A SEMINAR ADVENTURE FOR PLAYERS OF ALL LEVELS

Drawn to Extinction

The Broken Ladder and the Fight for Creative Legacies

Game Master: Pete Trainor
Setting: Dragonmeet 2026, ExCeL London

Before we start our quest

Curious people experimenting with shiny new play tools aren't on trial here. Using Ai for some productivity gains is part of the tooling.

Point your energy at the corporations industrialising human curiosity.

* Microsoft Co-Pilot in PowerPoint was used to restructure my content to fit the time-slot and projector ratio. The Claude plugin in PowerPoint was used to structure some of the flow. The content is mine.

THE QUEST HOOK

How I ended up here

QUEST POSTED

Speak at Dragonmeet

Quest giver: John Dodd from Dragonmeet

“Just finished your book, drawn to extinction, and I was moved by how well it puts across the human perspective.”

Posted on Bluesky, 09:22

MY REPLY

“Not sure I’m ‘games material’, let’s do it.”



HISTORY

Harold Webster, 1923

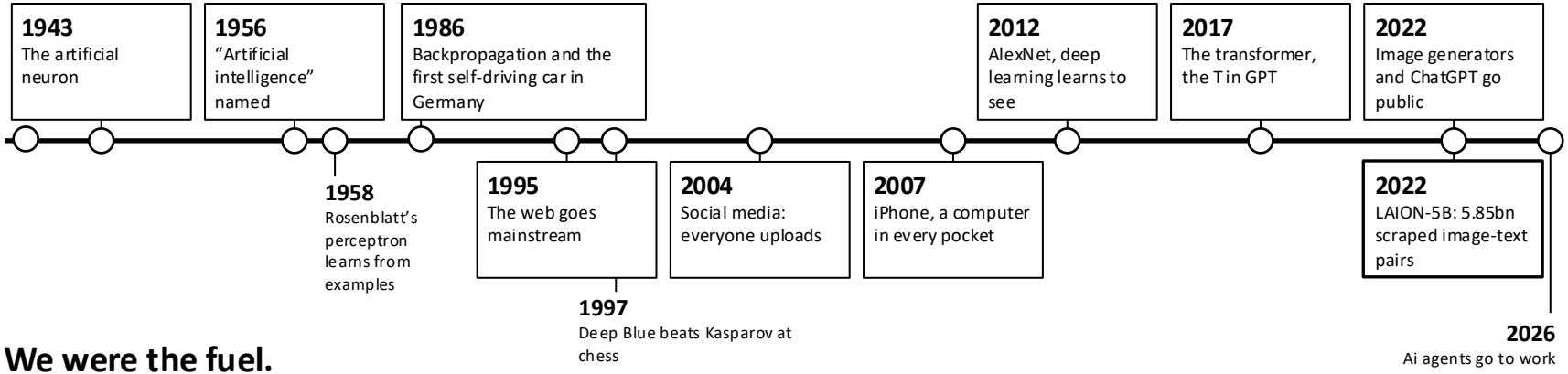
“In the year 2023 when all our work is done by electricity.”

We’re living in a cartoon from 1923!



HISTORY

Eighty years of machines, thirty years of fuel



We were the fuel.

HISTORY

Of course they asked for a slow-down…

"Nobody asks for a speed limit until they are already out in front."

"The big Ai labs spent years calling regulation innovation-killing, then the revenue arrived and they discovered a conscience. The brake is for everyone behind them."

JOB IMPACT

A game of chance…

Everybody up.

You’re all level 1 creatives now: colourists, letterers, junior writers, token artists.

I roll a 12-sided die. Whatever month comes up, everyone born in that quarter of the year sits down: a machine just took your commission.



A raised hand counts too.

JOB IMPACT

One roll. Your quarter sits down.

Round one: today

Jan to Mar	Apr to Jun	Jul to Sep	Oct to Dec
1 Jan	**4** Apr	**7** Jul	**10** Oct
2 Feb	**5** May	**8** Aug	**11** Nov
3 Mar	**6** Jun	**9** Sep	**12** Dec

One in four UK illustrators had already lost work to generative Ai.

Society of Authors survey, January 2024

Round 1 **Round 2** **Round 3**

Already sitting? Roll again.

JOB IMPACT

One roll. Your quarter sits down.

Round two: three years out

Jan to Mar	Apr to Jun	Jul to Sep	Oct to Dec
1 Jan	**4** Apr	**7** Jul	**10** Oct
2 Feb	**5** May	**8** Aug	**11** Nov
3 Mar	**6** Jun	**9** Sep	**12** Dec

Agents doing whole jobs, and a flood of generated products. Half the room is down.

My prediction

Round 1 ✓ | **Round 2** | **Round 3**

Already sitting? Roll again.

JOB IMPACT

One roll. Your quarter sits down.

Round three: five years out

Jan to Mar	Apr to Jun	Jul to Sep	Oct to Dec
1 Jan	**4** Apr	**7** Jul	**10** Oct
2 Feb	**5** May	**8** Aug	**11** Nov
3 Mar	**6** Jun	**9** Sep	**12** Dec

The bottom rungs are gone. A quarter of you are left standing, with nobody coming up behind you.

My prediction

Round 1 ✓ **Round 2 ✓** **Round 3**

Already sitting? Roll again.

AN EXPERIMENT

We were the fuel…

Everybody up if you own an iPhone.

AN EXPERIMENT

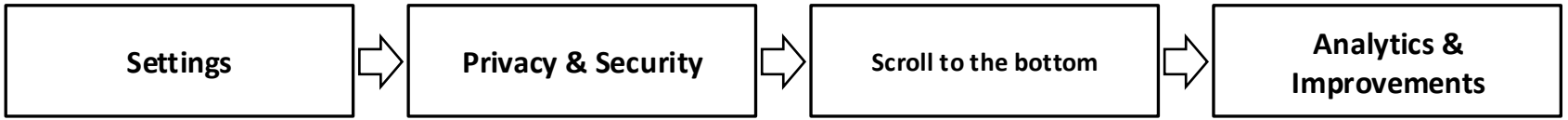
We were the fuel…

Sit down again if you're happy, comfortable, or apathetic about your photos, messages, biometric and psychometric data (from social media) being used to train Generative Ai models.

AN EXPERIMENT

It’s not under General

Turn off iPhone analytics



iOS 14 and 15	Settings > Privacy > Analytics & Improvements
iOS 16 to 18	Settings > Privacy & Security > Analytics & Improvements
iOS 26 and 27	Settings > Privacy & Security > Analytics & Improvements

Sit down if all the toggles are grey, not green.

JOB IMPACT

Why now?

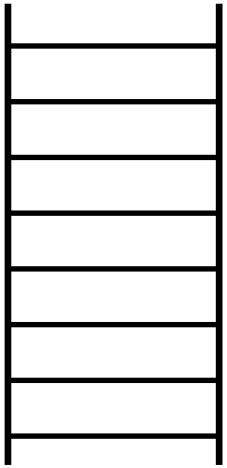
Ai is a cheap healing potion for an economy that’s been poisoned since 2008, sold by the merchants who got rich off the poison.

Every boardroom with a spreadsheet reaches for it, because it promises more output without hiring anyone.

Look at what it actually hits.

JOB IMPACT

Ai eats the bottom of the ladder



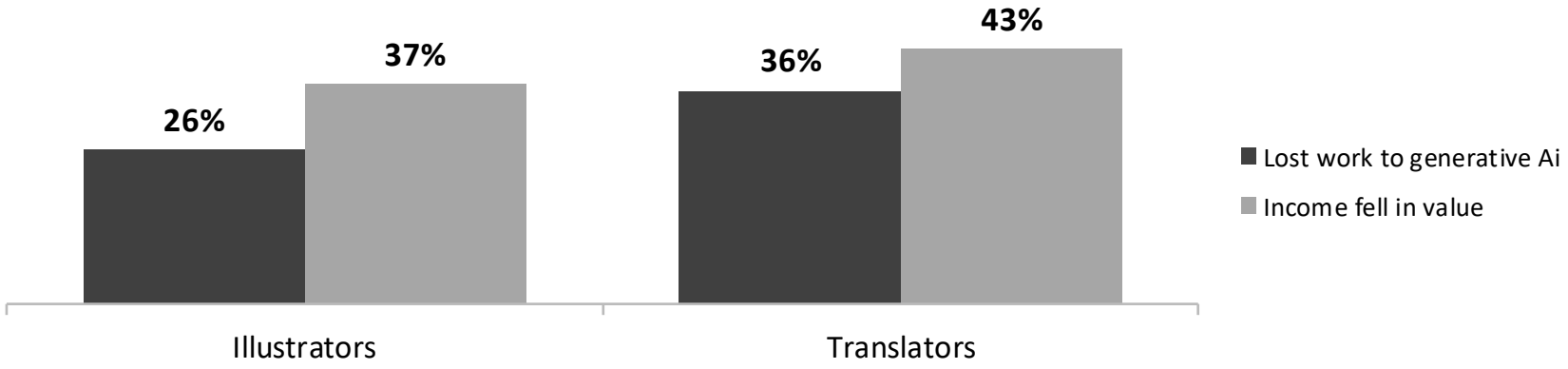
~~Flatting~~	~~Colour assists~~	~~Layouts~~	~~Lettering fixes~~
~~Spot art~~	~~Filler scripts~~	~~Stat blocks~~	~~Token art~~

Cheap jobs with nobody’s name on them go first, and they’re where everybody learned.

No juniors today means nobody to take over in twenty years.

JOB IMPACT

Roll for damage: it’s already happening



Society of Authors survey of 787 members, January 2024

Burning Man, 2022

A sermon in the desert

THE PREACHER

Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI

OpenAI had “figured out intelligence”. A superpower, he said, for people like him with no artistic talent.

THE ARTIST

Android Jones, digital artist

“You are meddling with the primal forces of humans’ relationship with the creative experience forever. No one voted for you, no one had a say in that.”

LIES, VILLAINS AND STOLEN DATA

They want what you do for a living

WANTED

Your job

REWARD: ten times faster, no royalties

DASHTOON

“any story into a global comic sensation”

SHORTBREAD

“the Netflix of comics”, ten times faster

LLAMAGEN

Ten million comics generated

LUMI STORY AI

“free creators from technical constraints”

Every one of these products is a job description with the person taken out of it.

LIES, VILLAINS AND STOLEN DATA

Same house rules, industrial scale

5.85 billion

images and captions scraped into LAION-5B in 2022. Stable Diffusion was trained on parts of it.

Asked: nobody
Credited: nobody

"If I download a movie without permission, I'm a pirate. If an Ai company downloads every movie ever made, it's **training data**."

Extraction is the business model.

LIES, VILLAINS AND STOLEN DATA

Level 20 isn’t safe either

Greg Rutkowski

Fantasy painter for Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering

STYLE CLONED

In 2022 his name became one of the most used prompts in Stable Diffusion, more often than Picasso’s.

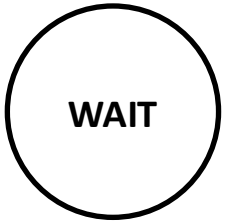
People typed his name to get his look. He wasn’t asked, and he wasn’t paid.

“In the style of…” prompts should be made illegal.

THE LEGAL MINEFIELD

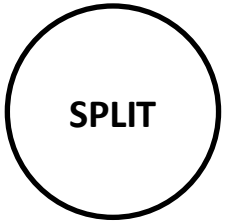
Where the law falls short

UK government



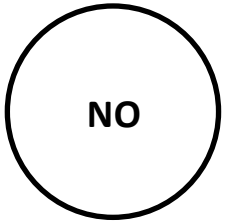
Dropped the opt-out plan. Nothing in its place.

The courts



Getty lost in London.
GEMA beat OpenAI in Munich.

United States



Ai-only image work can’t be copyrighted.

Little protection for artists, and Ai-only art you may not be able to protect.

THE LEGAL MINEFIELD

Critical hit: it’s already in the desk-top gaming space

August 2023

A D&D sourcebook, Bigby Presents: Glory of the Giants, ships with Ai-reworked art. Wizards of the Coast says it didn’t know.

January 2024

Wizards says a Magic: The Gathering promo image was made by humans, then admits it used Ai.

The biggest publisher in this space, caught twice in six months.
Players paid, and trust took the hit.

Realistically, what can we do?

SUPPORTING HUMAN-MADE

We can draw the line

Dragonmeet	Bans generative Ai in the trade hall and the awards	**NO GEN Ai**
Tabletop Scotland	Doesn’t permit generative Ai at the venue	**NO GEN Ai**
UK Games Expo	Announced a ban across all its trade halls in 2026	**NO GEN Ai**

Here you still buy from the person behind the stall, and that’s exactly the bit the Ai pitch wants to get rid of.

SUPPORTING HUMAN-MADE

The Human-Made Stamp



Safeguard human authorship
Made by a person, and you can check it

Transparent supply chains
Who made what, from commission to shelf

Trust with readers and players
You know what you're buying, and who you're paying

SUPPORTING HUMAN-MADE

Keep backing human-made work

- [ ] Buy something directly from the person who made it
- [ ] Back a creator-run Kickstarter
- [ ] Share someone’s art with their name on it
- [ ] Help pay someone for their first creative job
- [ ] Ask who drew the cover next time you buy a book

SUPPORTING HUMAN-MADE

Your side quest today

Before you leave the ExCeL, buy one thing from the person who made it, and ask their name.

Where: 280+ stalls in this building
Reward: XP for someone on the bottom rung

And remember the question…

“Who created this?”

Our biggest act of defiance against gen-Ai is going to be making human creators the influencers again.

OPEN TABLE

Over to you.

Questions, disagreements and war stories welcome

trainor.fyi
Drawn to Extinction is available from my website



THE MORAL OF THE ADVENTURE

Don’t do things better.
Do better things.

Faster and cheaper will always be on offer. The people who carry the craft on won’t be, unless we look after them.

APPENDIX

For publishers, studios and makers

The frameworks, checks and contract points from the Friday industry session.

APPENDIX

Why creative spaces are so exposed

WEAKNESS 1

Freelance by default

Most of the art and a lot of the writing is paid per piece, with no staff job to fall back on.

WEAKNESS 2

Tight crowdfunding budgets

Art is one of the biggest costs, so it's the first line a spreadsheet looks at.

WEAKNESS 3

Storefronts take anything

Print-on-demand and online marketplaces are the easiest places to flood with generated products.

WEAKNESS 4

Generatable bottom rungs

Token art, stat blocks and flavour text are what a publisher on a deadline is tempted to generate.

My roll for the next three to five years

1

Ai in the tools by default

Human-made gets blurry without anyone deciding to cheat

2

Style cloning

Fifteen years of someone’s hand, downloadable as a preset

3

Agents doing whole jobs

A whole book flatted, a whole rulebook laid out, no junior hired

4

The flood

Players pay for fakes, and good work drowns in the noise

5

Provenance tech

Labels get stripped, and “made by a human” is your word against a file

6

The law lags

By the time a court rules, a generation of juniors has gone

None of this is locked in, we can still change it.

APPENDIX

To be fair: these tools do help some people

ALLY
The solo designer
A brilliant game and no art budget

ALLY
The disabled creator
Making work now they couldn't before

ALLY
The tiny publisher
Finally able to translate a rulebook

ALLY
The first-time maker
A comic that might never have been started

None of them built the tools, set the prices or chose what went into them. The help is real, and it was built on other people's work without asking.

My argument is with the terms these tools are made on. The person using them is welcome at my table.

APPENDIX

Five checks before you adopt a tool

1	Do you know what it was trained on?	**No? Stop.**
2	Does it only assist, never generate?	**No? Stop.**
3	Can you switch it off for good?	**No? Stop.**
4	Can you own and protect the output?	**No? Stop.**
5	Would you declare it on the box?	**No? Stop.**

Five yeses, or it stays out of your pipeline.

Stand up if…

- [ ] Your contracts mention generative Ai
- [ ] You've asked a freelancer which tools they use
- [ ] You could show process files for everything you sold this year
- [ ] You credit every artist on the box and the campaign page
- [ ] You gave someone their first paid job this year

Still sitting? That's your to-do list.

APPENDIX

Four clauses for your contracts

1

Human authorship

It's theirs, made without generative tools

2

Disclosure

Flag any generating tool before it's used

3

No training, both ways

Nobody trains a model on the work

4

Process files

Keep working files, share them if challenged

Starting points, not legal advice. Get a lawyer to check them against your own contracts.

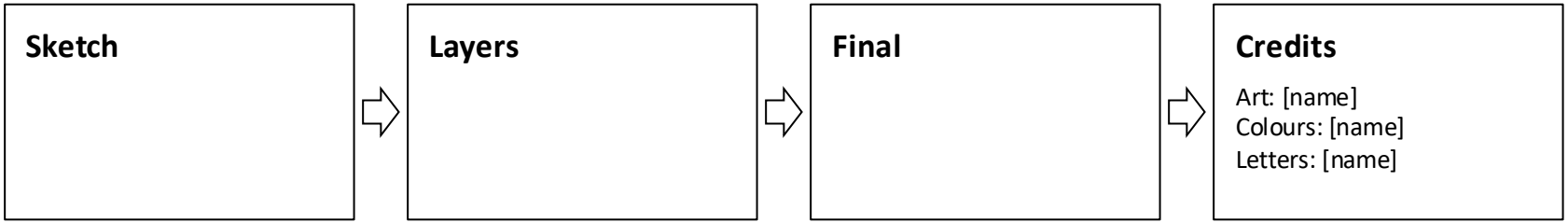
Vet your vendors

Freelancers	Which tools? Can I see working files?
Agencies and studios	Who else touches the work?
Translators	Is Ai switched on, and can it go off?
Printers	Will our files train anything?
Cloud tools	What happens to what we upload?

Expect them to ask you the same questions back.

APPENDIX

If you’re challenged, show your working



Plus the dated emails, briefs and invoices, and work-in-progress photos.

Keep every stage. Most of you already have it: stop deleting it.

APPENDIX

If you make things: your Monday morning list

1

Put provenance on the box

Say who made what, on products and crowdfunding pages

2

Write it into your contracts

Customs have failed creators before, and will again

3

Ask the awkward question

Of suppliers and freelancers, and expect them to ask you back

4

Keep hiring juniors

Give them the token art and the minor villains. That’s how the ladder stays standing