

Member's Quarterly

Spring 2021 Edition

President's Message

Shut Up Alexa: Artificial Intelligence I Don't Need

Here's what they don't tell you in the ads

I am not a fan of these personal assistants. I don't like the way they have intruded into our homes and personal lives. Even if they can quickly give me the step-by-step recipe for just about anything, I don't want them around me — especially at work. The latest trend is getting Alexa to schedule meetings, organize your tasks and track your time. This may sound useful, but what's the price?

The price is a loss of privacy and an opening for big tech to fully inhabit your universe — to move in and take up space. It can even happen without your knowing about it. One of the ways that Alexa intrudes is that she/it is always listening and recording. It's looking for the cue to 'wake' up and perform some function for you. Amazon doesn't record and keep everything you say, but your personal device does. That's a bit creepy, isn't it?

If that doesn't bother you, how about the fact that the newer devices also have a camera? The device can be your personal fashion advisor. If you wish, it will make recommendations on which tie to wear with that new suit. It's simply just a matter of time before it will start making other suggestions as well. It could tell you it's time to repaint or refurnish your office and recommend preferred brands for your consideration. You may want that, but I'm not on board.

There's another feature I have no interest in called Drop-In. This allows you to video call someone without them confirming the call. If they have a similar device, you can start seeing them live without them knowing about it. It's not difficult to imagine the potential issues with this feature alone. It could cause a number of problems, some on the wrong side of the law.

Alexa also keeps a record of every command you issue. You can delete them, but honestly who has the time for that? This means that your little device holds all that information about your requests and anyone who has access to your phone can browse through them at any time. This includes hackers and those who want to access your personal and business information. We have firewalls on our computer systems, but almost nothing to protect us from Alexa. In fact, we freely provide all that information without even thinking about it.

There's another issue I have with Alexa. If I ask the Internet for a suggestion on a specific product, I want to explore all of my options. I don't only want the one suggestion that Alexa provides which is based on preferred products through Amazon. To me, this represents a loss of choice and loss of privacy.

I'm not interested, but thanks for the offer.

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