



“Correct Me If I’m Wrong”

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Community of Mission Information Workers

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AI, Mission Information, and World Evangelization

by J. Nelson Jennings

Recently I asked ChatGPT-3.5 the following: “Is mission information needed for world evangelization?” Here is the quick AI answer:



Community of Mission Information Workers

“Yes, mission information is indeed needed for world evangelization. Mission information refers to the knowledge, data, strategies, and resources that are essential for effectively spreading a religious or spiritual message on a global scale. Here’s why mission information is crucial for world evangelization [an eloquent paragraph accompanied each point below]:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Contextual Understanding | 5. Avoiding Missteps |
| 2. Strategic Planning | 6. Measuring Impact |
| 3. Effective Communication | 7. Collaboration and Networking |
| 4. Adapting to Change | 8. Ethical Considerations |

In conclusion, mission information is vital for world evangelization because it enhances the effectiveness, relevance, and ethical nature of outreach efforts. It enables missionaries to understand diverse contexts, plan strategies, communicate effectively, adapt to change, and measure impact. Ultimately, mission information contributes to building bridges of understanding and promoting respectful engagement with people from various backgrounds.”

What are we to make of AI’s answer? (Just in case you were wondering, what follows is not AI-generated—except where otherwise noted.) Here are three considerations:

First, the rapidity and apparent ease with which ChatGPT can produce a well-crafted essay like the one above is astounding. The rest of this article and CMIW bulletin, for example, will have taken much, much more time and effort to produce (at least in the moment: the extensive human time and effort that has gone into creating AI’s capacities must not be discounted).

Second, AI’s answer seemingly resulted from more than simply accumulating electronically accessible data. Judgment and discernment were involved, particularly in addressing the question of “need”. To be sure, there are different types of “need” that fall on different spots on a scale of clarity and unanimity. For example, no one would debate the answer to, “Do people *need* air and water?” The clear, universal and straightforward answer is “Yes”. However, various contextually-shaped viewpoints would address (perhaps intensely) the question, “Do people *need* government assistance with food and shelter?” Regarding the question about the *need* for mission information in world evangelization, given missiological discussions about such topics as “managerial missiology”¹ it is safe to assume that the answer would fall somewhere between totally clear/unanimous and intensely complex/debatable. ChatGPT decisively took the position, “Yes,

¹ Related to mission information, note as well Chris Maynard’s recent appeal for “Honouring Data in Mission” (<https://weamc.global/data/>).

mission information is indeed needed for world evangelization”—then explained why. Apparently AI judgment and discernment were involved.

Third, Christian judgment and discernment are needed to analyze and evaluate ChatGPT’s answer. Interestingly ChatGPT’s own well-crafted viewpoint about this third consideration began and ended as follows:

“The need for Christian judgment and discernment when analyzing and evaluating ChatGPT’s answer about whether mission information is needed for world evangelization depends on your personal beliefs and values..... Remember that AI-generated responses are based on patterns in data and do not possess personal beliefs or a spiritual understanding, so it’s essential to critically assess AI-generated content in light of your own faith convictions.”

Is not a scientific worldview operative here, effectively confining “Christian judgment and discernment” within the realm of “personal beliefs and values”? Is not the claim that “AI-generated responses are [simply, scientifically, objectively and neutrally] based on patterns and data and [ostensibly] do not possess personal beliefs or a spiritual understanding” at root a *religious* viewpoint—reflective of AI design? Was not ChatGPT’s concluding answer to my first question (“Ultimately, mission information contributes to building bridges of understanding and promoting respectful engagement with people from various backgrounds.”) reflective of a particular *belief* about interreligious engagement?

“Yes, mission information is indeed needed for world evangelization.” So are Christian judgment and discernment in using, analyzing and evaluating “Artificial Intelligence”, including with respect to mission information.

Practically Speaking

by Stephanie Kraft



On April 11, 2019 the ERLC (Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission) of the Southern Baptist Convention released its "Artificial Intelligence: An Evangelical Statement of Principles".² The statement's preamble began with these words:

As followers of Christ, we are called to engage the world around us with the unchanging gospel message of hope and reconciliation. Tools like technology are able to aid us in this pursuit. We know they can also be designed and used in ways that dishonor God and devalue our fellow image-bearers. Evangelical Christians hold fast to the inerrant and infallible Word of God, which states that every human being is made in God’s image and thus has infinite value and worth in the eyes of their Creator. This message dictates how we view God, ourselves, and the tools that God has given us the ability to create.

In light of existential questions posed anew by the emergent technology of artificial intelligence (AI), we affirm that God has given us wisdom to approach these issues in light of Scripture and the gospel message. Christians must not fear the future or any technological development because we know that God is, above all, sovereign over history, and that nothing will ever supplant the image of God in which human beings are created. We recognize that AI will allow us to achieve

²

(<https://erlc.com/resource-library/statements/artificial-intelligence-an-evangelical-statement-of-principles/>).

unprecedented possibilities, while acknowledging the potential risks posed by AI if used without wisdom and care.

We desire to equip the church to proactively engage the field of AI, rather than responding to these issues after they have already affected our communities. In light of this desire and hope, we offer the following affirmations and denials about the nature of humanity, the promise of technology, and the hope for the future.

In the four-plus years since the articulation of these principles, Artificial intelligence has been actively utilized in Christian outreach and mission. It is being employed in:

- Audience segmentation
- Automated translation
- Chatbots for answering queries
- Ideation for brainstorming
- Predictive analytics for outreach and ad campaigns
- Sentiment analysis
- Topic extraction
- Automated content design feedback
- Building courses, training curricula
- Context recommendation
- Image recognition for content tagging
- Social media trend analysis
- Video analytics

AI has also been used for internal mission organization and administration. Specific applications now include:

- Content summarization/stylization
- Personalized email campaigns
- Assistance with qualitative research coding
- Donor segmentation
- Preparing for live Q & A in training events
- Preparing for board meetings, answering donor questions

Finally, it is useful for personal applications, such as

- Creating resumes (employment CVs)
- Crafting personalized messages to family and friends
- Preparing for job interviews
- Stimulating/inspiring feeling through poetry and music

There have been moments in history when the church opposed the developments of its scientists and creative thinkers. Recall the imprisonment of Galileo for supporting the Copernican view that the Earth revolved around the sun. Remember, too, those moments when the Church's creative impulses shaped not only the prevailing culture but artistic streams for subsequent decades and even centuries. Which of us has not been moved by the creative genius of Bach and Handel? Can we be open to be similarly inspired by the output of learned machines?

Christian GIS Group

by Loren Muehlius

GIS is the abbreviation for Geographic Information System, a system which aids the display, discovery, and analysis of data that has a location component. Connecting data to a map is one example. It enables people to more easily see, analyze, and understand patterns and relationships. Do you want to learn more about how Christians and Christian ministries are using GIS?



A bit of History: In May 1996 three believers met at the Esri User Conference and shared how they were using GIS to further the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Esri is a secular company, one of the leading GIS software developers. In subsequent years a growing number of GIS professionals participated in informal gatherings at the conference. They recognized both a need and a benefit for Christians working in the GIS field to connect and share ideas via email and social media.

Gatherings at the User Conference have continued. Our largest gathering was 2022 with over 70 in attendance. Here a facilitating group of 6 people was formed. An additional person was added in 2023, when 27 people attended the User Conference meeting. We divided into smaller groups to meet each other.

Some purposes of the Christian GIS group:

1. Help GIS folks know how GIS is used in missions
2. Give a forum to ask questions – including folks from mission organizations having a GIS question
3. Tell of GIS job openings
4. Help members of the group to network with each other
5. Let them know of events or tools which may be of interest to them
6. Allow folks to share prayer items, specifically job and GIS focused
7. Provide options for GIS folks to volunteer in missions

The range of participants in the group include students, recent graduates, educators, people in secular work, and people working with missions organizations. Currently there are around 200 members in the group, though not all are active. Most are in the US, but some are in Europe and other continents. The focus of the group has broadened from only missions, but missions is still an important focus of many.

In August 2012 a Google Group e-mail was started for Christians interested in missions who also worked with GIS or had an interest in it. A Facebook group was started in September 2017 and a LinkedIn group in 2022.

In 2022 the Christian GIS group created a website, www.ChristiansInGIS.org. The Resources section of the website features some ways GIS has been used in missions and Christian purposes. It also has recordings of past webinars of our group. These are also on our YouTube channel. Future webinars will be announced on the website. Since November 2022 we have had monthly webinars excluding July and August. To join the Google Group go to www.ChristiansInGIS.org/about-us, and fill in the short form. To join social media groups, click icons at the top right of the same page.

Contact me with any questions - lorenmapper@gmail.com

MIW Training Corner

Research Notes: A new tool that may be useful to you for the Quantitative Transformation of Interview Data

by Daniel Hoskins

There is debate in the wider research world about quantifying data that was collected through qualitative means such as interviews. Personally I have always been very skeptical of approaches such as automated word frequency counts. However, recently I devised a process for quantifying some interview data that contributed to the qualitative nature of the project. Since it was helpful to me, I thought to share it with my CMIW colleagues. I will explain the process with an example from that project.



In a study on the spiritual and personal formation of pioneer missionaries who had catalyzed movements, our team is predominantly interested in the "formative factors" that

shaped them. The initial round of coding the 50 interview set focused on five categories of factors, or code families.

These were drawn from research by the Center for Creative Leadership³:

- Challenging Assignments
- Developmental Relationships
- Adverse Situations
- Course Work and Training
- Personal Experiences

The first step of transforming the coded interview data was to treat each interview as a distinct data set and quantify the code density for each family. For example:

Table 1

| Formative Factor Families | Interview # 07: M GN North Asia (Male, origin Global North, serving in N. Asia) |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Challenging Assignments | 19 |
| Developmental Relationships | 7 |
| Adverse Situations | 15 |
| Study/Training | 10 |
| Personal Experiences | 6 |
| TOTAL | 57 |

Step two was to identify a factor family that was dominant in that interview. It was decided that if a family represented ≥ 33 percent density of the total coded text sections in that interview, it was the dominant one for that interview (although a few interviews had two dominant ones).

Unfortunately there is no guidance in the literature for what level of code density is "significant." The key is finding a threshold that works with your data set; too high for a threshold and there will be very little of significance, too low and everything will appear significant.

As you can see in the table above, "Challenging Assignments" was dominant in this interview, at exactly the ≥ 33 percent code density threshold. Thus we characterized this interviewee's developmental experience as primarily formed by challenging assignments.

The final step was to compare across the entire interview set to analyze the relative importance of each of the formative factor families on a catalyst by catalyst basis.

This simple process produced another mode of description from the interview set, one that was inaccessible when considering coding of the project as a whole. This data transformation also keeps the experiences of the individual as the analytical unit, something important to many qualitative researchers. It's just one more tool to help qualitative mission researchers evaluate their findings and move from producing data to making meaning of that data.

The author welcomes comments, critique, or conversations: Daniel Hoskins - dhca@securenym.net

Lausanne Workplace Ministry Network's Public Reading of Scripture Call

The Research and Strategic Information Network of the Lausanne Movement will be hosting the November 14, 2023 Public Reading of Scripture Call at 09.00 EST and again at 21.00 EST. All members of our Community are invited to attend. These virtual gatherings are open to everyone associated with the Lausanne Movement (which includes us 😊). On this one-hour call, we will listen to God's Word together, hear a brief teaching from the Theology of Work Project, receive an

³ Lindsey, E. H., Homes, V., & McCall, M. W., Jr. (1987). *Key events in executives' lives*. Technical Report No. 32. Greensboro, NC: Center for Creative Leadership.

update from our Research and Strategic Information Network, and share what God impresses on our hearts.

Here's the link: <https://Lausanne.zoom.us/j/83687975638>

Special Profile: Bolortuya (Boloroo) Damdinjav

1) [CMIW] Please tell us about yourself and your family.

[BD] I was born in 1973 in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. When I was 7 years old, my family moved to a newly built town called Erdenet because my father was sent there to be in charge of the military base. Therefore, I took primary school studies and university studies in that town. Unfortunately, my father passed away when I was 13 years old, and then my oldest sister passed away three years after my dad. These deaths brought lots of sadness and hopelessness into my life.



One day as I was walking in the street I had a thought in my mind: “What if there is God in heaven? If so, why is He not doing something to reveal himself to a human being? Why can’t he send someone to show that He is there for people?” At that time I was in despair and really wanted to know the meaning of life, but I could not find it anywhere else.

Then when I was in my second year of university, a Swedish couple started teaching English in my class. Later I found out that they were the first missionaries to ever come to my town to plant a church. Eventually, I started seeing nearby young people holding the same book, and then I started hearing people singing on the 1st floor of my apartment building. After a while, I learnt that the first Christian fellowship was meeting just below my family’s apartment. God brought the church so close to my home!

During that time, I had several opportunities to hear the gospel, and God opened my heart for His truth. Therefore, I made a decision to receive Jesus as a Savior with my younger sister at the end of 1993.

2) [CMIW] What is your current ministry?

[BD] The ministry I am mainly involved in is related to research, training and missions. Currently I am serving the Research and Mission Department of the Mongolian Evangelical Alliance in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. God provides lots of opportunities to serve the body of Christ in Mongolia. Also, I am an Associate Member of One Challenge (OC International), and thus I am a part of OC’s Global Research Team and also the Global Church Planting Network ministry.

3) [CMIW] What are the contributions you have made to world missions that have brought you the greatest satisfaction?

[BD] I like to mobilize people for Mission-related ministry and to help facilitate or conduct training which relates to discipleship, leadership, and church planting. I rejoice hearing stories about how God uses other people in missions.

4) [CMIW] What dreams do you have for your next ten years of ministry?

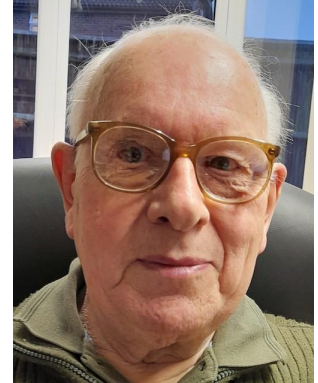
[BD] I would like to keep mobilizing and equipping Mongolians, both for church planting and cross-cultures missions. I want to see a church in every province of Mongolia, and a multiplication of cross-cultural Mongolian missionary efforts.

5) [CMIW] **Is there some way you'd be willing to help the CMIW community?**

[BD] I am willing to share stories about what the Lord is doing in Mongolia and beyond.

Information from the Word

by Peter Brierley



Mark 5:21-43 tells us that outside Jairus's home was a critical crowd; inside were grief-stricken parents, three dazed disciples, and a 12-year old lifeless girl. A young girl, nearing marriageable age, was not to be touched by any man outside her family except her (future) husband. Additionally the dead of any age or gender were never to be touched so as to not induce defilement.

Nevertheless, Jesus answered Jairus's plea for supernatural help with a physical touch. He walked into Jairus's daughter's room, unhesitatingly cut through hindering prohibitions and took her by the hand, raised her to life, and asked the parents to give her a meal.

As mission information workers, we often deal with intangibles—observations, quantities, and ideas. Are we sometimes tempted to stay comfortable in that realm of research rather than also engage in the messy ministry of relationships? Lord, “take my hands and let them move, at the impulse of Your love.”

Bio: Peter Brierley is a statistician who has been working with church and mission statistics for the last 50 years. He still continues to publish the FutureFirst Bulletin for Christian leaders.

Note

CMIW bulletins include links to important websites related to the bulletin content. We on the CMIW Editorial Team are vigilant about security concerns in connection with those links and test them carefully before including them in our bulletins. That is why the links are normally spelled out, so that readers can be assured of the site being linked. At the same time, links that we consider unwieldy in length are normally embedded in the bulletin's main text. As an exercise in reader vigilance, the editorial team encourages readers to examine embedded links before clicking on them – a habit we encourage everyone to maintain in all electronic reading.

Final Details:

- With the help of God this bulletin is now produced quarterly in English, Portuguese and Spanish.
- The Editorial Team comprises Duane Frasier, Jennifer Poling, Larry Kraft, Nelson Jennings, Rodrigo Tinoco and Stephanie Kraft.
- Please send any comments, suggestions or ideas to us at info@globalcmiw.org.
- Back issues can be found at www.globalcmiw.org/cmiwbulletin.