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Into the Unknown: Developing AI Policies for the Student Research Journal

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Into the Unknown: Developing AI Policies for the Student Research Journal

Abstract

In light of the artificial intelligence (AI) boom in late 2022, policies governing the use and disclosure of artificial intelligence in scholarly journals have occupied editorial boards of all disciplines. The Student Research Journal (SRJ) at San José State University sought to tackle this issue with an inclusive process to better serve our authors and editorial team in uncertain times. This editorial will discuss the work of the SRJ's AI Policy Working Group in completing a comprehensive review of literature surrounding the topics of AI and scholarly publishing, detail the journal's first AI disclosure policy in depth, and identify next steps for the SRJ to take in advancing the responsible use of AI in research development. The goal of this policy is not only to guide potential authors and our editorial staff, but to also provide a blueprint for other editorial boards and scholarly journals to consider adopting comprehensive and adaptable policies to address the unpredictable growth of artificial intelligence technologies.

Keywords

artificial intelligence, scholarly publishing, generative AI, artificial intelligence policy, AI disclosure, editorial team, Student Research Journal

Acknowledgements

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About Author

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Into the Unknown: Developing AI Policies for the *Student Research Journal*

In the fall of 2023, the *Student Research Journal* (*SRJ*) at San José State University embarked on the development of a set of policies to address the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) in works submitted to the journal. Given the many uncertainties resulting from the AI boom in late 2022, the editorial team was eager to establish a suite of policies to help authors make transparent choices in how these tools were utilized and disclosed in the creation of their research. This editorial details the process of developing those policies, including an overview of the existing literature on the subject, the guiding questions used to frame our work, an overview of our disclosure policy, and the remaining work to be completed as part of our larger AI policy framework.

Establishing goals and preliminary work

To bring this set of policies to fruition, the editorial team established an AI Policy Working Group, consisting of the managing editor, two copy editors, and one content editor. The group was charged with executing several goals:

- To create a foundational policy that should be adapted and developed over time as artificial intelligence technology and the scholarly communications ecosystem evolve;
- To provide clear, actionable guidelines for both submitting authors and the editorial team about how to approach the use of generative AI tools in submitted manuscripts;
- To engage with the entire *SRJ* editorial team as the AI Policy Working Group moved through the policy development process.

The first step on this journey involved a comprehensive review of existing literature to understand current opinions and approaches to how AI is addressed and utilized in scholarly publishing. This investigation involved reviewing a broad swath of writings on topics related to both artificial intelligence and publishing. Through the literature review process, it became clear that any comprehensive AI policy would require a diverse set of perspectives on the subject of generative AI tools, and how generative AI is utilized and critiqued within the larger scholarly ecosystem, from individual scholars to established publishing bodies. The final pool of resources reviewed by the working group encompassed government publications, higher education guidelines, business and corporate publications, and articles or editorials from reputable trade publications. For a list of reviewed resources not cited as part of this editorial, see the Further Reading section.

The AI Policy Working Group was responsible for reviewing, assessing, and synthesizing these resources into actionable options for the *SRJ* to pursue policywise. As this effort progressed, the working group regularly consulted with the rest of the editorial team in defining the scope and details of our eventual policies. To translate this bounty of information about AI and scholarly publishing into a series of structured conversations with the entire team, four questions were defined for the working group to consider during our review of the literature:

- Does the resource take a stance on the use of AI in scholarly research? If so, what is that stance?

- What pros and cons are presented about the use of AI in scholarly research?
- Given the rapidly evolving landscape of AI tools, does this resource provide ideas on how to keep tabs on this quickly developing technology?
- What practical implications does this resource offer when considering how to enforce an AI policy?

Literature Review

Prefacing this literature review, it is important to map out the spectrum of opinions about how to disclose the use of AI in scholarly publications. Figure 1 establishes the poles of potential use cases, defining one end as free, unattributed use of these tools and the other not allowing their use under any circumstance.

Figure 1

Spectrum of Approaches to AI Disclosure

The editorial team determined that neither of these polar approaches were appropriate for the *SRJ*. The freer approach with no disclosure would curtail the journal's intention to promote transparency and accountability in how AI tools are used to develop scholarship. The latter, restrictive approach would be difficult to enforce and prevent the *SRJ* from actively engaging in future technological advances influencing the scholarly conversation. In light of this spectrum, the editorial team agreed that our approach would ultimately fall somewhere in between these extremes. This would allow authors to experiment with these tools as developing researchers, while still promoting transparency and contextualization of their usage.

Benefits and challenges to AI use in scholarly research

Despite uncertainty surrounding the potential impacts of generative AI tools on the scholarly landscape, many positive attributes were identified in favor of their use. Several benefits include assistance with pre-writing, brainstorming, and drafting efforts (Crawford et al., 2023; Duke University, 2024), while others highlighted the ability to help non-native speakers of certain languages communicate in the scholarly vernacular of their written language (Hoover, 2023; Hosseini et al., 2023). In addition to aiding authors, generative AI tools have several opportunities to assist journals and editorial boards. Their abilities can be harnessed to check

submitted manuscripts for correct formatting and required content in alignment with the journal's policies, as well as execute general copy editing processes (COPE, 2021; Crawford et al., 2023). Discovery can also play a connected role by providing robust metadata for journal articles and enhancing the finding experience of research summaries (Lund et al., 2023). Regardless of its usage, generative AI tools are intended to enhance, but not replace, human intelligence as the primary driving force in the research process.

Amplifying these concerns of balance between human and artificial intelligence are a series of broader issues of how AI can undermine the scholarly ecosystem. The first of many concerns pertaining to the *SRJ* and other scholarly journals is the provision of inaccurate results from a chatbot. Given the opacity of how these tools make decisions, it is incredibly difficult to determine the reliability of generated information without the clear citation of scraped sources (Dalalah & Dalalah, 2023). These tools can hallucinate information and provide non-existent references (Harker, 2023; Hoover, 2023), further disputing claims of reliability. Generative AI's ability to provide accurate responses relies heavily on its training data, which can be vulnerable to perpetuating biases and therefore provide distorted results (Lund & Wang, 2023). These challenges culminate into a major issue targeted specifically at the world of scholarly publishing: AI-generated paper mills. Machine fabricated research papers have the potential to severely disrupt the publishing industry by diluting the research bounty with inaccurate or biased studies, further detracting from the efforts of human-authored research (COPE, 2023; Hoover 2023).

These arguments against the use of AI in the research ecosystem represent only a portion of the concerns facing these technologies. Additional issues identified in the field involved concerns regarding plagiarism (Dalalah & Dalalah, 2023; World Association of Medical Editors, 2023), challenges surrounding copyright and ownership of generated material (Lund et al., 2023), and issues surrounding privacy and confidentiality in chatbot queries (Manna, 2023; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2023). The qualms raised in this arena reinforce the notion that the application of human intelligence is still the bedrock of the scholarly research process. To combat the potential errors and biases presented in AI-generated content, researchers and journals must ensure that lived experiences and documented, evidence-based analysis is centered as the primary aspect of the development of quality research. Failure to address potential biases presented in AI-generated responses has the potential to further damage the integrity of the scholarly ecosystem and jeopardize the legitimacy of continued use of these tools in the research process.

AI is not an author

An overarching theme that resounded throughout the literature review is the assertion that artificial intelligence tools should not be granted individual authorship. AI chatbots are not able to take responsibility for the responses they provide, aligning with the broader scope of accountability required to establish authorship in a manuscript (Crawford et al., 2023; University of Utah, 2023). This stance was affirmed by notable industry publishers (American Psychological Association, 2023; Cambridge University Press, n.d.; Journal of Academic

Librarianship, n.d.) as well as large editorial and publishing ethics bodies (COPE, 2023; World Association of Medical Editors, 2023). The *Student Research Journal* affirms this notion and, through our policy, works to highlight that generative AI's role is as a tool. In this capacity, a tool possesses specific utility depending on the context of its use, rather than the ability to claim responsibility for generated material. As such, the editorial team determined that authors should include a citation of any AI tool to equate it not as an author, but as a resource tapped to aid their research.

Adapting & enforcing in real time

Aside from maintaining vigilance of new developments in artificial intelligence, the scholarly publishing field lacks a concrete strategy of how to enforce the policies established to address AI usage. A major challenge lies in the fact that while there are industry-wide standards, protocols, and precedents, a universal policy is unlikely to meet the needs of every publisher as authorial and editorial needs change based on the scholarly discipline and their operational scale.

One preliminary solution has been for journals to utilize so-called AI detection software to identify passages of machine-generated text. There are several approaches for how these technologies have claimed to operate in recognizing such passages. For example, GPT Zero asserts the use of several attributes, including similarity to other AI texts and sentence variation, to identify AI written material (Watson & Štiglic, 2023). OpenAI uses a "classifier" to articulate potential computer-generated text using a Likert scale. These predictions are based on trained comparisons of human and machine written text samples (Braindard, 2023). Outside existing models, there are other approaches in mind for future solutions. Abd-Elall et al. (2022) suggest the development of a solution akin to adblocker software, which utilizes keywords identified in an original manuscript to generate new papers and compare them back to the original writing samples (Lund et al., 2023).

Despite these innovative concepts for AI detection, current options are flawed and unreliable for broader adoption. OpenAI admits that its detection software identifies "likely" instances of computer-generated content roughly a quarter of the time (Brainard, 2023). In the case of ChatGPT, detection rates fell from 74% to 42% when AI written text had been slightly altered by humans (Williams, 2023). Aside from accuracy rates, the propensity to sustain biases is the most concerning trait of current detection software options. In a study at Stanford University, AI detectors routinely demonstrated bias against non-native English speakers, citing human written essays to be generated by machines (Liang et al., 2023). Given that one of the supposed benefits of using AI tools to develop scholarship is the ability to aid non-native speakers, it is hypocritical for solutions to penalize those same individuals for their use. With these issues in mind, Dalalah & Dalalah (2023) note that "it is crucial to use a combination of automated tools, and human reviews and judgment in order to reduce the risk of false positives" (pg. 8). This quote begs the question: what value added does AI detection software offer when additional bias might be introduced into the equation and human discernment might be an adequate alternative to identify machine written text?

Whatever solutions are ultimately deemed sufficient to meet editorial needs, the singular trait that any successful policy must possess to address the use of generative AI in research development is adaptability. To guide the industry through this period of uncertainty, Kaebnick et al. (2023) indicate that "reliance on evolving professional norms based on broader public conversation about generative AI technologies may turn out to be the best way forward" (pg. 5). While our understanding of these tools and their functionalities continues to evolve, the larger scholarly ecosystem must be prepared to continue this conversation on adapting our norms and policies to meet the developing needs of readers, authors, and editorial bodies.

Turning knowledge into action

With this intensive review of the state of artificial intelligence and scholarly publishing complete, the AI Policy Working Group shared our findings with the editorial team and developed a four-pronged policy framework to address the issues and needs of our unique scholarly entity:

Figure 2

SRJ AI Policy Framework

1. AI disclosure policy, establish enforcement and review mechanisms
2. Editor guidelines for identifying non-disclosed AI usage
3. Guidelines for future authors on responsible/ethical AI usage
4. Actions *SRJ* can take to advocate for ethical AI use in the scholarly ecosystem

The framework in Figure 2 outlines the key areas of policymaking and activity the *SRJ* would undertake in the coming months and years. The foundational piece of the *SRJ*'s AI policies, and the primary focus of this editorial, is a disclosure policy for submitting authors to explain and cite their use of any generative AI tools in their manuscripts. The remaining flanks of the policy are briefly described below.

***SRJ*'s AI Disclosure Policy**

After several months of drafting and revision, the editorial team voted to approve the journal's first AI disclosure policy for the journal in March 2024 (See Appendix A). Divided into three sections, the first part of the policy describes different ways in which generative AI tools could be used in the writing process and, based on said usage, describes where in the manuscript to

disclose it. Adapted from the guidelines and policies from the World Association of Medical Editors (2023) and the American Psychological Association (2023), the combination of disclosure locations in the *SRJ*'s policies provides an opportunity for authors to elaborate on the reasoning behind their use of a generative AI tool, cite the specific tool utilized, and transparently provide their query and results. Context plays a major role in determining where of the three locations the use of AI should be disclosed. If purely used for the review of text for any grammatical recommendations, usage should be described in the methodology section. In any cases where authors used a tool to draft text or generate new content, authors must include the tool they used in the reference section and provide both the prompt and response as supplements in an appendix. While these procedures will require some practice, the editorial team believes they provide a comprehensive approach to explaining why, how, and in what context generative AI tools are being used in the research process.

The second section focuses on ensuring compliance with the disclosure policy, and promoting the responsible use of generative AI tools. Ensuring policy compliance will require the efforts of all editorial team members, from content and copy edits being alert to potential, non-disclosed uses, to the editorial team leadership for facilitating the conversation between the editors and author about perceived, non-disclosed uses. Establishing a compliance process for the journal is necessary as we seek to promote the responsible and ethical use of generative AI tools. In doing so, the policy outlines specific scenarios for failing to properly disclose (including the delay of the publication timeline or removal of a published work if discovered after the editorial cycle is complete). The team hopes that this clause is invoked as a rare exception and encourages submitting authors to actively engage with the editor-in-chief if there is any concern or question about how to adequately disclose AI use in compliance with our policy.

The final section of the policy briefly discusses the periodic review of the journal's AI policies. Given the rate of development that artificial intelligence tools have had over the past years, the editorial team does not anticipate our current policy will stay unchanged for very long! At minimum, a biannual review will be implemented to ensure that our policies are reflective of the current state of technology while remaining supportive of both our authors and editors to do their jobs successfully.

By defining parameters for disclosure, compliance, and periodic review, the *SRJ* strives to establish a permission structure by which student researchers are afforded the opportunity to responsibly experiment with new methodologies in their research development. Allying these parameters is the notion that authors should use these technologies with an eye towards intention and transparency. Intention establishes justification for why a tool is being used and allows authors to consider the contextualization of its use within their own research. Transparency reaffirms that authors should be upfront and honest about how they utilize these technologies in their work to generate new ideas of their usage for future researchers. By aligning these research values in the context of this policy, the *SRJ* seeks to foster and further promote responsibility in the scholarly conversation surrounding artificial intelligence.

Next steps for the *Student Research Journal*

With the most substantial and foundational piece of our AI policy framework established, there is still much work for the current and future editorial teams to accomplish. Our next step involves the development of guidelines for the editorial team to identify potential uses of artificial intelligence in manuscripts that are not disclosed in compliance with our policy. At this moment in time, AI detection software solutions are not a reliable option for the journal to adopt without more rigorous testing and assessment. Similarly, human detection of AI is an evolving competency, and we hope our guidelines provide a foundation to be built upon as methods of detection improve.

Looking beyond the boundaries of the editorial team, the *SRJ* is interested to see what actions we can take as a scholarly body to promote the ethical use of generative AI tools in the scholarly ecosystem. These developments would ideally involve collaboration with staff at the King Library and larger San José State University administration to develop guidelines for authors on the responsible use of AI tools as a complement to the journal's policies. External developments would involve engaging with our submission manager, Digital Commons, to identify any potential steps the journal can take to prevent the unauthorized crawling or scraping of our catalog for training data purposes. Another major endeavor for future editorial teams will be determining, once more reliable models and solutions have been thoroughly vetted and verified, if an AI detection software should be used to review submissions to the journal. In this instance, the editorial team will conduct an independent investigation of research and assessment for any potential solution to identify the scope of its usage and ensure it meets the needs of our authorial and editorial constituents. Whatever shape these tools may take in the future, the *Student Research Journal* commits to being attentive and responsive to the developing technological landscape of artificial intelligence.

An invitation

A recurring theme underscoring our policy and this editorial is that the work of developing substantial policies to address artificial intelligence usage is still in its infancy. There is still far more work to be done, and the success of our future endeavors will not be achieved solely by a singular editorial team. Promoting and enhancing these policies will need to be done in dialogue with authors and scholars, editorial teams and peer journals, and other actors in the larger scholarly ecosystem. The *SRJ* editorial team encourages any and all individuals in this space to converse with our journal and other editorial entities about this policy and where we go next as these capricious technologies continue to develop. Our hope is that this activity inspires further development of policies to address the needs of various authors and disciplines in the publishing landscape with regard to artificial intelligence. The scholarly conversation is a vibrant domain, and it is incumbent on all of its participants, from reader to researcher, editorial team to editor-in-chief, to engage in the certainties and uncertainties of these emerging technologies and thoughtfully discuss and disclose a way forward.

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Further Reading

Elsevier. (n.d.). *Publishing ethics.* https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/publishing-ethics?trial=true

Elsevier frames its stance on the use of AI for both authors and editors in a broader set of policies related to publishing ethics. This resource highlights the importance of considering AI-related policies as part of an overall strategy and vision for ethical standards within a journal or publishing house.

Exec. Order No. 2023-19. (2023). https://www.governor.pa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/20230920_EO-2023-19_AI_Final_Executed.pdf

This Executive Order from Pennsylvania outlines core values of how AI should be used in the context of governmental agencies. These policies and the oversight structures described herein would be useful for journals and publishers to consider in defining their policies and governance structures to ensure responsible AI use.

Exec. Order No. 14,100, 3 C.F.R. (2023). https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/11/01/2023-24283/safe-secure-and-trustworthy-development-and-use-of-artificial-intelligence

President Biden's comprehensive Executive Order identifies strategies for risk management and standards to establish across a variety of sectors. While the recommendations are targeted at a federal scale, the values of privacy protection, supporting workers, and responsible use are equally applicable in a scholarly context.

Flanagin, A., Kendall-Taylor J., & Bibbins-Domingo K. (2023). Guidance for authors, peer reviewers, and editors on use of AI, language models, and chatbots. *JAMA, 330*(8), 702-703. https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2023.12500

This editorial provides several interesting questions asked of authors upfront about the potential use of AI in their writing and guidelines for peer reviewers regarding confidentiality.

McAdoo, T. (2024, February 23). *How to cite ChatGPT*. American Psychological Association. https://apastyle.apa.org/blog/how-to-cite-chatgpt

This blog post provides a foundational citation format for ChatGPT and other AI software and provides ideas for contextualizing the usage of AI tools in the narrative of a scholarly work.

RELX. (2022, June). *Responsible artificial intelligence principles at RELX*. https://www.relx.com/~/media/Files/R/RELX-Group/documents/responsibility/download-center/relx-responsible-ai-principles-0622.pdf

While this resource has a corporate scope, many of its principles of responsible AI use could be translated to the scholarly context and could serve as inspiration for other upcoming research journals.

Appendix A: *SRJ* AI Disclosure Policy

SRJ prides itself on advancing intellectual inquiry and fostering student participation in scholarly publication. We work to promote best practices in scholarship and academic publication, including maintaining integrity in the publication and peer review process. Our AI Policies are intended to support the emerging practice of responsible artificial intelligence (AI) usage in scholarship and normalize disclosure of AI usage as a necessary part of the scholarly publication process.

1. **Disclosure of AI tool usage in manuscripts, book reviews, and evidence summaries submitted to the *SRJ***

To ensure transparency and accountability in the scholarly publication process, ***submitting authors must disclose the use of any generative AI text or image tools (AI tools) in the creation of their scholarly work.***

AI tools may include, but are not limited to:

- ChatGPT;
- GPT-4 or subsequent versions; or
- Bard/Gemini.

How should submitting authors disclose the use of AI tools in the creation of their scholarly work?

AI tools can be utilized in a variety of scholarly writing contexts. Depending on how an author used AI tools in the creation of their submission, the author will be required to disclose such usage in one or more of the following ways:

A. Methodology

In the methodology section of your scholarly work, provide a description of why the AI tool was used, what function it served in your research approach, and how its usage influenced the creation of your scholarship.

B. References

A citation of the AI tool (in the references list and in-text if applicable) must be included in APA format, which includes four elements:

Author: publisher of the tool
Date: year the tool was utilized
Title: name of the tool, version number, and description of the software in brackets
Source: include the URL

C. Appendix

The exact prompt provided to the AI tool and the response must be included as supplemental material in an appendix. Ensure that the formatting of the appendix is APA 7 compliant (see APA 7: 2.14 Appendices).

Submitting authors can refer to the chart below to determine where they must disclose the use of AI tools in their submission.

How was the AI tool used?	**Where is disclosure required?**
Reviewing text and making grammatical recommendations	A. Methodology
Drafting new text	A. Methodology; B. References; and C. Appendix
Generating analytical work	A. Methodology; B. References; and C. Appendix
Reporting data results in the form of a figure, table, or other illustrative manner	A. Methodology; B. References; and C. Appendix
Writing computer codes	A. Methodology; B. References; and C. Appendix
Generating images from a textual prompt	A. Methodology; B. References; and C. Appendix

If you have any questions about responsibly incorporating AI into your submission or the proper disclosure elements outlined here, we encourage you to reach out to sjsu.ischool.srj@gmail.com.

2. Compliance with these AI Policies

To ensure compliance with these AI Policies, the *SRJ* Editorial Team has implemented the following measures:

Authors will review these AI Policies when submitting scholarly works for publication
Future authors submitting to the *SRJ* will be required to review these AI Policies and check a box verifying at the time of submission that they have reviewed and are in full compliance with these AI Policies.

Editorial review
The SRJ Editorial Team has been trained to identify common indicators of AI usage in submissions. If a member of the SRJ Editorial Team believes that AI tools were utilized in a submitted scholarly work and were not disclosed in accordance with these AI Policies, the Editor-In-Chief of the SRJ may reach out to the submitting author to discuss this matter.

Encouraging Responsible AI Use
While these AI Policies are intended to support and guide submitting authors on responsible use of AI tools, failure to abide by these AI Policies may result in the following:

- A submitting author's publication timeline may be delayed while we work with the author to address and remedy any improper AI use or lack of disclosure.
- If improper AI use is not disclosed and remedied during the publication process and is discovered after publication, we may choose to remove the published scholarly work from the journal's issue. We may also determine that the SRJ will no longer accept future submissions from the author.

If you have any questions about responsibly incorporating AI into your submission or the proper disclosure of AI usage, please feel free to reach out to sjsu.ischool.srj@gmail.com.

3. Periodic review of the *SRJ* AI Policies

Any policy to address AI must possess resilience and flexibility to withstand the evolution of new technologies while meeting the needs and concerns of our editors and authors. To ensure our processes are up-to-date, ***the SRJ Editorial Team will review these AI Policies at least once every semester***, and make updates and modifications as appropriate.

Disclosure policies are an emerging trend amongst scholarly publications, and the *SRJ* is committed to maintaining an open dialogue on the intents and impacts of these AI Policies. If you would like to engage with the journal concerning our AI Policies or proper AI usage and disclosure in scholarship, we encourage you to reach out to sjsu.ischool.srj@gmail.com.