

ZeMKI-Forschungskolloquium

ZeMKI Research Seminar

Linzer Str. 4, Room 60.070, 28359 Bremen, DE

26.04.2023, 16.15 – 17.45 (CET)

Prof. Dr. Daniel Spitzberg

(Exit to Community Collective, Oakland, CA, USA)

Simple Tools, Social Complexity, and Designing the Difference in AI Chat Interfaces

Abstract:

This talk theorizes the software industry design challenges involved in creating new artificial intelligence (AI) tool user interfaces. Characterizing the professional work performed in this context is critical to explaining the ongoing shift from human-computer interaction, to the bureaucratic corporate social media in a "conversational firm" (Turco, 2016), and finally, to automated interactions in the ecosystem of "societal communication" (Hepp, 2023). To do this, I present preliminary findings from a small number of in-depth interviews with user experience (UX) designers and researchers working in AI. These UX professionals experience day-to-day challenges trying to plan and execute meaningful yet manageable projects, and in a context defined by rapid changes in the underlying technology and overwhelming social complexity. What's more, their work involves another challenge of addressing both user needs and business opportunities in relatively constrained, one-dimensional user interfaces similar to ELIZA, a 1966 chat-based natural language processing (NLP) program. And similar to how ELIZA users and workers reported having moving experience with serious psychotherapeutic implications, UX professionals designing AI chat tools are engaging in social engineering based in part on their own theories, a mix of aesthetics, ergonomics, eugenics, and more. Despite the simple nature of AI user interfaces, the design challenges require a broad set of stakeholders to interpret in terms of risks, benefits, and shifts in human communication.

Bio:

Danny Spitzberg is a user researcher and sociologist based in Oakland, California. He is interested in the intersection of co-design and business ownership conversions, and is currently the research director with the Exit to Community Collective. Previously, Danny was Lead Researcher at Turning Basin Labs, a staffing co-op facilitating worker- and user-led studies on job quality, workforce development, and economic mobility. Danny has done applied research to help expand wage claim access with the California Department of Labor, streamline data analytics at American Express, and develop a worker-owned platform for booking cleaning services in NYC called Up & Go. Danny also created the Ownership Model Canvas with the co-op accelerator Start.coop. Follow his work on Twitter at @daspsitzberg.