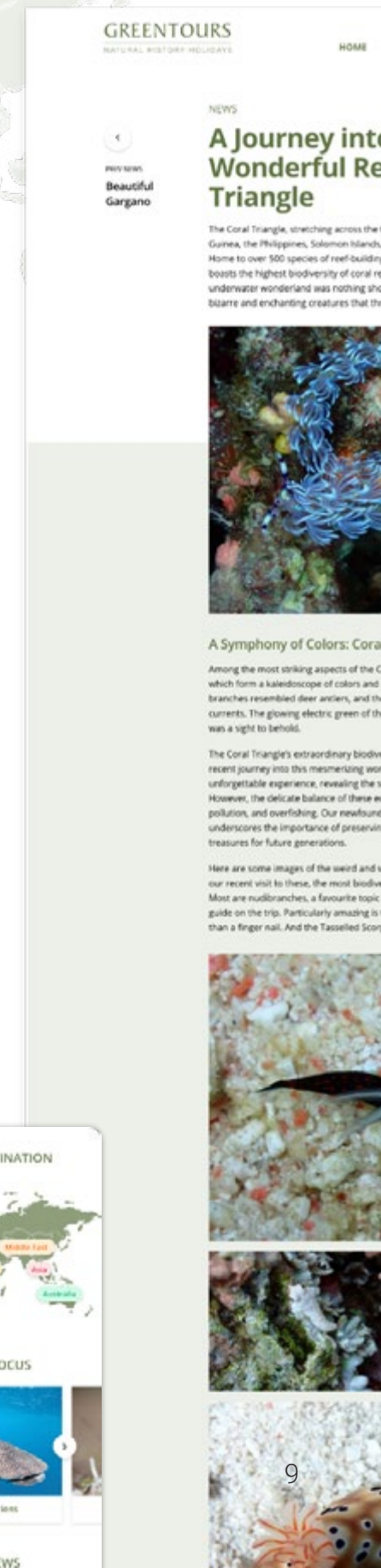
The team is transitioning to a green hosting provider that utilises renewable energy or offsets its energy usage. The hosting servers are powered by renewable energy sources like wind or solar power, minimising carbon emissions significantly. Not only does this contribute to the fight against climate change, but it also provides a unique selling point for eco-conscious users.

Additionally, energy-efficient coding is implemented wherever possible, reducing the energy required to load and interact with the site. Every bit of energy saved counts towards reducing the overall carbon footprint of the website.



THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Keep an eye out for the reveal of a newly designed, eco-friendly website as we usher in an era where technology meets environmental responsibility. 🌱



BECOMING A DIGITAL NOMAD



ARTICLE BY
GEOFF

Geoff hits the open road...

Last year I bought a campervan. The decision wasn't directly related to Accent's move to remote working and had more to do with the freedom of our children becoming older and more self-sufficient, although the timing was good.

My wife & I use the van to go to festivals and for odd weekends away, but last autumn, I also managed to get away for a week to the Peak District on my own, which was my first taste of being a digital nomad.

THE TECHNOLOGY

I decided not to invest in a StarLink satellite setup or even an external aerial and Wi-Fi booster but to see how it went linking my laptop to my phone, increasing my data allowance and checking mobile coverage when planning where to stay. And that is something worth checking, especially if you are in the hills – the coverage in one valley can be excellent, whilst there is absolutely no signal in the next. Thankfully, the network coverage maps (at least with giffgaff) seem pretty accurate.

PLANNING AHEAD

In order to get the most out of my days, I tried to arrange meetings in the morning, which I could conduct from the 'van office', keep my afternoons free for exploring, and then catch up on work in the evenings. I could be contacted via Teams on my phone if I was out and about, and often had my laptop with me, too, should the need arise. This arrangement worked well; I did have one progress meeting with a client from the top of a hill, but that worked out fine too, maybe the only issue being a little wind noise.

PRODUCTIVITY

It was a very enjoyable shift in headspace, and I believe that it improved my productivity. Working on problems in new environments can make you think a little differently, and there was a definite sense of being able to step back and see the bigger picture. There were also fewer distractions. You don't realise how many distractions you have working (in my case) from home – kids, deliveries, and just that mental list of things to do around the house.

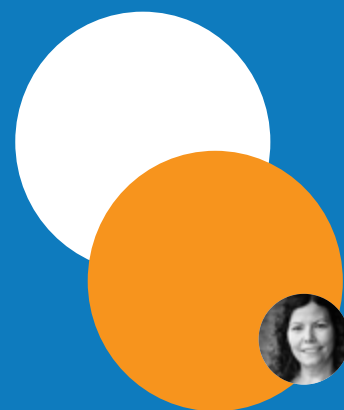
Being in touch with nature is also great for general well-being, although the comforts and security of a van didn't go amiss.



LESSONS LEARNED

The technology all worked well; video meetings worked through a mobile phone connection both from the van and the odd hilltop, but do remember to check coverage before you set off. Maybe one of those furry microphone covers might be good for cutting wind noise for outside meetings! As a guide for anyone thinking about going down this road, an hour-long Teams video meeting uses about 1GB of data.

Can I see myself becoming more of a digital nomad? I will undoubtedly be getting away to the hills more this summer, but maybe becoming a proper digital nomad will have to wait until the kids have left home! ■



THE POWER IN CROPPING

ARTICLE BY
KAREN



To best communicate through visuals, you must consider the impact, story and message. One way of finding a story within a story is through the image crop.

Image cropping works hand in hand with composition, excluding unwanted or distracting elements and getting straight to the message. When choosing images for your website and brand, the same image may be used with multiple cropped formats across your marketing, so understanding the core message is vital.

THE ORIGINAL

Whether commissioning a photographer, using stock imagery or creating in AI, you'll first need to consider the art direction problem. The art direction problem encompasses the requirement of multiple crops of the same image for viewing websites on different devices, for example, a landscape banner on a desktop or a vertical crop on a mobile. The photo above shows the original stock image of a mountaineer in Patagonia. As you can see, it has been photographed with space, providing options for cropping and room for headlines and copy text.

CROP 1: THE DESKTOP LANDSCAPE HERO IMAGE



By eliminating the right-hand side and a portion of the sky, your eye is drawn to the mountaineer in the image. By placing

on the dominant third and walking to the left, space has been left for his destination. There is also a repetition of tone (trousers and sand, rucksack and sky). This is an impactful crop, cutting through to the core story but allowing room for copy if needed.

CROP 2: THE DESKTOP LANDSCAPE HERO BANNER



Landscape banner crops are often the hardest to consider when choosing a hero image. As mentioned, it's the perfect image choice because the photographer took this image wider without a final, tighter crop. As with crop 1, the impact is key. The image has been more aggressively cropped from the top, bottom and right-hand side. Positioning the mountaineer on the dominant third, with negative space to the left, works either with or without copy.

CROP 3: THE THUMBNAIL



On websites, you often require a square-cropped thumbnail. Because the image appears smaller, you need to crop tighter and get straight to the message. There is no need for copy space, but still, place the mountaineer on the right-hand side to give him room to walk.

CROP 4: THE INSET AND INSTAGRAM SQUARE



For a square paragraph inset or for sharing on social media, an impactful square needs to communicate with a correct crop. As with crop

1, the mountaineer is placed in the dominant bottom right. The tonal repetition and space for the mountaineer (and your eye) to walk through the scene communicates a compelling story.

CROP 5: THE MOBILE PORTRAIT HERO IMAGE



The final crop to consider is how a hero image will appear on mobile devices. For maximum impact, this is portrait (and may even have a taller ratio) and will need to communicate the story whilst

leaving room for headlines and copy. As with crop 4, you guessed it, the mountaineer is placed on the right-hand side, leaving space to the left to tell the story of where he is walking and room above for text.

One last point to mention is about pixels. Make sure the original photograph is large enough to crop without losing resolution. ■

SOCIAL MEDIA



HIGHLIGHTS BY
BRENTON



formantic



CODER
BY DAY **WRITER**
BY NIGHT



WHOSE DESK
IS THIS?



INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY

**PEOPLE ARE
LIMITED BY
BARRIERS,
NOT BY THEIR
ABILITIES.**

ACCESSIBILITY: PERCEIVABILITY



PCI COMPLIANCE
PAYMENT | SECURE



MAINTENANCE

Twice weekly,
we post on our social media
channels. We like to think this gives more of
an insight into the personality of Accent, the
beating heart of the company, if you will. We
curate a range of stories, showcasing new
and old work, social musings, or creativity and
inspiration. We hope there's something you find
engaging, and we look forward to seeing
you there!

Please give us a thumbs-up on the
following social media:





CAN AI BE CREATIVE?



ARTICLE BY
DAVE

Artificial intelligence (AI) has made great strides in recent years, increasingly capable of performing various tasks. While AI is typically associated with data analysis and decision-making processes, it is now recognised as a creative tool that can generate art, music, and other forms of creative expression.

AI-powered tools like generative adversarial networks (GANs) and deep neural networks (DNNs) can generate unique and compelling works of art. These tools analyse existing art to identify patterns and use this information to create new pieces inspired by the original. By doing so, AI can be used to create original works of art informed by human aesthetics and taste.

One of the most significant advantages of using AI as a creative tool is that it can produce endless ideas and possibilities. This is particularly useful for artists who may experience creative blocks or want to explore new avenues. AI-generated art can be a starting point for human artists to build upon and develop further.

AI-generated music is another area where AI is used as a creative tool. Music generated by AI algorithms can be used in various contexts, from film soundtracks to video games. AI-generated music can also be used for music composition and production, allowing musicians to experiment with new sounds and styles they may not have considered before.

AI is also used to create compelling visual effects in film and television. In the past, creating realistic

visual effects required a significant amount of time and resources. With the help of AI, it is now possible to generate high-quality visual products more quickly and efficiently than ever before.

However, it is essential to note that AI is not a replacement for human creativity. While AI can be used as a tool for generating creative ideas, it is ultimately up to human artists to bring those ideas to life and add their unique perspectives and interpretation. Human creativity is still an essential component of the artistic process.

In conclusion, AI is rapidly becoming a creative tool that can be used to generate new and exciting works of art, music, and visual effects. AI-powered tools can create endless ideas and possibilities, providing artists with a starting point for further exploration and development. While AI is not a replacement for human creativity, it can be used to enhance and supplement it, opening up new avenues for artistic expression. As AI technology continues to evolve, we can expect to see even more exciting and innovative applications of AI in the creative arts. ■

*Image created in MidJourney AI image generator
AI Prompt: /Imagine Artificial intelligence
blog cover page --v 4 --ar 16:9 --s 777*

REVOLUTIONISING SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT:

THE UNPRECEDENTED IMPACT OF AI AND MACHINE LEARNING



ARTICLE BY
CRAIG

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) are redefining software development landscapes, ushering in an era of faster, smarter, and more efficient software creation, testing, and deployment. While AI imitates human intelligence through computer systems, ML - a subset of AI - focuses on educating algorithms to learn from data and make consequent predictions or decisions. This transformation is giving rise to more intelligent, tailored but also precise, and reliable software.

AI and ML are enhancing software development in numerous ways.

1. Automated testing: These technologies streamline software testing, making it quicker and more precise. They automate the process of reviewing the code, reducing software release delays due to manual and time-consuming steps like testing, code review, security testing, and code development.

2. Predictive analytics: By leveraging AI and ML, predictive analytics can scrutinise data and forecast future trends. These can help anticipate user behaviour, pinpoint bugs and glitches, and bolster software performance. Tools like GitHub Copilot and AWS Codewhisperer exemplify this trend.

3. Natural language processing (NLP): NLP is an AI facet enabling seamless interaction between humans and machines. In software development, NLP propels chatbots and virtual assistants to comprehend and react to user requests and inquiries. Intelligent assistants like Amazon Alexa or Apple's Siri represent such interactions.

4. Intelligent automation: By combining AI, ML, and robotic process automation (RPA), complex tasks previously executed by humans are now being automated. Tasks like code deployment, database management, and server monitoring now fall under this realm of automation.

5. Personalisation: With AI and ML, software products have become more customised. Recommendation engines suggest products and services based on the user's previous activities and browsing history. This technology, once a luxury of big corporations, is now accessible to SMEs.

AI and ML confer multiple benefits to software development:

1. Enhanced accuracy: By analysing extensive data swiftly and accurately, AI and ML improve the reliability of software products.

2. Boosted efficiency: By mechanising repetitive tasks, they accelerate the software development process.

3. Better user experience: With personalisation and NLP, more intelligent and customised software products enhance user experience.



However, while AI can analyse patterns and make predictions, it cannot comprehend or reason like humans. Human intervention is crucial for setting parameters, providing context, or making ethical decisions. Additionally, AI models demand regular monitoring and updates to cope with the changing business environment - tasks requiring human developers.

Despite its massive potential in advancing software development, AI still necessitates human involvement at various stages for effectiveness. Therefore, AI should be seen as a potent tool in a software developer's repertoire rather than a standalone solution.

Accent will continue to investigate and utilise AI where appropriate. We're happy to go into more detail, so give us a call to discuss how you see AI enhancing your business operations in the future. ■

A CONVERSATION ACROSS TIME: CHARLES DARWIN MEETS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE



ARTICLE BY STUART
REQUESTED FROM CHATGPT

Interviewer: Mr. Darwin, it's a pleasure to have you with us today. As the father of the theory of evolution, how do you see artificial intelligence fitting into the grand narrative of life on Earth?

Charles Darwin: Thank you for having me. It's fascinating to see how far science has progressed since my time. From what I understand, artificial intelligence is a human creation designed to simulate and imitate human intelligence. In that sense, AI could be considered another step in the evolution of human ingenuity, a product of our own natural selection.

Interviewer: Some argue that AI, as a human creation, cannot truly evolve as organisms do. What are your thoughts on this?

Charles Darwin: While it's true that AI does not undergo genetic evolution, there is a concept called "machine learning" that allows AI systems to learn from data and improve their performance over time. This process bears similarities to the natural selection that drives biological evolution. Although the mechanisms are different, the principle of adaptation and improvement remains.

Interviewer: Do you think AI has the potential to outpace human intelligence? If so, what would that mean for our species?

Charles Darwin: It's difficult to predict the future, but it seems plausible that AI could eventually surpass human intelligence in certain areas. As with any tool, AI's impact on humanity will depend on how it's used. If harnessed responsibly, AI could help solve many of humanity's most pressing challenges. However, if misused, it could lead to unintended consequences or exacerbate existing inequalities.

Interviewer: There is an ongoing ethical debate about the development and deployment of AI. How might your perspective on evolution and natural selection inform this discussion?

Charles Darwin: Ethics are a complex and important consideration, especially when dealing with powerful technologies like AI. From an evolutionary standpoint, cooperation and collaboration have been crucial for the survival and advancement of species. In this light, I believe it's essential to approach AI development and deployment with a focus on ensuring the technology benefits humanity as a whole, rather than being used solely for individual or corporate gain.

Interviewer: Lastly, as someone who dedicated his life to understanding the natural world, do you see any potential applications for AI in biology, conservation, or understanding evolution itself?

Charles Darwin: Absolutely. AI has the potential to revolutionize many fields, including biology and conservation. By analyzing vast amounts of data, AI systems could help us better understand the intricacies of ecosystems, discover new species, and monitor environmental changes. In terms of understanding evolution, AI could even be used to simulate the evolutionary process, shedding light on the mechanisms that drive adaptation and speciation.

While we can never truly know how Charles Darwin would have reacted to the advent of AI, it's clear that his ideas about evolution and natural selection have much to offer when considering AI's development and implications. As we continue to push the boundaries of technology, it's crucial to remain mindful of the ethical and societal impacts, ensuring that our innovations benefit all of humanity and the natural world. ■

We can only imagine what Charles Darwin, the 19th-century naturalist who proposed the theory of evolution through natural selection, might have thought about the rapid advancements in artificial intelligence. While we may never know for sure, we can speculate on what he might say based on his writings, ideas, and the advancements in AI.



Image created in
MidJourney

OUR FAVOURITE DESTINATIONS...



...WHERE WILL YOU
EXPLORE THIS SUMMER?

ADDRESS

The Enterprise Centre
University of East Anglia
Norwich, NR4 7TJ

[instagram.com/accent_design_group](https://www.instagram.com/accent_design_group)

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CREATIVE DIGITAL SOLUTIONS