

## Viewpoint: Tech Panic Cycle — AI could transform entertainment, education, health care, unless over wrought fears shut down innovation

Fears about AI have reached new levels because of the emergence of generative AI. Generative AI—a novel tool that can produce complex text, images, and videos from simple inputs—promises to democratize the creative sector and enable entirely new forms of creativity. This novelty has impressed technology enthusiasts but alarmed many others—especially those who believe AI is encroaching on creativity, which many people believe to be an essential difference that separates humans from machines.

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As the public begins to use and become familiar with a new tool, it soon becomes clear the alarmists exaggerated the risks or misled the public about their concerns. Panic starts subsiding, and the media slowly lose attention (though they rarely correct the record). As the innovation becomes mainstream, only the alarmists are left dispensing sporadic and less attractive concerns before eventually moving on to new technologies. This pattern constitutes the Tech Panic Cycle.

panic cycle update scaled

The Tech Panic Cycle (Credit: Center for Data Innovation)

The tech apocalypse never arrives. At the Moving On stage, previous fears are exposed and ridiculed (in some cases by the same people who first raised the alarm.) *Wired's* alarmist article in 2000, “Why The Future Doesn’t Need Us,” was followed up eight years later by the more measured, “Why the Future Still Needs Us A While Longer.”<sup>7</sup> Once-feared tools are normalized and cooler heads lead policy conversations. Alarmists have turned their attention to the latest shiny technology hype by this stage. New panics crowd out the old. And the cycle repeats.

[This is an excerpt. Read the full article here](#)