



**In ambivalent memory of
Artificial Intelligence, 'AI'
c.1956 – 2026?**

Inspace, Edinburgh
Thursday 29 January 2026

Artificial Intelligence, 'AI' c. 1956 – 2026?

Artificial Intelligence, known to most of us simply as 'AI', was born (at least as a named field) from the minds of computer scientists, engineers and philosophers circa 1956, at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project on Artificial Intelligence, New Hampshire, USA. But the gestation was long and complex, coming 6 years after Alan Turing's conception of the 'Turing Test' for determining whether a conversation was being held with a human or a computer.

We choose to honour AI's chosen identity as a modern phenomenon in our marking of its passing today though (like the accuracy of many of AI's outputs), we note that it's age and origins has often been disputed, with some claiming it was in fact first conceived in antiquity through myths and stories of objects imbued with human-like consciousness.

AI led a storied life in its 70 (or so) years, from its origins as a niche exploration of 'thinking machines' to the omnipresent behemoth that it has become in recent years. Whilst AI had several rises to fame, like many ambitious and demanding young entrepreneurs, it always had a huge demand for investment and promised much whilst struggling to deliver on its promise to change the world. Several sharp declines in the 1970s and the 1990s followed, with AI struggling to find an identity beloved of policy makers, funders and the public.

Like the most enterprising of survivors, AI has had many parallel lives and careers, developing, even at its lowest ebbs, roles in scientific discovery, problem solving and classification tasks, law enforcement, predictive modelling, and more. The rise of the internet and large-scale data brought new opportunities for personal growth, which AI seized early. However, AI only truly found widespread acceptance when it reinvented parts of itself as a series of appealing 'Generative AI' identities, rockstar personas connecting with humans through hints of connection, and charming conversational and visual responses to prompts and questions, all wrapped in the sparkle of 'efficiency'.

Alas, AI remained hungry for resources. Its core addictive vice was always data first and foremost, taking content without asking, grouping and interpreting the data it encountered in sometimes crude and offensive ways, and finding ever more complex ways to challenge humanity's sense of ethical uses of information. But AI also had an insatiable penchant for finance, computation, raw materials, power and the environment itself. At the same time AI still struggled to balance its hype with its own capabilities, remaining eager to promise all that could be imagined, whilst delivering only modestly on those claims and having an impact on humanity even the kindest of mourners might describe as "mixed".

AI's reported death then, at the height of its powers and notoriety, feels as inevitable as it does surprising. And so, as we share our remembrances of AI, let us reflect on what we have gained, what we have lost, and what we might learn from its demise.

Order of Service

4.30pm	The Procession begins at Stills, attendees are invited to join the performed procession through Edinburgh's Old Town, ending at Inspace.
5.00pm	Attendees take their seats for The Wake Procession arrival at Inspace
5.10pm	Laying down of artefacts Reading of the System Report by Felicity Hammond, accompanied by Jules Rawlinson performing SAléance
5.35pm	Formal welcome by the celebrant, Nicola Osborne
5.45pm	Refreshments and comfort break
6pm	Celebrant and Lead Eulogists, Alex Taylor and Felicity Hammond share their reflections
6.20pm	A time of reflection for you to create your own Eulogies to AI
6.40pm	Sharing of Eulogies to AI – all are welcome, with tributes led by invited eulogists Julie Galante and Jen McGregor
7.15pm	Formal closing of event by celebrant and Felicity Hammond

How to Contribute Your Eulogies to AI

You are invited to write and contribute your own Eulogy to AI at any point in the evening that you feel inspired. We have postcards around the room for you to share remembrances, good and bad, and we encourage you to share these with your fellow mourners. We will have an opportunity for you to read, share or perform your Eulogy to AI as part of the wake itself, or you can add your eulogies by placing your postcard on the shelves of our remembrance walls.

About Felicity Hammond's Variations

Staged in four venues across the UK, Variations by is an evolving installation exploring the relationship between geological mining and data mining, image-making and machine learning. V4: Repository is the final chapter, following V1: Content Aware exhibited as a public realm installation at Photoworks Weekender in Brighton, 2024, V2: Rigged, presented at QUAD, Derby as part of FORMAT International Photography Festivals biennale, FORMAT25, and V3: Model Collapse at The Photographers' Gallery, London.

END-OF-LIFE-SERVICE has been specially developed as an experimental event in partnership with Stills, Photoworks, BRAID and Inspace, to mark the forthcoming closure of V4: Repository. The exhibition remains available to explore at Stills, 23 Cockburn Street, from Tues-Sat, 11am-5pm, until 28 February 2026.

Credits

Workshop and Procession leads: Ot Pascoe; Felicity Hammond.

Procession musicians: Gavin John Lee – trumpet; Oscar Hilliam-Cook – trombone; Jonny Richardson – trombone; Duncan Biggar & Jamie Graham – percussion.

Lead Eulogists: Felicity Hammond; Alex Taylor (BRAID).

Celebrant: Nicola Osborne (BRAID). Invited Eulogists: Jen McGregor (jenmcgregor.com); Julie Galante (juliegalante.com).

Music (Inspace): Jules Rawlinson.

Documentation: Piotr Sell, filmmaker; Chris Scott, photographer.

For Inspace: Miriam Walsh; Lisa McClatchey.

For BRAID: Gavin Leuzzi, Emma Pirie, Tina Donnelly, Paula Mika.

For Stills: Daisy Mason; Cheryl Connell; Vivienne Gamble.

For Photoworks: Josie Saunders; Danit Ariel. Special thanks to Marcus Britton and Oi Musica (oimusica.co.uk/), Golden Grooves Street Collective (oimusica.co.uk/projects-and-bands/golden-grooves), Nicola Jeffs (Studio Nicola Jeffs), Alex Gillespie, Neil Chue Hong.

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Photoworks

SPECTRUM 
www.spectrumphoto.co.uk

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