



Supercomputer has swear filter added after learning the Urban Dictionary

In an attempt to make it sound more human, Jeopardy!-winning supercomputer, Watson, has been taught the entire Urban Dictionary. What could possibly go wrong?

The Urban Dictionary is a user-curated, web-based dictionary of slang words and phrases, containaing almost 7 million definitions. The site was founded in 1999 by Aaron Peckham, who was a computer science student at California Polytechnic State University, US, at the time.

In order for an artificial intelligence to pass [the Turing test](#), it must be able to conduct a conversation with a human without giving itself away as a machine. It was perhaps with this in mind that [IBM](#) researcher [Eric Brown](#) attempted to make the company's supercomputer [Watson](#) sound a little more human by teaching it [the Urban Dictionary](#).

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There was, however, just one slight snag: Watson was completely incapable of judging when it was and wasn't appropriate to use the plethora of sexual slang and swear words it had picked up from the website. Apparently, the computer even used the word "bullshit" in response to a question posed by a researcher.



Watson is a work-load optimized system that can answer questions posed in natural language. It was named after IBM founder Thomas J. Watson. Courtesy of International Business Machines Corporation. Unauthorized use not permitted.

Consequently, the supercomputer's transition from smart to smart mouth had to be reversed. Brown and his team have now purged the contents of the Urban Dictionary from Watson's vocabulary and have even installed a swear filter, to make sure the supercomputer doesn't get itself into any more trouble.

Watson, which famously [won the popular US game show *Jeopardy!* in 2011](#), can now thankfully return to learning more useful skills, such as [helping doctors to diagnose diseases more accurately](#).

Tags

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Last year, IBM also announced plans to make Watson available as a cloud-based service that experts can consult on a wide range of complex issues. Even if it doesn't know the answer to your question, at least you can now rest assured that you'll receive a courteous response to your query, rather than an x-rated series of expletives.

- *Andrew Purcell*

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