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Classificazione Decimale Dewey

— 006.301 (23.) INTELLIGENZA ARTIFICIALE. Filosofia e teoria

Thema

— Soggetto: UX Informatica applicata
— Qualificatori: 3MR. XXI secolo, 2000-2100

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ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND OPEN SOURCE INTELLIGENCE

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ISBN
979-12-218-2628-9

PRIMA EDIZIONE
ROMA 30 MARZO 2026

Summary

FOREWORD

The new OSINT paradigm in the era of generative artificial intelligence

Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) is undergoing a radical transformation. What for decades was conceived as a discipline of collecting and analysing publicly available information has evolved into a complex cognitive ecosystem in which human intelligence, computational systems and global information flows intertwine in previously unimaginable ways. The advent of generative artificial intelligence models—particularly Large Language Models (LLMs)—has not simply added new tools to the OSINT analyst's repertoire: it has redefined the very nature of the analytical process [1].

This transformation raises fundamental questions that go far beyond mere technical expertise. How do human cognitive biases interact with the statistical inference patterns of language models? What neurocognitive mechanisms make an analyst vulnerable to algorithmically generated disinformation? How does cognitive offloading to AI systems affect the quality of analytical reasoning and decision-making accountability? These questions cannot be resolved through technical manuals or lists of tools: they require a robust theoretical framework that integrates cognitive neuroscience, epistemology of inference, and computational architectures [2].

This volume stems from the awareness that the OSINT community—from intelligence analysts to law enforcement investigators, from academic researchers to policy makers—needs a systematic conceptual foundation to navigate this new landscape. It is not a question of uncritically embracing every technological innovation, nor of rejecting the potential of AI outright for fear of its risks. Rather, it is about building a scientifically grounded understanding of what it means to integrate generative artificial intelligence into the OSINT process, while preserving the analytical rigour, epistemological responsibility, and ethical and legal constraints that must govern all intelligence activities in democratic contexts [3].

This book does not offer simplified recipes or promises of analytical superiority through automation. Instead, it offers a path to critical understanding: from the neurophysiology of attention and memory to the Bayesian inference mechanisms that underlie both human and algorithmic reasoning; from transformer architectures to the systemic risks of technological overreliance; from the dynamics of disinformation to the ethical frontiers of informational influence. Only through this multidisciplinary understanding is it possible to use generative AI as a genuine cognitive amplifier, rather than a dangerous substitute for critical thinking.

Who is this book for?

This book is designed for readers with an advanced background in at least one of the following areas:

OSINT analysts and professional intelligence: intelligence agency operators, strategic analysis units, cyber threat intelligence teams, and national security professionals who need to integrate generative AI tools into their workflows while maintaining rigorous standards of source validation and auditability.

Law enforcement and investigators: law enforcement officers, magistrates, digital forensic investigators, and organised crime analysts who need to understand how generative AI can support complex investigations without compromising evidentiary admissibility or violating fundamental rights.

Academic researchers: PhD students and researchers in computer science, cognitive science, intelligence studies, strategic communication, and security studies who seek a theoretical framework for studying the interaction between human cognition and AI systems in information analysis.

Policy makers and institutional decision makers: public policy makers, regulators, strategic advisors, and executives of organisations who need to understand the implications, opportunities, and risks of integrating AI into intelligence-based decision-making processes.

The text assumes familiarity with the basic concepts of OSINT and at least intermediate technical competence in the use of digital tools. However, it does not require formal training or education in neuroscience or machine learning: relevant concepts are introduced progressively, with a focus on operational implications rather than internal technical details [4].

This is not an introductory book. It is an advanced text intended for professionals and experts already working in the field who need more sophisticated conceptual tools to address the emerging challenges of the contemporary information ecosystem. The language used reflects this choice: it favours conceptual precision over popularisation and requires significant cognitive effort on the part of the reader.

Areas of application and operational contexts

The methodologies and frameworks presented in this volume can be applied in a variety of contexts, all of which share the need to make informed decisions in conditions of epistemic uncertainty and time pressure:

Strategic and operational intelligence: support for threat assessment, analysis of geopolitical scenarios, early warning of regional instability, monitoring of state and non-state actors, economic and technological intelligence, countering strategic disinformation.

Law enforcement and crime fighting: investigations into organised crime, trafficking, terrorism, financial fraud, cybercrime, and any area where open source analysis can generate investigative leads or support the building of court cases.

Academic research and geopolitical analysis: studies on conflicts, migration, social movements, disinformation, propaganda, foreign influence, analysis of public discourse, monitoring of humanitarian crises and human rights violations.

Cyber threat intelligence: monitoring of APT (Advanced Persistent Threat) groups, analysis of phishing and social engineering campaigns, identification of malware infrastructure, study of tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) of malicious actors.

Corporate intelligence and risk management: due diligence, reputational risk assessment, monitoring of competitive threats, supply chain risk analysis, identification of insider threats, support for M&A (mergers and acquisitions) operations.

Investigative journalism: investigations into corruption, tax evasion, illicit trafficking, abuse of power, with a particular focus on source verification and the responsible use of AI technologies in the journalistic process [5].

In all these contexts, the integration of generative AI raises common questions: how to maintain transparency and auditability of analytical processes? How to prevent algorithmic biases from amplifying human biases? How to ensure that the use of advanced tools does not violate fundamental rights or personal data protection rules? How to preserve human responsibility in critical decisions?

This volume addresses these issues not as abstract problems, but as concrete challenges that require operational solutions. Each chapter in Part II is structured to provide not only theoretical understanding, but also practical workflows, contextualised prompt libraries, and decision criteria for the responsible integration of AI into OSINT processes specific to each application domain.

What this book is not

It is essential to clarify from the outset what the reader

will *not* find in these pages. This clarification is not merely an editorial precaution: it reflects a precise epistemological and ethical position on the use of artificial intelligence in sensitive contexts.

It is not a manual on psychological manipulation or social engineering

Although Chapter 6 deals with topics such as informational influence, framing, and decision-making context architecture, it does so exclusively from an analytical and defensive perspective. The goal is to understand how information is processed, evaluated, and integrated into decision-making processes—not to provide tools for manipulating individuals or audiences. Any reference to influence techniques is

contextualised within the framework of OSINT analysis (understanding how malicious actors operate) and countering disinformation, never as operational instructions for conducting influence campaigns [6].

It is not a technological shortcut to bypass critical thinking.

Generative AI does not replace analytical expertise, eliminate the need to verify sources, or render counterfactual reasoning obsolete. This volume does not promise to automate intelligence or reduce OSINT analysis to a series of prompts to be copied and pasted into a chatbot. On the contrary, it systematically argues that the effective and responsible use of AI requires

more cognitive competence, not less: greater metacognitive awareness, superior critical skills, and a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of inference [7].

It is not a commercial catalogue of tools

Although Part II presents a structured matrix of AI tools for OSINT activities, the goal is not to promote specific products or provide absolute rankings. Technological tools evolve rapidly; commercial platforms change access policies, pricing, and functionality. What this book offers is a

replicable and adaptable *evaluation methodology* that allows readers to independently evaluate any tool—present or future—in relation to their operational needs and institutional constraints.

This is not a text of uncritical technological advocacy

Enthusiasm for the potential of generative AI should not translate into technological solutionism—the fallacy that every complex problem can be solved through the application of sufficiently advanced technologies. Part III of this volume is devoted entirely to systemic risks, failure modes, and the governance implications of integrating AI into OSINT. Each operational chapter includes sections devoted to limitations, typical errors, and the risks of overreliance [8].

In summary: this book does not offer facile technological optimism, nor does it promise extraordinary analytical powers through automation. It recognises the irreducible complexity of intelligence work and aims to provide conceptual tools to navigate it with greater awareness.

What this book is: a cognitive-operational framework

This volume represents the first systematic attempt to integrate cognitive neuroscience, epistemology of inference, and generative artificial intelligence architectures into a unified framework for OSINT. The approach is deliberately multidisciplinary and multi-level:

A neurocognitive foundation for OSINT analysis

Part I of the book builds a scientific understanding of how the analyst's cognitive system works: attentional mechanisms, memory consolidation, inferential biases, credibility assessment processes, vulnerability to persuasive storytelling. Understanding these mechanisms is not an academic luxury: it is a prerequisite for recognising when and how AI can genuinely support the analytical process, and when it risks amplifying pre-existing biases or inducing illusions of understanding [9].

An operational epistemology of inference under uncertainty

OSINT does not produce absolute truths: it produces probabilistic inferences in contexts of incomplete, ambiguous, potentially misleading information. This book provides a rigorous conceptual language for distinguishing between narrative coherence, statistical plausibility, and factual truth—distinctions that become crucial when working with outputs generated by LLMs, which excel in the first dimension but do not guarantee the other two [10].

A methodology for evaluating and integrating AI tools

Part II does not merely describe tools: it provides a systematic rubric for assessing fitness for purpose, auditability, regulatory compliance, cognitive load reduction, and risk of bias for each class of OSINT activity. This methodology enables informed and contextualised choices, rather than uncritical adoptions driven by technological hype.

A repertoire of contextualised operational workflows and prompt libraries

Each operational chapter (A1-A8) provides concrete workflows, annotated prompt templates, verification checklists, and decision criteria. These are not recipes to be applied mechanically, but adaptable frameworks that require contextual judgement and understanding of the underlying principles [11].

An ethical and governance framework

The use of AI in sensitive contexts raises ethical, legal, and governance issues that cannot be delegated to technologists. This book integrates considerations of privacy, algorithmic bias, accountability, transparency, and human oversight into every phase of the framework—not as a moral appendix, but as a constitutive component of the analytical process.

Ultimately, this is a book that takes both the potential and the risks of generative AI seriously. It recognises that AI-enhanced OSINT is not simply traditional OSINT made faster: it is a qualitatively different practice, requiring new skills, new conceptual frameworks, and—above all—a higher level of epistemological and ethical responsibility.

How to use this text

This volume is structured to support different modes of use:

Sequential reading (recommended for those approaching the subject for the first time)

Part I progressively builds the conceptual framework necessary to understand the interaction between human cognition and AI systems. The chapters are arranged logically: they start with strategic considerations (Chapter 1), proceed through neurocognitive foundations (Chapters 2-4), introduce the concept of AI as a cognitive amplifier (Chapter 5), address ethical and influence issues (Chapter 6), and conclude with an operational epistemology (Chapter 7). Skipping this part to go directly to the tools risks producing a superficial and potentially dangerous use of the technologies presented.

Consultation for specific activities (for experienced professionals)

Analysts already in operation can use the chapters in Part II as a reference for specific activities. The standardised structure (purpose, cognitive criticalities, tools, workflow, prompts, errors, limitations, KPIs) allows quick access to relevant information. However, it is still recommended to read at least Chapter 3 (epistemological limitations of AI) and Chapter 6 (influence and manipulation) to avoid critical misconceptions.

Use in advanced training contexts

The text is suitable for master's or doctoral courses in intelligence studies, cybersecurity, data science for analysts, or advanced training programmes for professionals. Each chapter includes extensive bibliographical references that can serve as a basis for in-depth seminars. The case studies and annotated prompts can be used as practical exercises [12].

Basis for organisational policy and governance

Institutional decision-makers can use Chapters 8-11 (evaluation method and tool matrix) and Part III (risks and governance) in particular as a basis for internal policies on the adoption of AI in OSINT contexts, for technological tool procurement criteria, or for risk management frameworks.

Regardless of the chosen mode of use, it is essential to maintain a critical and contextual approach. The tools, workflows, and prompts presented are starting points, not definitive solutions. The effectiveness of AI integration into OSINT depends on the analyst's ability to adapt these frameworks to the specificity of their operational domain, the regulatory constraints of their jurisdictional context, and—above all—the contingent nature of the particular analytical problem at hand.

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Generative artificial intelligence will not make OSINT more powerful: it will make it more demanding, more responsible, and profoundly more cognitive. This is the challenge—and opportunity—that lies ahead.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why Generative AI and Neuroscience in OSINT

Open Source Intelligence is at a turning point today. For decades, the discipline has been conceived primarily as a problem of *access* and *aggregation*: identifying publicly available sources, collecting relevant data, organising it into usable formats. The tools have evolved—from specialised search engines to web scrapers, from social media intelligence platforms to geolocation systems—but the fundamental assumption has remained unchanged: the value of OSINT lies in its ability to find information that others have not found, or to aggregate it in ways that reveal otherwise invisible patterns [13].

The advent of generative artificial intelligence—and in particular Large Language Models capable of linguistic processing, contextual reasoning, and information synthesis—is radically transforming this conception. Not because these systems can *find* information that human analysts cannot (in most cases, they cannot), but because they profoundly alter the *cognitive process* through which analysts process, integrate, and interpret available information. The central problem of contemporary OSINT is no longer primarily *where* to find information, but *how* to cognitively manage volumes of information that systematically exceed human processing capabilities [14].

This transformation raises a number of questions that require a multidisciplinary approach. How do human cognitive limitations—selective attention, limited mnemonic capacity, inferential biases—interact with the accessibility and limitations of AI systems? What neurophysiological mechanisms make analysts vulnerable to specific errors when relying on algorithmically generated outputs? How must the cognitive architecture of analytical reasoning adapt to the integration of artificial co-pilots into the inferential process?

Answering these questions requires a framework that integrates at least three domains of knowledge: (1) cognitive neuroscience, to understand the brain mechanisms underlying information processing, credibility assessment, and judgement formation; (2)

epistemology of inference, to clarify what it means to 'know' something through OSINT in contexts of radical uncertainty; (3) computer science and machine learning, to realistically understand what generative AI systems can and cannot do, and what systemic risks they introduce [15].

This chapter provides the strategic justification for such a multidisciplinary approach. It argues that the effective and responsible integration of generative AI into OSINT is not purely a technological problem—it cannot be solved simply by selecting the 'best' tools or writing more sophisticated prompts. It is a cognitive and epistemological problem that requires a deep understanding of how human analytical thinking works, what its strengths and structural vulnerabilities are, and how artificial systems can genuinely support—rather than simply replace or degrade—that process.

We will proceed through four main topics. First, we will trace the evolution of OSINT from a collection practice to an inferential process, highlighting why this transition renders the purely technological approach inadequate. Second, we will examine the inherent limitations of this approach and why it systematically fails to capture the complexity of real analytical work. Third, we will explain why cognitive neuroscience—often considered irrelevant to practical intelligence—is instead essential to understanding and improving analytical performance. Fourth, we will demonstrate why generative AI represents a paradigm shift that requires a fundamental rethinking of the relationship between analyst and technology.

1.2 The evolution of OSINT: from collection to inference

The history of OSINT can be read as a progressive expansion of the notion of 'intelligence obtainable from open sources'. In its origins during the Cold War, OSINT mainly referred to the analysis of publicly accessible government publications, radio broadcasts, newspapers, and specialist magazines. The main constraint was *physical access*: obtaining copies of foreign publications, monitoring radio broadcasts, collecting technical literature. Analysis consisted mainly of translation, cataloguing and comparison with other sources [16].