Becoming AI Literate
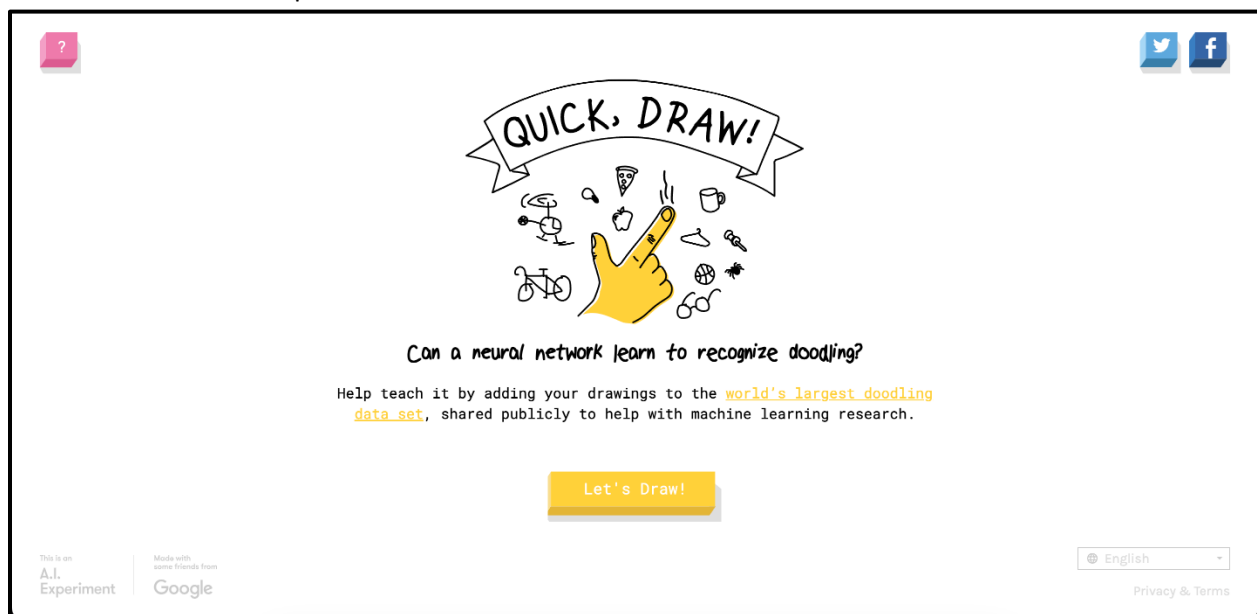
Becoming AI literate has become a major competency required of academic practitioners since the debut of consumer-grade generative AI. Developing AI literacy, in this case referring to the ability to critically understand, use, and evaluate AI systems effectively, is something that we all must work towards in our current society. We must know what AI is, where it gets its information, the possibilities, and the pitfalls. Becoming AI literate can be a daunting experience, one where we face the uncomfortable truth that corporations and individual entities are already using AI to persuade consumers, sometimes without the appropriate disclaimers and citations indicating AI has been used in product generation.

Part of becoming AI literate is understanding how AI uses existing data to generate new output. This concept can be a bit difficult for some to grasp, but we have tools to help!
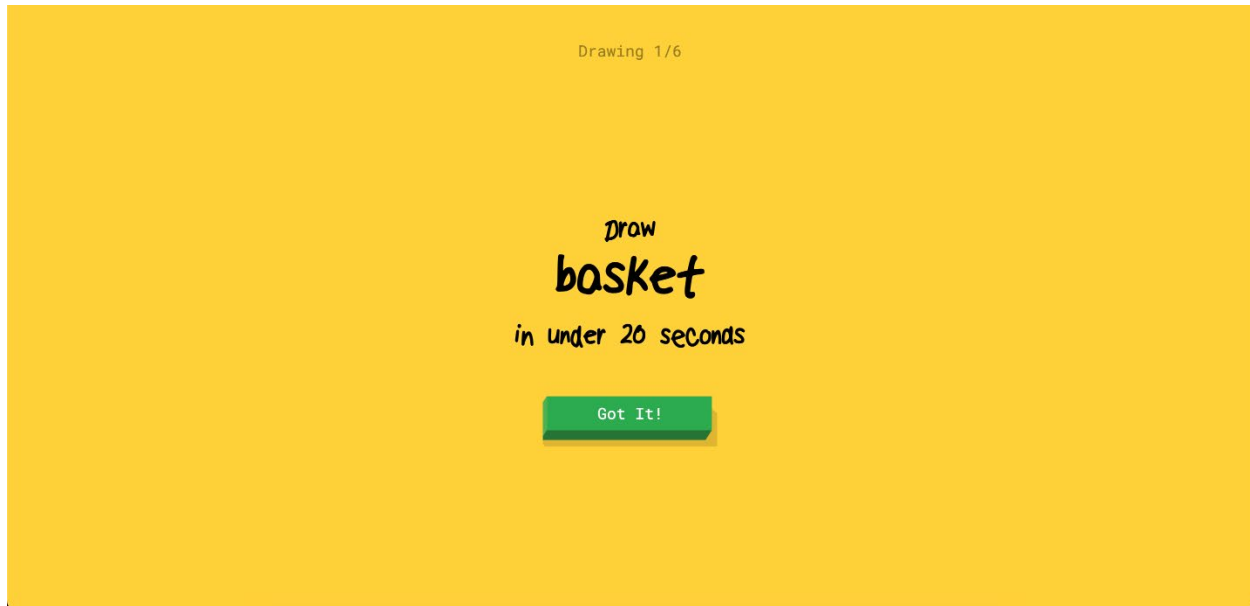
One way we can demonstrate to our peers, or students, where AI gathers its information is an engaging and easy-to-replicate activity that highlights these concepts in a fun way. Let's look at this activity!

1. Head to https://quickdraw.withgoogle.com/
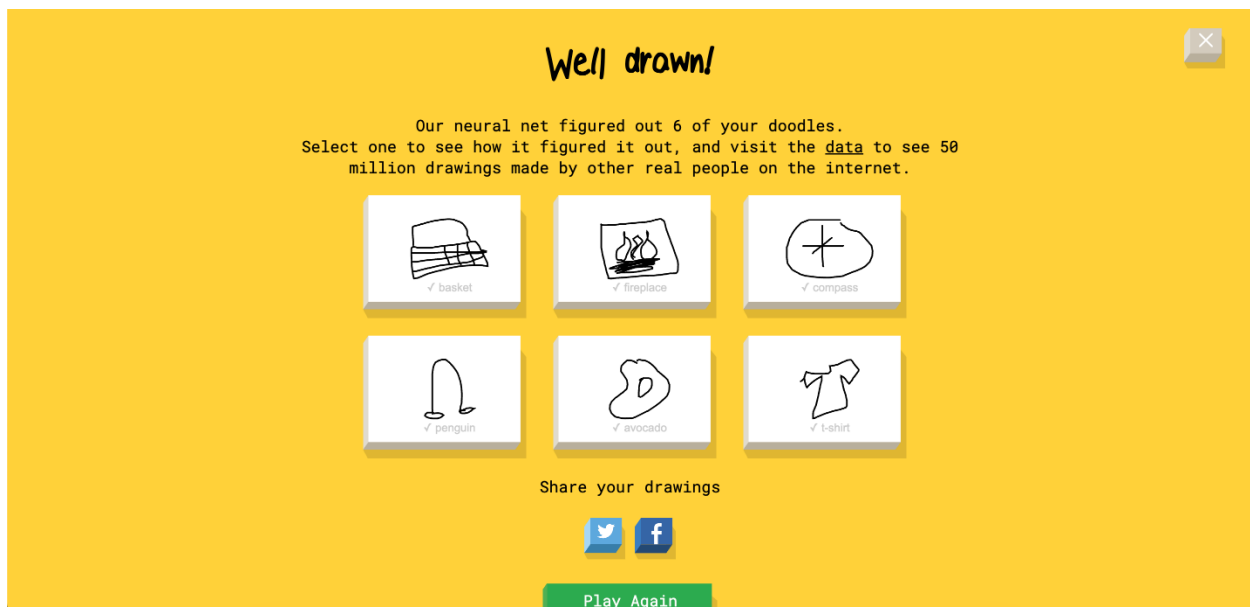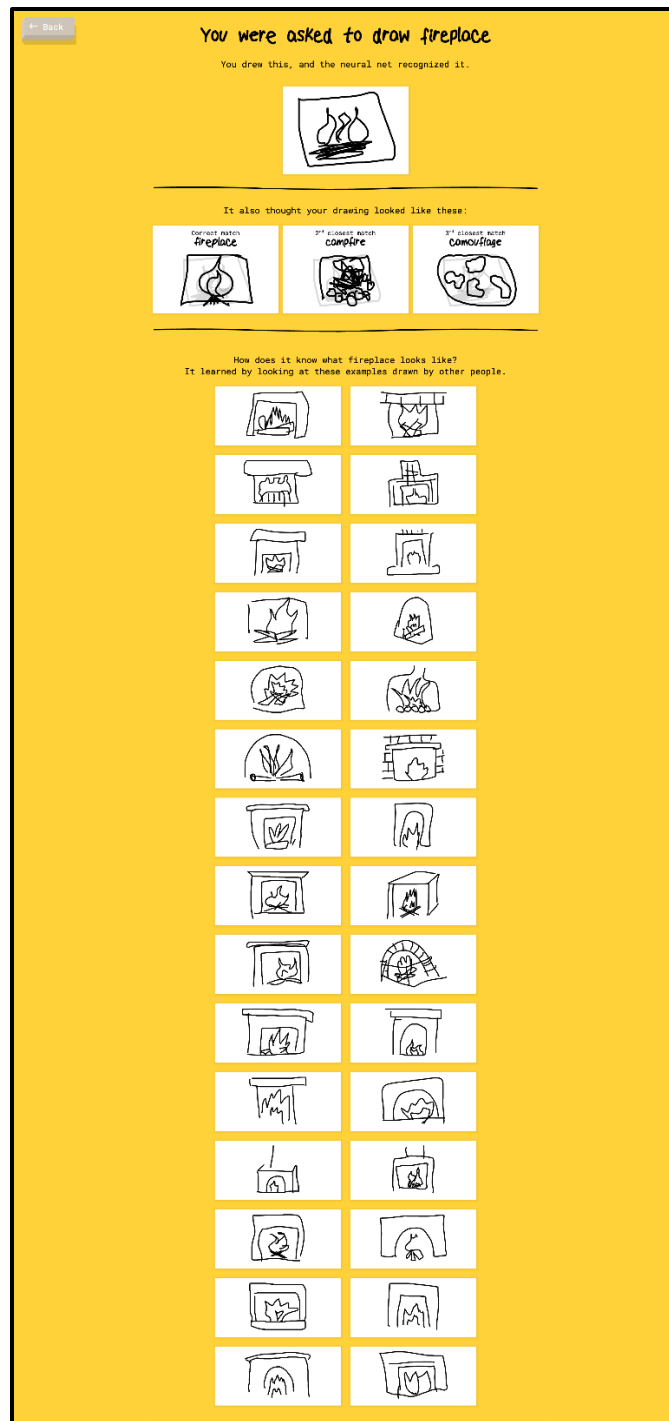   a. This is a Google platform designed to help illustrate how AI works and how it gets data for output.

2. Using this platform, you will be asked to draw a specific item, which will be compared against the world's largest doodle database.
   a. You will be asked to draw something on your computer using your mouse or touchpad and given time parameters to do so. In this example, it has asked me to draw a "basket".

3. You will continue drawing the images until the timer has expired, and you will be allowed to evaluate the data the system used to determine what you were drawing.

Using this tool can also open important conversations about bias. In one instance, when I was using this with a group of educators, the system had a difficult time recognizing *high heels.* While this seems a bit silly, our AI systems must be equipped with data that provides diversity of content, thought, and perspective. With a system unable to identify high heels, but able to identify basket, what does this say about how female-presenting attributes have been treated in this data set?

As we continue to develop our AI literacy, we must work to inform not only ourselves, but those in our community, about AI in a more holistic manner. This is not about being pro- or anti-AI, but more so about arming ourselves with the knowledge needed to ensure this emerging technology is used for the benefit of all, not the profits of some; we must enhance our AI literacy so we can be better prepared to navigate a world that is becoming increasingly more augmented by technology in every aspect of our lives.

Want to explore all the data Google Quick Draw has collected? They make it available here. This is a great visual representation of how our data is collected and used when interacting with most AI platforms.