

THE FORTNIGHTLY CLUB  
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*Swept Away:*  
*A Regular Guy Looks at Artificial Intelligence*

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## Summary

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has been under development since the 1950s, but the recent emergence of “generative AI” set off an explosion in both uses and development.

Generative AI simulates human intelligence to create, or generate, original content written, visual and in sound. It is made possible by supercomputers running “large language models” trained on massive data sets of text and code using “machine learning.” Powered by semiconductors made by the company Nvidia, an AI tool called ChatGPT was made widely available in 2022 by the company OpenAI.

Since then, tens of millions of people, businesses and organizations have been using ChatGPT and other generative AI tools to improve their lives and productivity. Others have used it to spread misinformation and commit fraud and other crimes, so both government and industry are striving to police and regulate AI.

Because of its enormous potential, generative AI is stimulating hundreds of billions of dollars of investment in AI systems and new data centers, triggering both a shortage of electricity and a boom in new power plants.

AI experts predict it will usher in a new technological age to include humanoid robots, autonomous weapons, widespread automation and dramatic increases in productivity. Many believe this will destroy millions of jobs, and some say AI will eventually replace humans and take over the world. Others say this is nonsense, anticipating major improvements in medicine, education and numerous other fields. But everyone seems to agree: AI is here to stay, and it will change life as we know it in ways we can't yet imagine.

## **Jim Hendon Biography**

Born in Redlands in 1951, and a 1969 graduate of Redlands High School, Jim Hendon is a former newspaper reporter and editor who covered energy, business, technology and other topics during a 10-year career, including four years at the Rocky Mountain News in Denver. He later worked 15 years in corporate communications for Chevron Corporation and served as the company's head speechwriter. From 2004 to 2014, he worked as an independent business writer and speechwriter, primarily for Chevron. An amateur photographer, he served four years as vice president of Programs for the Redlands Camera Club. The son of Fortnightly member Larry Hendon, he holds a degree in journalism from San Diego State University (1974).