

Subject: What China's A.I. Optimism Can Teach Us — And How We Can Benefit Safely

Dear neighbors,

A recent New York Times article, “Where Are China’s A.I. Doomers?”, offers an interesting contrast between how people in China view artificial intelligence (A.I.) and how many of us in the United States feel about it.

Surveys in 47 countries found that about 69% of people in China believe A.I.’s benefits outweigh its risks, compared with only about 35% of Americans. In China, people encounter A.I. daily in very practical ways: self-driving taxis in multiple cities, service robots in hotels and restaurants, medical chatbots to reduce waiting lines, and A.I. helpers built into popular apps to recommend meals, help with shopping, and more. These tools are often free, and companies even offer incentives like cash or prizes to encourage people to try them.

The Chinese government has also framed A.I. as a key driver of economic growth and better quality of life, aiming to weave A.I. into over 70% of society by 2027 and 90% by 2030. At the same time, officials are starting to acknowledge real risks—such as job disruption, mental health concerns, deepfake abuse, and the need to keep powerful systems under human control—and are introducing safeguards and rules. So the picture is not “no worries at all,” but rather “optimistic, with guardrails.”

What can this mean for us here at our community?

We do not need to copy China’s approach, but we can take a page from their book: focus on practical benefits while staying clear-eyed about risks. A.I. does not have to be mysterious or scary. Used wisely, it can be a helpful everyday tool—much like search engines, smartphones, or online banking gradually

became. 35% AI use is not going to be enough to maintain our society. We can help by becoming literate in AI.

One easy, low-risk way to explore these benefits is to use Perplexity.ai, an A.I. assistant that many of us are already experimenting with. Perplexity is designed to answer questions in clear language, show you where its information comes from with citations, and help with real tasks such as:

Summarizing news articles (like this A.I. piece) into plain English

Drafting emails, letters, and announcements

Helping with trip ideas, recipes, or health-related questions, you can later discuss with your doctor

Assisting with hobby research, book ideas, and class materials

Unlike a simple web search, Perplexity pulls together information from multiple sources and presents it in a concise, readable way, which can be especially helpful when we are dealing with complex topics. It also allows you to ask follow-up questions in regular conversational language.

If you are curious but cautious, here are a few suggested “first steps” you might try with Perplexity:

Ask it to explain a recent news story in one paragraph.

Ask for a short summary of a book or movie you already know, just to see how it does.

Ask it to help you compose a polite email to a friend or family member.

You stay in control by reviewing the answers, using your own judgment, and double-checking anything important—just as you

would with information from a website, TV, or newspaper.

If there is interest, we can arrange a short, hands-on session where residents bring their devices and we walk through using Perplexity.ai together, step by step. The goal is not to “hand our lives over to A.I.” but to learn how to make it work for us: saving time, supporting learning, and making everyday tasks a bit easier.

If you would like to join such a session—or if you have questions or concerns about A.I.—please reply to this email and let me know.

Sincerely,
Mel Haas