Generative AI in Academic Publishing:
Comparative Analysis of Five Publishers' Policies

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ABSTRACT

The authors present a qualitative comparative analysis of AI policies from five major academic publishers: Taylor & Francis, Elsevier, Sage, Wiley, and Springer Nature. They employed position statements of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) as their analytical framework. Six key themes emerged: permitted AI use, prohibited AI use, disclosure requirements, AI as author and co-author, AI in peer review, and policy adaptability. They found substantial differences among publishers in defining acceptable AI use and disclosure requirements. While all publishers explicitly state that AI cannot claim authorship, their policies differ in permitted AI roles, particularly regarding peer review and manuscript preparation. These inconsistencies create ethical challenges for authors and reviewers. The study concludes by recommending clearer, discipline-specific guidelines and enhanced reviewer training to ensure responsible AI use for upholding scholarly integrity.

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid integration of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into academic publishing has raised concerns about ethical boundaries of technological innovation (Chauhan & Currie, 2024). Once limited to assisting writers with grammar and readability, GenAI tools can now generate entire sections of text and analyze complex datasets (Mhlanga, 2024). These changes have intensified debate on accountability and publication quality (Ganguly et al., 2025; Hanafi et al., 2025). Traditionally, academic authorship has required researchers to generate original content and assume responsibility for the validity of their claims (Bozkurt, 2024). GenAI challenges these norms by automating text production without critical reasoning (Watson et al., 2025). While AI can produce grammatically coherent text, it lacks the ability to assume responsibility for accuracy (Xu et al., 2021). The use of AI to generate content without human oversight reinforces the pressure-driven 'publish or perish' culture and may contribute to a rise in retractions due to undisclosed AI use (Chauhan, 2024; Chauhan & Currie, 2024; Kwon, 2025; Orral, 2025). Many journals have retracted articles for violating editorial policies by incorporating AI-generated text without disclosure, a practice that undermines the credibility of published research (Dergaa et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2024).

The scale of GenAI's influence is evident in recent studies. Gray (2024) estimated that over 1% of 2023's published articles (roughly 60,000 papers) contained a high frequency of words commonly generated by AI models. Similarly, Cheng et al. (2024) found that roughly 5% of preprints submitted post ChatGPT launch included AI-generated text, a figure likely underestimated due to strategies authors use to hide AI involvement (Bakla, 2023; Zohery, 2023). With time and training, AI tools could produce more natural text, which can make it challenging to detect undisclosed contributions (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). In addition, Taylor & Francis and Wiley are collaborating with AI companies to train AI models, which raises concerns that undetected AI-generated content could distort scientific knowledge if incorporated into training datasets (Chen et al., 2024; Nguyen & Vuong, 2025).

Failure to disclose AI contributions undermines trust among readers, reviewers, and editors (Hosseini et al., 2023; Koul, 2023; Sharma, 2023; Ugwu et al., 2024). These concerns align with critiques of automation in knowledge systems, such as Zuboff's (2019) analysis of surveillance capitalism, where efficiency often overshadows ethical reflection. In this context, publisher policies serve as operational guidelines and critical mechanisms for regulating human and machine agency in scholarship (Ågerfalk, 2020). Publishers' role is crucial in protecting science from malpractices, determined by the policies they implement to address undisclosed AI-generated content (Wiwanitmkit & Wiwanitkit, 2024). Addressing these challenges requires redefining authorship to emphasize intellectual accountability and ensuring that the use of GenAI adheres to standards of transparency in research (Yeo, 2023).

Opportunities Created by AI in Academic Publishing

AI tools offer various opportunities to improve scholarly productivity (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024). One such opportunity is AI tools' ability to reduce the manual labor in manuscript preparation (Youvan, 2024). Adams and Chuah (2022) noted that tasks like formatting references, writing keywords, and correcting sentence structure detract researchers, particularly novice researchers and non-native English speakers from engaging fully in their primary research activities. By delegating these tasks to AI, researchers can focus on their core research activities (Mondal & Mondal, 2023; Razack et al., 2021). Many journals have embedded AI tools (e.g., Elsevier's Journal Finder) that use AI algorithms to help authors match their man-