Articles

“Insider” trumps

The term *AI* (artificial intelligence) has come to mean anything that anyone wants to attribute to it. It’s like the word *digitize*. If I tell you that automakers have digitized the modern car, what does that mean? Well, supposedly modern cars have about 2,500 chips regulating this, that, and the other thing. Some of the chips are major components without which a car cannot operate. Other chips operate minor superfluous accessories that have little to do with the operation of a car but provide some convenience to drivers or passengers. In other words, digitize doesn’t mean a damn thing. Only a specific explanation will enlighten.

Likewise with *AI*. It doesn’t mean a damn thing until you get specific information on how it functions in the operation or process of something. AI is not necessarily magic. It doesn’t necessarily make operations or

processes better or more efficient. Yet it has become an *ad* word with high promotional value. “The vacuum cleaner is powered by AI.” Does that make it better, more efficient, less expensive, or higher quality? Who knows? No one, until a specific and credible explanation is given.

AI runs on a source(s) of data. To understand what AI does in a specific application, you need to know what its source of data is. It’s very possible to have a high-quality AI operation but a low-quality or useless data source.

So, AI doesn’t mean anything until you know specifically how it works and what its source of data is. But that raises another problem. AI can be so incredibly complex that any explanation can be beyond the understanding of lay people. Consequenly, the value of AI has to be explained in terms of useful results (outcomes). Unfortunately, explanations of outcomes sound like hype and, in fact, it can be difficult to distinguish from hype.

Another problem is that chips, AI chips, and database storage (digital memory) can be very small now. High powered AI can exist in a device that is almost too small for the human eye to see. Connect that device to the internet, and you can have the most powerful AI available anywhere. So, physical inspection of an AI device is of little value in attempting to understand it or measure its effectiveness.

Thus, a strategy for laypeople to evaluate AI in a particular use is to gather enough reliable information about the AI application to reach an understanding of its *added value* in a situation, whether financial, social, mechanical, statistical, medical, agricultural, etc. After all, if AI adds no value, what good is it?

Wait

Excuse me now. I have run off to brush my teeth with my AI electronic toothbrush. If I don't and I happen to run across my spouse this morning, I might get demerits.

OK, back with you now with clean teeth thanks to AI.

You might ask how can AI help photographers be better, more efficient, and more frugal? There are thousands of ways. Some are simple,

and some are complex and innovative beyond your imagination. Moreover, it has become almost impossible to discern hype from reliable and useful information. As usual, you're on your own and left to be devoured by the advertisers and experts. And most of the experts know little more about AI than you, although that will change over time.

My advice is to look for the specific added value that the AI is alleged to provide. If that's something useful to you, GO FOR IT. You get more capability and as an added bonus you get *AI-bragging-rights*.

If it's not useful to you, PASS. But, do you have to forego bragging rights? Let's hope not.

If you PASS, use the explanation as old as the steam engine: "My cousin who is a computer scientist says the AI in this particular application is still in its infancy and doesn't do anything, significant." This makes you an *insider*, never mind that your cousin is only a cook at Burger King. Who's going to check?

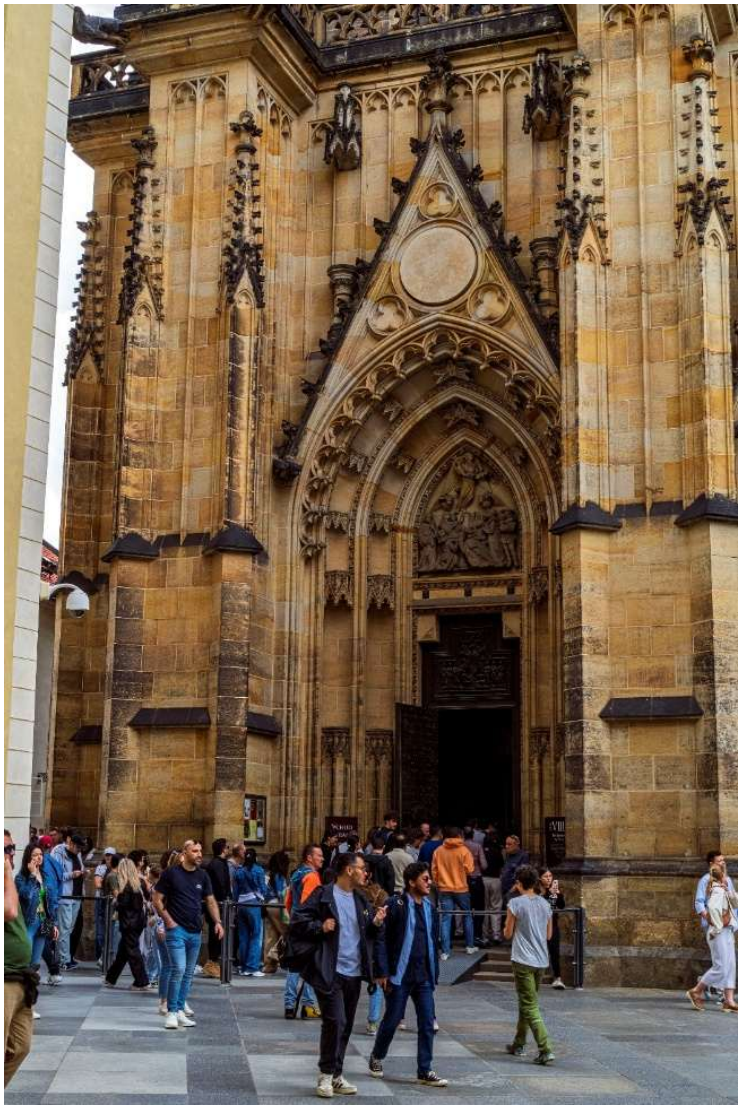
Being an "insider" trumps AI-bragging-rights.

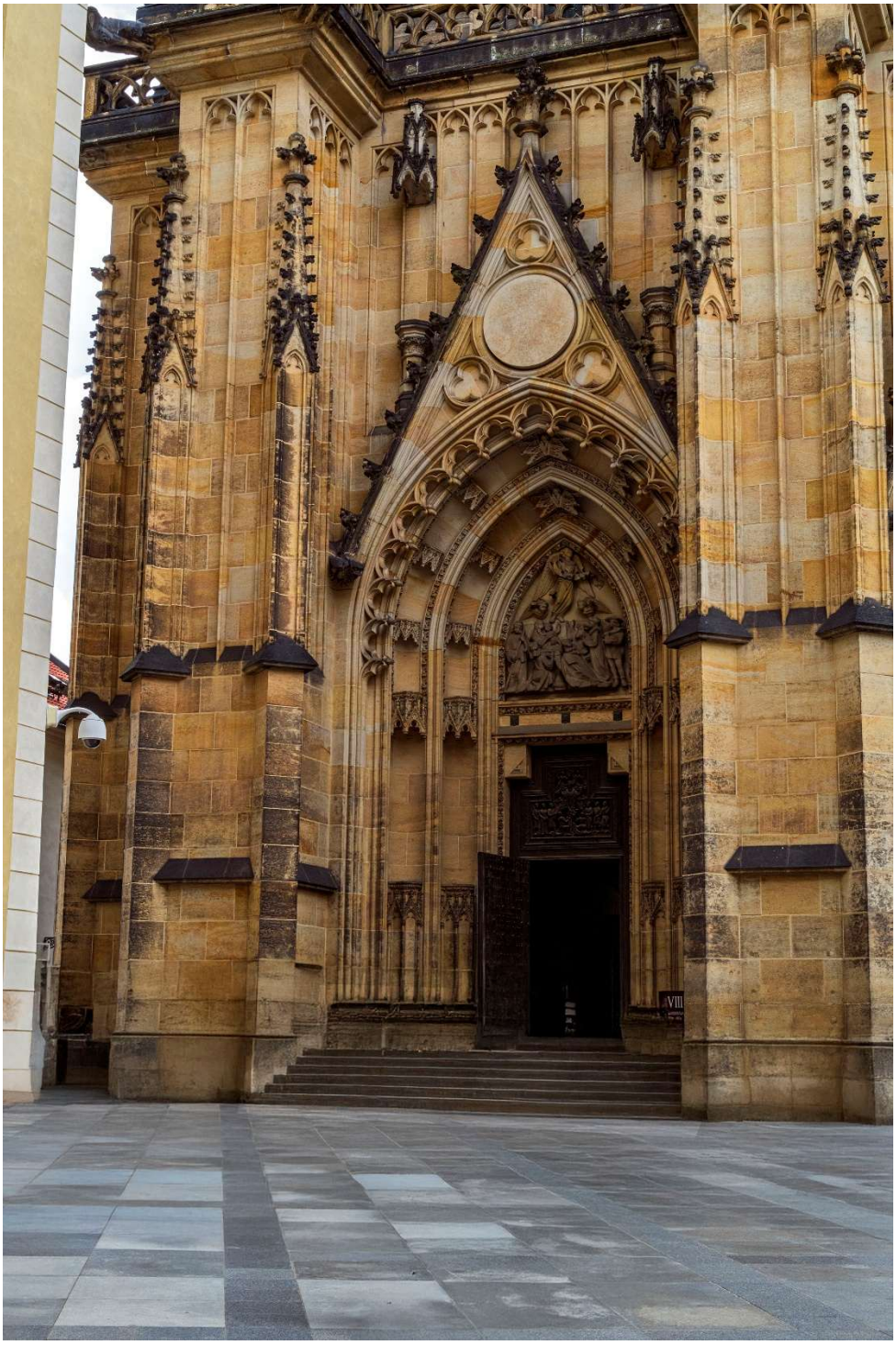
AI postprocessing

Does AI provide added value to postprocessing? Let's take Photoshop for example. For years Photoshop has offered a clever way to correct a defect in a photo usually by doing the corrections with parts (image fragments) from elsewhere in the photo itself. With AI, however, Photoshop can now make corrections with additions (image fragments) from outside the photo. From where? From Adobe's cloud (vast database of images).

Of course, you can't expect it to work perfectly every time. But, indeed, it works like magic for many situations. Not only that, but Photoshop gives you several choices (different corrections) from which to choose. If you don't like any of them, you can regenerate and get three more choices. The bottom line: you can remove your mother-in-law (ex-spouse, nasty boss, cheeky colleague, etc) from a photo, and what replaces her looks natural and authentic, even though it didn't come from the photo itself.

In the photo below, you want to remove those pesky tourists. You use *generative fill*. Photoshop removes the people and substitutes photographic pieces from the Adobe database to fill in. Notice the new stairs.





It's not perfect, but it looks real. I did this in less than two minutes. I took the first of three alternatives.

The bottom line is that you can save a lot of time doing your postprocessing. This is just one of dozens of functions (tools) in which Photoshop uses AI. And each AI enhancement is an added value that enables you to do better work faster.

AI Presets

AI presets are here and ready to use. For instance, you can remove all lines (phone lines, electric lines, telegraph lines, etc) with one click and no other steps. You can do it the old way in multiple steps. But you can imagine how the AI-one-click preset can save you much time and effort. In the future there will be many more presets available.

What about the future? The future is already here. Photoshop has been integrating AI into its software for years. And recently Adobe has perfected many of its new AI enhancements, which have been in beta for many months. It's worth noting that some of Photoshop's new AI enhancements have replaced tools offered by other software vendors as plugins.

It's time to upgrade if you haven't already. Of course, Adobe Photoshop isn't the only photo editing software that uses AI productively.

AI is yours (version 2)

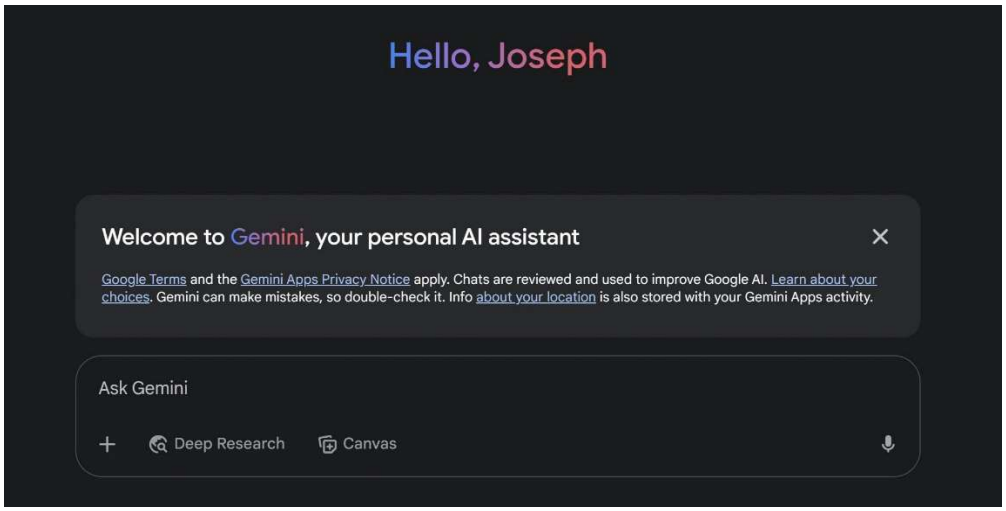
I have to say, "AI is where it's at." I have come to use AI about 75% of the time in place of search. That means I often use it a dozen times a day. Although search gives you multiple sources, AI gives you the information you seek neatly summarized. And AI often gives you sources as well. It doesn't matter what the subject is. AI does it for you.

For many, this is not news. For some it might be. And why is it relevant to photography? You can get photography information easily and quickly whenever you need it via one of the AI generators. It's amazing.

Some AI text generators are:

- Microsoft Copilot [Microsoft app]
- Apple [Intelligence]
- ChatGPT [https://chat.openai.com]
- X (Grok) [https://x.ai]
- Google Gemini [https://gemini.google.com/app]

- Google search [often provides AI at the head of search results]



There are many more. Some are specialized. Some are free. Some require a monthly fee. And we're just talking about the *text* generators. There are also specialized AI generators for images, video, audio, code, and a myriad of other uses. The time has come to streamline your work, whatever it is, with AI. Prior articles provided commentary on using AI to get information about photography.

Corroborate

Of course, AI can make mistakes. So, be sure to corroborate any AI generated information where safety or exactitude are at stake.

> Beyond the use of AI text generators for mundane searches for practical information (e.g., photography information), there is the use for getting other kinds of information, for instance political information. An AI generator can be programed to give biased results (e.g., Grok).
>
> So, although one may assume that AI uses for photography information are productive and likely to be accurate, you're on your own to determine whether the AI generator you use is accurate for searches in which you seek reliable and unbiased subjective information.

AI generators for images are of special interest to photographers. Prior articles covered AI for photographic images.

Check out Adobe's FireFly AI photo generator:

https://www.adobe.com/products/firefly.html

Input text: "cow at a train station"

Waiting for to Go, a potential winner of the ag photo contest at the county fair?