

What academies can and cannot provide to policy makers

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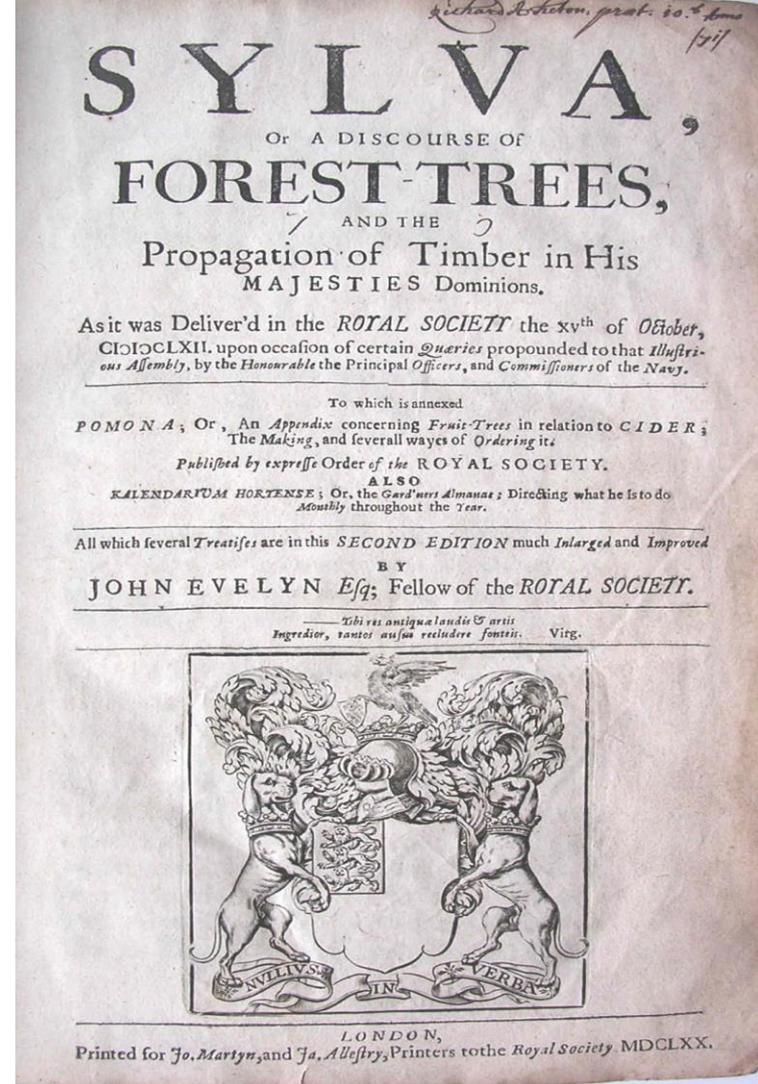
SAPEA workshop
16-17 October
Bucharest



The Royal Society and Science Policy

- Independent Fellowship est. 1660
- Science policy since **1662**.
- Three strategic goals 2017-2022

Promoting excellence in science
Supporting international scientific collaboration
Demonstrating the importance of science to everyone



What academies can provide

- Trusted Independent advice
- Convening power
- Evidence synthesis
- Public engagement



What we can not do

- Stand still – the world is changing, the audience's needs are changing
- Support for values-based positions – we inform not make policy
- Compromise Independence – finding smart ways of working with Industry

Principles for good evidence synthesis for policy

Consider many types and sources of evidence and their relevance

Use a range of skills and people

Involve policymakers and be relevant and useful to them



Inclusiveness

In most instances, an inclusive evidence synthesis process that involves policymakers throughout – from the design of the research question to the interpretation of findings – is most likely to yield important policy insights. It also helps identify the range of evidence types, sources and expertise that are most relevant. A team of contributors should have the necessary skills for the task and could comprise some or all of the following: policymakers, practitioners, subject experts, statisticians, experts in databases and search terms, objective writers (usually non-subject experts), and independent reviewers who have not been directly involved in the process. Policymakers may be involved to a lesser extent in the design of the research question if the aim is to scan the horizon for future priorities, or to synthesise evidence on a topic that is yet to attract major policy interest.

Use the most representative and largest feasible body of evidence

Recognise and minimise bias

Be independently reviewed as part of a quality assurance process



Rigor

Evidence synthesis should aim to minimise bias and consider the totality of evidence on a topic within the timeframe and with the available resources. Researchers should be as comprehensive as possible in identifying all relevant evidence, before critically appraising and then analysing the included evidence in a rigorous manner. Many of the principles outlined help to minimise bias, or to disclose or explain any potential bias.

Clearly describe the research question, methods, sources of evidence and quality assurance process

Communicate complexities and areas of contention

Acknowledge assumptions, limitations and uncertainties, including any evidence gaps



Transparency

Evidence synthesis that is transparent is likely to be more rigorous, credible, replicable and useful. For example, a clearly described study design that includes the search terms used, the databases and other evidence sources considered and the inclusion criteria (which studies were and were not included and why) is more useful both in its own right, and as a basis for undertaking further evidence synthesis on the same topic. In addition, explicitly acknowledging the complexities of the argument, areas of strong consensus and areas of contention – particularly where there are fundamental disagreements within the project team – is useful for a policymaker attempting to interpret the findings, and is important to inform evidence-based public debate more widely.

Declare all interests and manage any conflicts

Be freely available online

Be written in plain language

Be available in a suitable timeframe

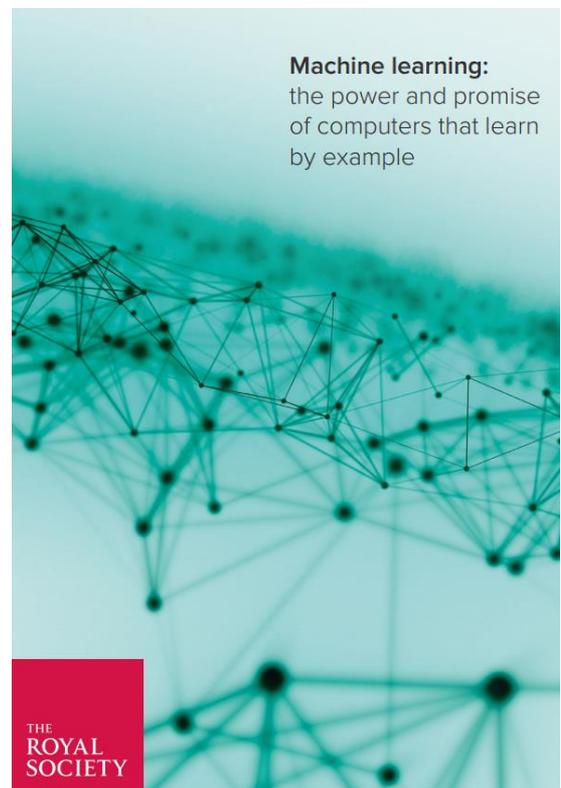
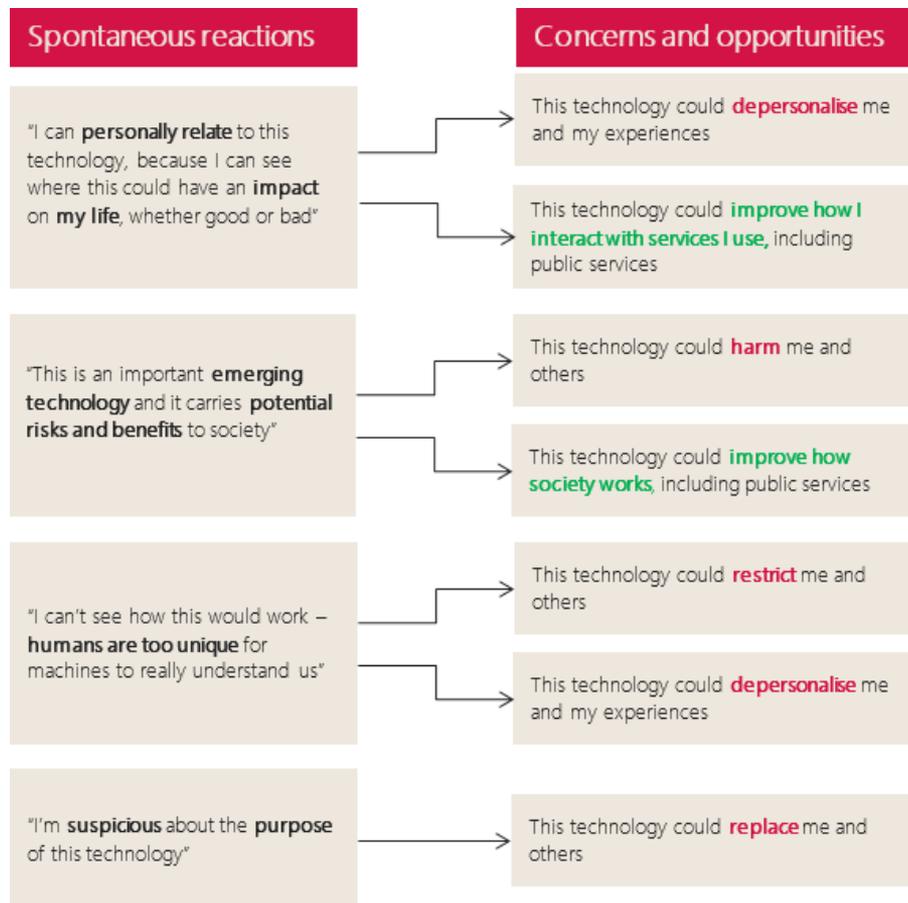


Accessibility

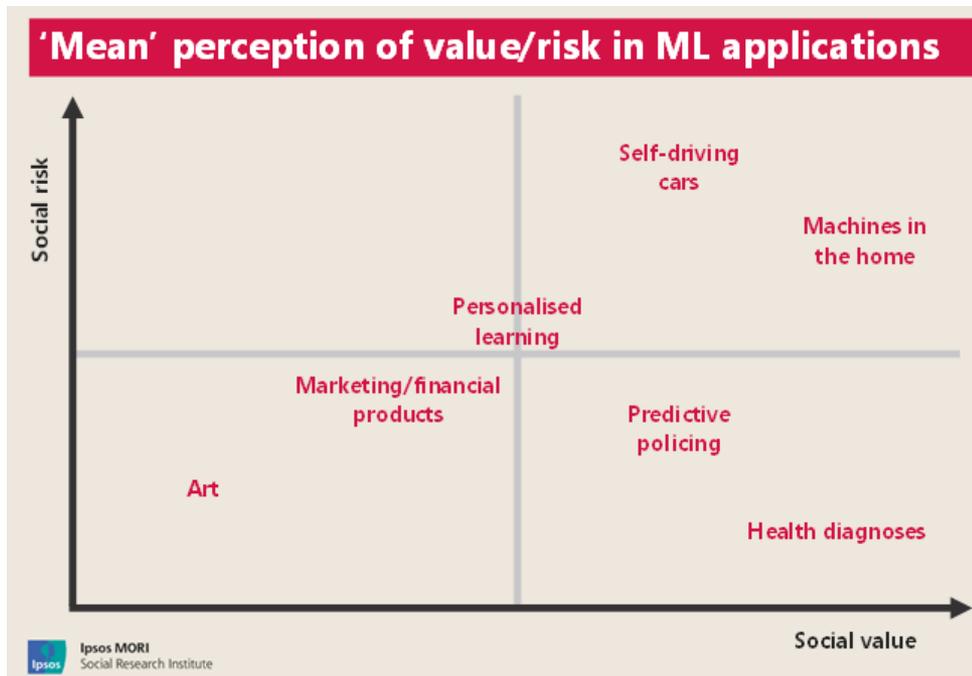
Good evidence synthesis should be both useful and used. To ensure its usefulness, a short summary of the synthesis should be written in plain language by an objective writer who is experienced in presenting information clearly and concisely. To ensure it is used, synthesised evidence should be made available in time to contribute to the decision making process. The full text and search terms should be published in an open access repository to allow the synthesis to be extended, reproduced or updated in light of new evidence.

Draft for discussion on 11 October

The Royal Society's public dialogue on machine learning



Public views are context specific



The public do not have a single view on machine learning. Attitudes towards this technology – whether positive or negative – depend on the context of its use.

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