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Webinar On

Driving Documentation Workflows in the Age of AI

Speaker

Marco Spinello

Senior technical writer

Booking.com

About me

- Nickname at previous company: *@thedude*
- Typo creator at scale
- Nuked a production database (Confluence. For real.)
- MediaWiki, Confluence, DITA XML, rSt, AsciiDoc, Markdown, MDX, Mermaid
- Patterns are powerful, from Native American rock art to konnakol to tech docs

About this talk

- Claude helped develop it.
- Almost all images are AI generated
  (source: Pixabay).

Overview

- From chaos to order 💥 ➡️ 📓✨
  (Well, sort of. More or less. Kinda.)
- What can AI help with?
- Search for patterns 🔍
- Start small ➡️
- Rinse and repeat 🔁
- Keep tabs

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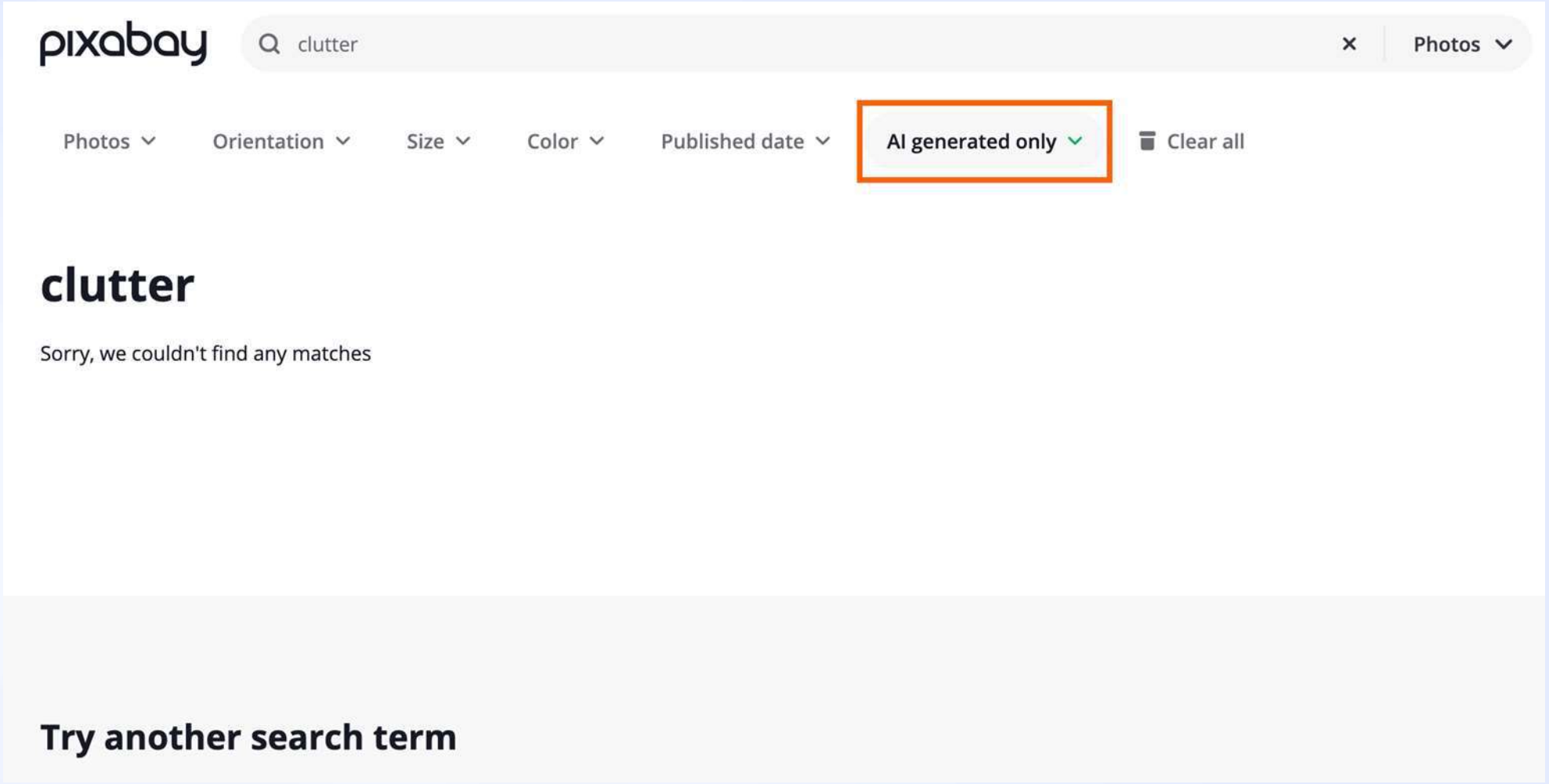
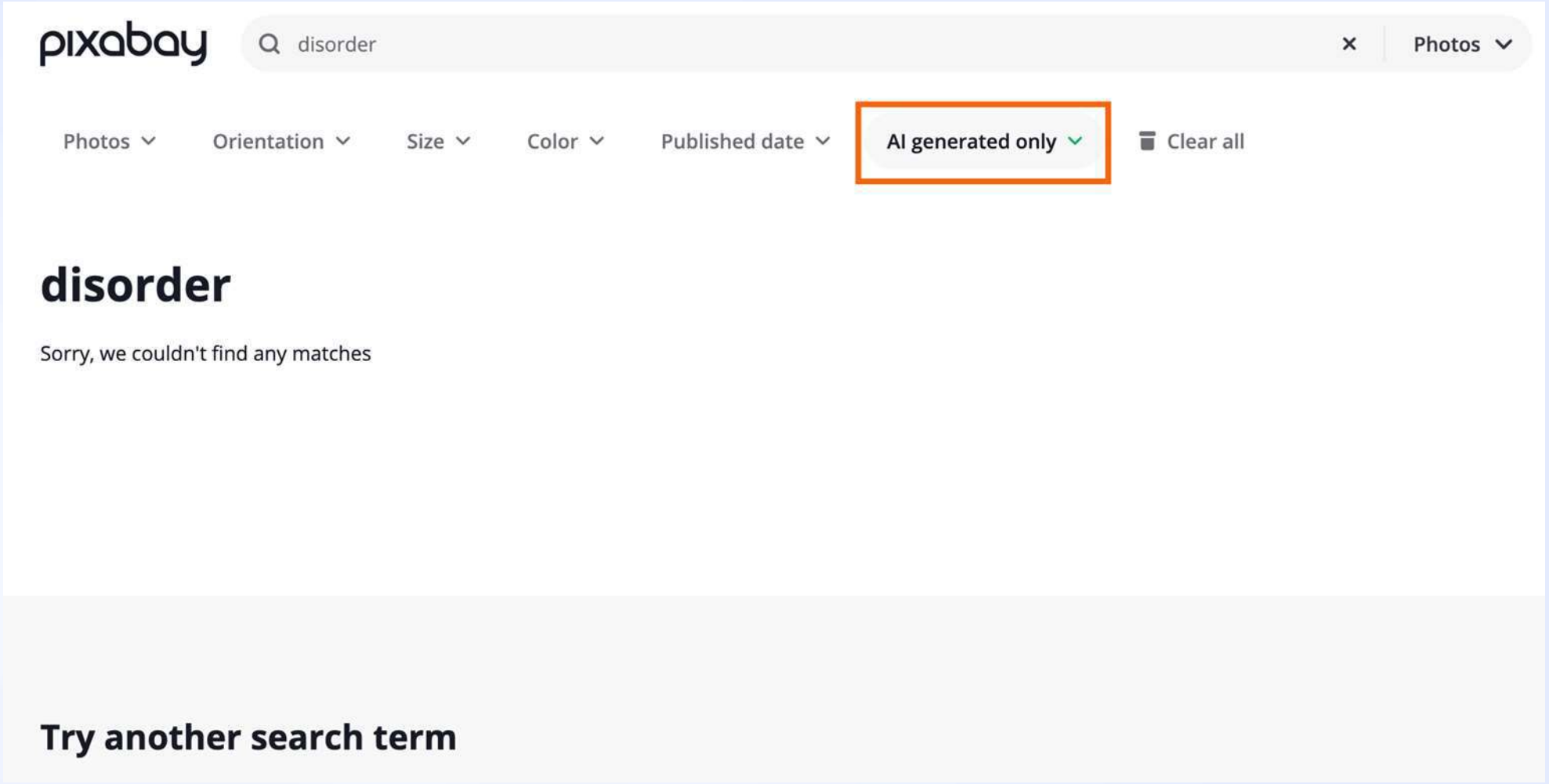
From chaos to order

A day in the life of a technical writer:

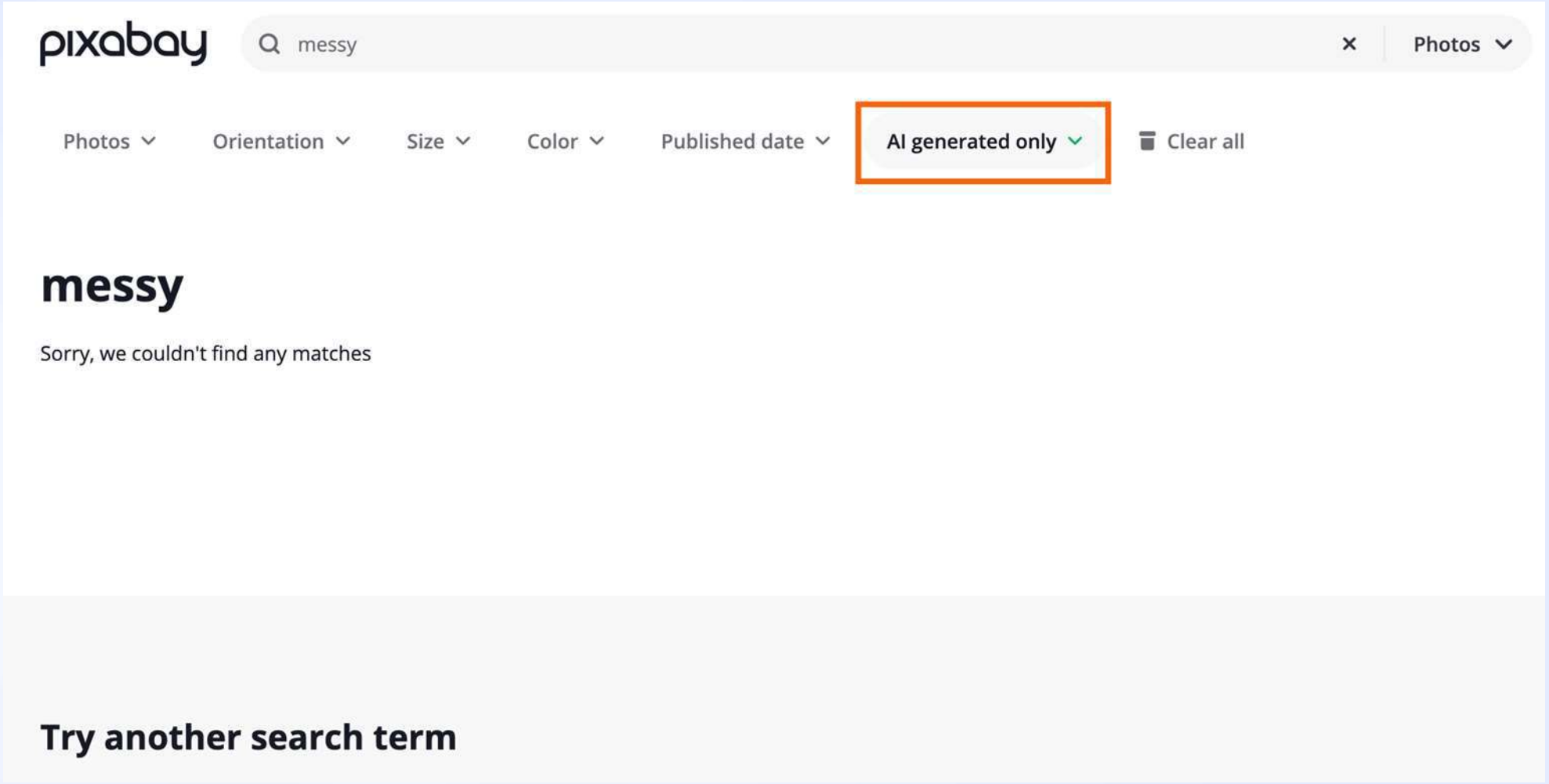
AI and messiness



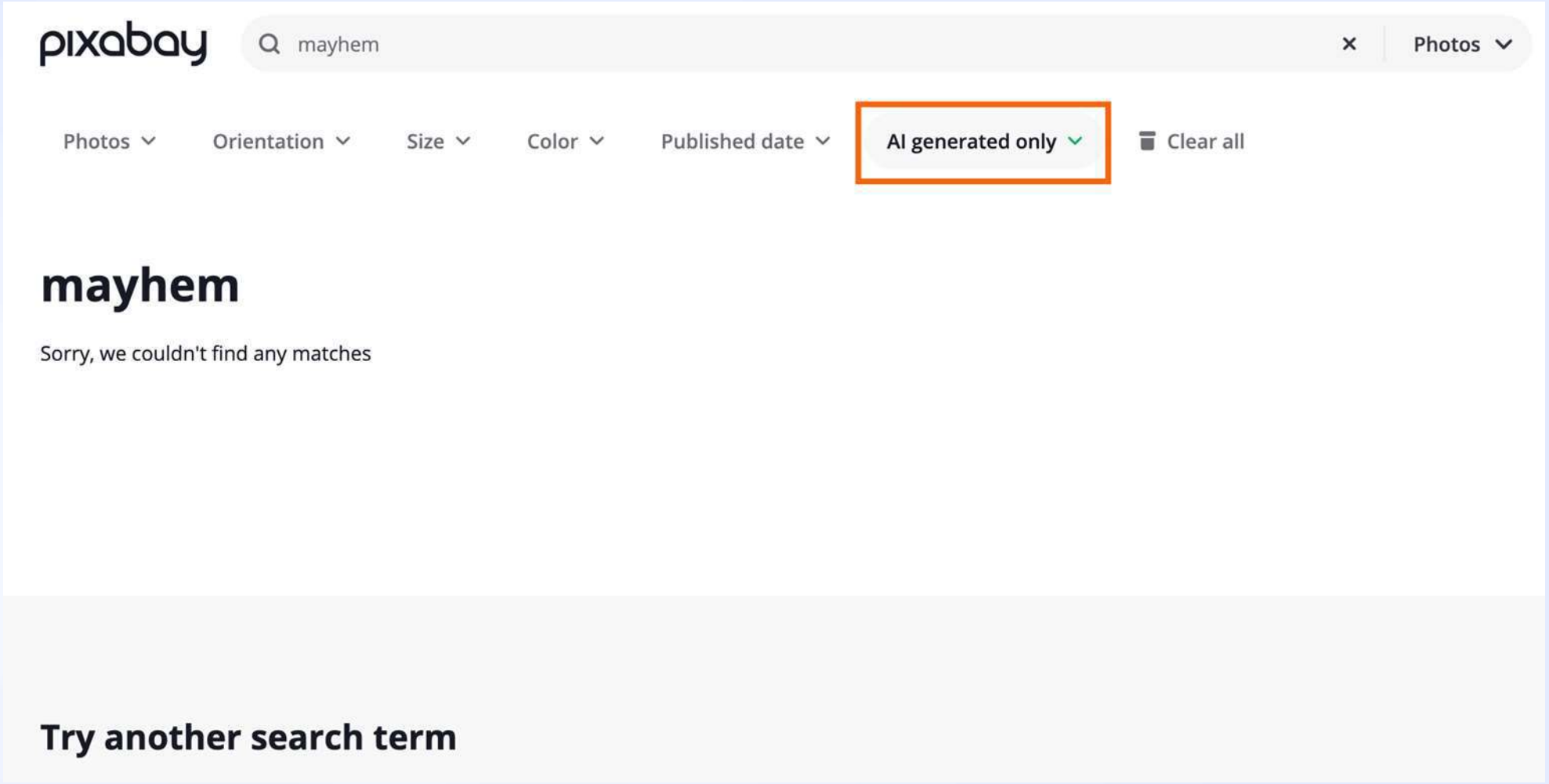
AI and messiness



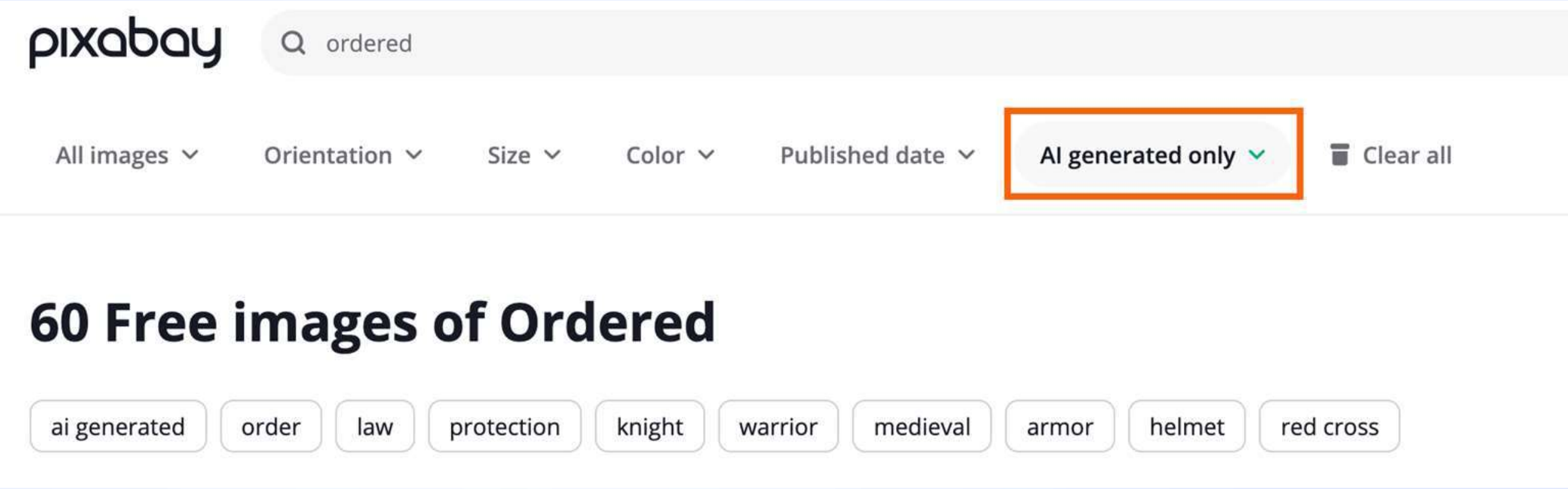
AI and messiness



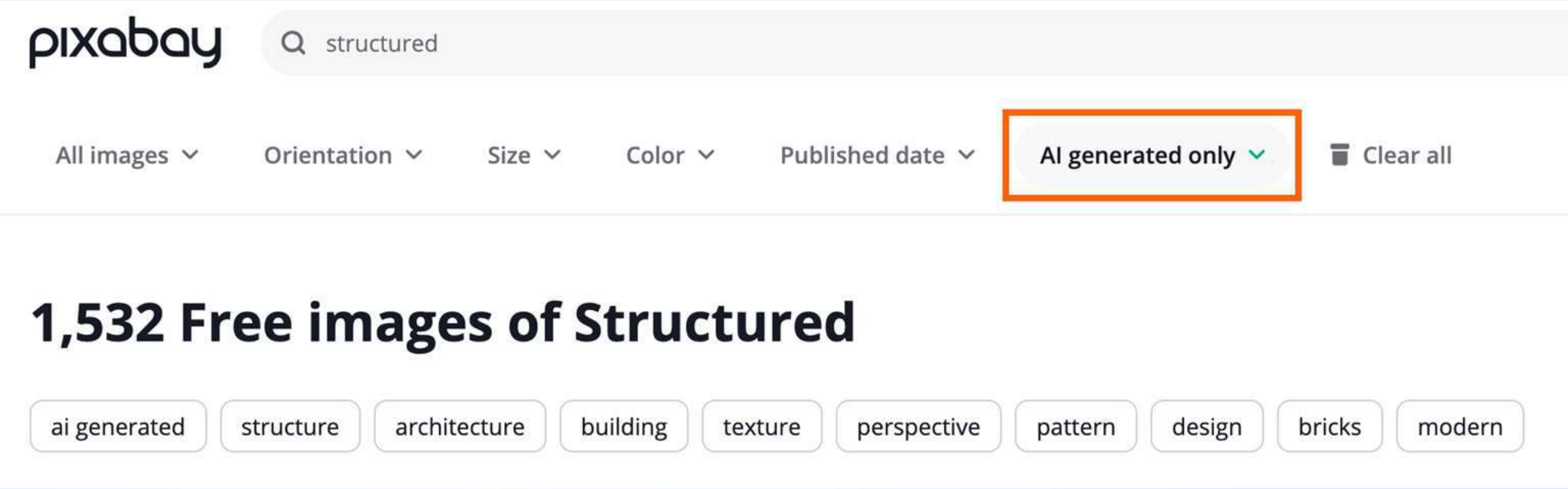
AI and messiness



AI and messiness



AI and messiness



Desired outcome

Notice the crumbling bits at the bottom.

We'll get to them later.

Where to start from

What can AI help with?

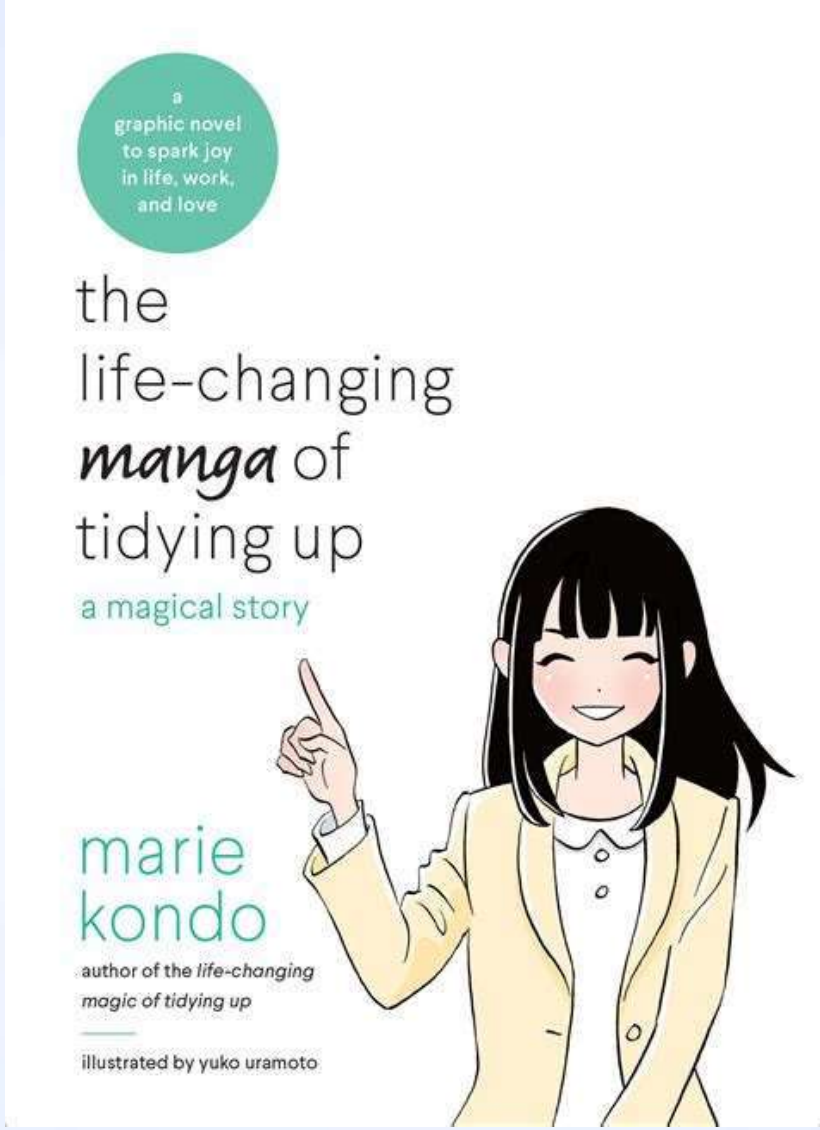
💡 Easy answer:

😂 The boring parts!

❓ How do I find out what’s boring?

✨ It doesn’t spark joy! ✨

Find the boring stuff



1. Map your process.

2. Find tasks that are:

   - ✓ High-effort
   - ✓ Low-satisfaction
   - ✓ Repetitive

Pick candidates for AI

AI can help you with the grunt work:

1. **Gather information**: automate collection and synthesis of technical information from multiple sources.
2. **Validate the sources**: verify the accuracy of technical content through fact-checking systems.
3. **Plan and structure**: create documentation scaffolding and outlines.
4. **Create content**: generating comprehensive draft content with code examples and diagrams.
5. **Test and validate**: implement quality assessment for technical accuracy and style compliance.
6. **Monitor and improve**: set up analytics, feedback processing, and continuous improvement.

1. Gather information

Many sources of information: Confluence, Jira, Slack, email, Google Docs, README files, code comments…

For example:

1. Analyze code repositories and pull requests to extract key technical details.
2. Process meeting transcripts and team discussions to capture requirements and use cases.
3. Compare new information against existing documentation to identify overlaps and gaps.
4. Create structured summaries of technical concepts for easier processing.

2. Validate the sources

Works better if the AI implements RAG. RAG data needs to be accurate, relevant, up to date, and exhaustive (within the defined scope).

For example:

1. Check the reference sources vs existing documentation and the code base.
2. Generate questions to ask SMEs to identify potential gaps or inconsistencies in the available documentation.
3. Create a preliminary technical accuracy checklist based on the existing documentation.

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3. Plan and structure

Create an outline for the documentation article:

- Article title and paragraph titles.
- Placeholders for rich content such as images, diagrams, embedded, PDFs or presentations, and videos.
- Related topics list
  (same as the “See also” list of related links at the end of Wikipedia articles).
- AI-driven templates.

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4. Create content

Use AI as a sparring partner:

- Fetch relevant info from Slack and order it in a timeline.
- Fetch images and other rich media available within the organization.
- Produce diagrams based on a text description.
- Suggest related topics.

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5. Test and validate

AI complements automated checks and linting:

- Check structure vs corresponding template.
- Identify gaps or missing information.
- Check readability.
- Suggest improvements for future updates.

6. Monitor and improve

AI helps you connect the dots.

For example, leverage analytics to get actionable feedback about:

- Trends in good vs poor docs performance.
- How users navigate the docs.
- Identifying gaps.
- Areas requiring attention.

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Ethical concerns

- Bias due to LLM training data.
- Good at lying and scheming.
- Data-hungry
  (concerns: PII, copyright).
- Huge, expensive, closed AI vs Hugging Face and open source.
- AI parody: AI writes resumes that another AI reads.
  Worse: fake AI candidates

Environmental concerns

- Electricity consumption.
- Pressure on the power grid.
- Water consumption.
- Search engines can be a better alternative for simple information lookups.

Questions ?

Thank You!