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October 19, 2025

Reflection Paper:
AI Survey Presentation

Introduction

When I began this assignment, I envisioned a streamlined workflow leveraging AI at multiple stages: using Claude to structure content and generate speaker notes, then feeding that polished material into Canva's AI-powered presentation tools to automatically generate professional slides but likely requiring minor corrections after in PowerPoint. For preparation, I used the same Claude instance that had previously consulted on the original chart generation and data analysis.

Intention vs. Reality

The problems emerged immediately when I began working with Canva. It does not accept uploads of Word documents, markdown files, or PowerPoint files, and the prompt character limit is merely 4000 characters. I was forced to use more succinct descriptions of the slides, and I proceeded through the in-built generation process for selecting theme, audience, length, etc. It appeared that this process was inserting hidden context into the prompt, some of which contradicted with my explicit instruction – for instance, length, where I requested a specific number of slides in my prompt, but the guided process also included a hidden insert requesting a range of numbers, leading to model confusion.

The AI-generated themes featured color combinations that were functionally problematic for someone with colorblindness. Also, Canva's chart generation proved unreliable and buggy. Most problematically, when I attempted to link my scatterplot directly to source data in Google Sheets, the visualization displayed incorrect data points. Interacting with Canva to attempt corrections, it seemed able to manipulate the slide's text but not the graphs, though it would incorrectly assert that it had made the corrections to both. I exported the presentation from Canva as a PowerPoint file, and I opened it there to make corrections or replacements of the charts. Any interaction with the generated element at all caused PowerPoint to immediately crash, and reopening the file again, PowerPoint would recommend Safe Mode for potentially harmful content. I ultimately just deleted all the Canva-generated charts and used the Claude-generated JavaScript charts from the original analysis.

Platform Comparison

PowerPoint won't do any of the work for you, but at least you have total control and reliability. Canva performed fine for providing the initial scaffolding of the presentation, but the more complex content it included was essentially unusable, with hidden contextual inserts negatively impacting the process, a lack of control over the elements, and a hallucinating chat interface that was unaware of what corrections it had successfully made.

PowerPoint is the clear choice when reliability and control are essential, particularly under deadline pressure. Canva might be useful for simple, text-heavy presentations where its templates could save time, but it cannot be trusted with complex data visualization or content requiring precision.

Prompt Evaluation

I prepared more detailed prompts than Canva could even read, but alternating to more succinct prompts with explicit instruction, it was able to structure the presentation successfully. Regardless of how it was prompted though, Canva struggled to manipulate the graph content, and just gauging by the unreliable format of the graphs as exported, I suspect this was a failing of the platform's graph-generation tools and not something that prompting could correct.

Lessons Learned

I like to know exactly what the model is doing, and tools like these will hide the complexity, opting for ease rather than transparency. That might be fine if the tools are working correctly, but they weren't.

Ultimately too, I don't feel comfortable using tools that include so much unprompted image generation, as I believe it is one of the least ethical uses of this technology, directly infringing on the livelihoods of designers and artists. My understanding is that Canva uses a combination of Leonardo.AI, Magic Media, Imagen, and GPT-image-1 for image generation. Most of these models rely on the LAION-400M or LAION-5B datasets, which include instances of child sexual abuse material, private medical images, non-consensual intimate photos, and countless instances of copyrighted artwork.

This project reinforced that AI tools should augment rather than replace human expertise, and that transparency about tool capabilities and limitations is essential for making informed decisions about when and how to integrate AI into professional workflows.