

AI-operated Robots Write Letters for Humans

手紙は、自分の気持ちを伝える大切な手段の一つとされてきました。しかし今、そのあり方に少しずつ変化が生まれているようです。技術の発展によって、「誰が書くのか」という点にも新しい可能性が広がっています。ロボットが手紙に関わる時代を、あなたはどのように感じますか。



1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Humans have been writing by hand for thousands of years.

Since ancient times, people have used every **tool** imaginable to share information, do business, and keep records.

But as computers took over the job and the type-written word became more common, something was lost in the process; namely, the charm and personal nature of a hand-written note or letter.

Modern tools

Now, letter writing is making a comeback in the form of artificial intelligence-operated robots. These AI robots can write notes for humans in their own handwriting.

David Wachs is the head and founder of Handwrytten. He said businesses use his company's robots for handwritten letters and "thank-you" notes to create a strong and personal **connection** with those who receive them.

Many non-profit organizations also use handwritten letters to keep donations coming. It helps turn one-time givers, or donors, into yearly givers, Wachs explained.

Wachs added, "I think what's old is new again."

A president's hobby

Automated letter writing is not new. Thomas Jefferson, the third U.S. President, often used a polygraph created by British inventor John Isaac Hawkins. Jefferson considered the [device](#) the greatest invention of his time. It let him make copies of his letters to keep for his own records.

Charles Morrill is a historian and professional woodworker who worked as a guide for several years at Monticello, Jefferson's Virginia home from 1770 until his death in 1826. Morrill said about the polygraph, "Jefferson falls in love with this and it becomes in many ways the hobby of his presidency...He keeps buying machines and exchanges ones that are not quite perfect for the next one that's a little bit better."

The president had more than ten of the devices at one point, Morrill added. Using what he considered wonderful [technology](#), historians say Jefferson went on to write almost 20,000 letters in his lifetime.

In a January 15, 1809 letter to Charles Willson Peale, who worked with Hawkins to develop and perfect the machine, Jefferson wrote: "The use of the polygraph has spoiled me for the old copying press the copies of which are hardly ever legible," adding, "I could not, now therefore, live without the Polygraph."

Morrill remembered that a visitor once told him, "What is it about you Americans and this new, new thing? Other cultures aren't like this. You Americans are just so absolutely convinced that the next new thing is going to do it; the latest software, the latest computer, the latest phone."

"And I think this kind of begins with Jefferson," Morrill added.

From early polygraphs to AI-created letters

Handwriting technology has greatly changed since Jefferson's time.

Wachs says such technology now includes 3D printing and laser cutting, among others. And if users need help thinking of exactly what to write in their notes, they can choose AI to help them create a more [effective](#) message.

Whether via the printing press or the polygraph, a computer or a robot, one thing is clear... humans will use whatever tool they have to express themselves through the printed word.

Julie Taboh reported on this story for VOA News. John Russell adapted it for VOA Learning English.

2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

1. tool (n.) something used to help do a job

Jeremy used a simple tool to fix the broken chair.

2. connection (n.) a relationship or link between people or things

Soon after joining the math class, Kelly felt a strong connection with her new classmates.

3. device (n.) a machine or piece of equipment made for a purpose

The new kitchen device makes cooking easier.

4. technology (n.) the use of machines and science to solve problems

New technology like the Internet and smartphones helps people communicate faster.

5. effective (adj.) working well to produce a result

Using a vocabulary notebook and writing original sentences is very effective for learning new words.

3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What company does David Wachs lead, and what is the purpose of the company?
2. Why do businesses use handwritten letters from robots?
3. What was a "polygraph," and why did American president Thomas Jefferson use one?
4. Do you prefer handwritten letters or typed messages? Why?
5. Do you think using robots to write letters is a good idea? Why or why not?