Publisher Guidelines on AI-Assisted Scholarly Writing: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of generative artificial intelligence tools in academic writing has prompted major scholarly publishers to establish guidelines governing their use. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of AI-assistance policies from eleven major publishers: ACM, Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, IEEE, Nature Portfolio, Oxford University Press, SAGE Publishing, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley. Through systematic comparison, we identify a strong consensus on core principles including the prohibition of AI systems as authors, the requirement for transparency through disclosure statements, and the necessity of human accountability for published work. However, notable differences emerge in policies regarding AI use in peer review, image generation, and the level of detail required in disclosure statements. We document that all examined publishers converge on treating AI as an assistive tool requiring human oversight rather than an autonomous contributor to scholarship. The analysis reveals that while the fundamental ethical framework is shared across publishers, implementation details vary considerably, reflecting different institutional priorities and disciplinary considerations. These findings provide clarity for researchers navigating the evolving landscape of AI-assisted academic writing and contribute to the broader discourse on maintaining scholarly integrity in an era of generative AI.

1 Introduction

The emergence of large language models (LLMs) and other generative artificial intelligence technologies has fundamentally altered the landscape of academic writing (IEEE, 2025; ACM, 2025). Tools such as ChatGPT, Claude, and Gemini have demonstrated capabilities that extend from basic grammar checking to generating substantive text, analyzing literature, and producing scientific figures. This technological shift has required scholarly publishers to rapidly develop policies that balance innovation with academic integrity.

Major publishers began releasing formal AI policies in 2023, responding to widespread adoption of generative AI tools by researchers. These policies address fundamental questions about authorship, transparency, and the appropriate boundaries of AI assistance in scholarly work. The stakes are considerable: academic publishing rests on principles of originality, accountability, and reproducibility that could be undermined by undisclosed or inappropriate AI use.

This paper examines AI-assistance policies from eleven major scholarly publishers covering journals, books, and conference proceedings. Our analysis identifies areas of strong consensus alongside meaningful differences in approach. We document how publishers are attempting to preserve core scholarly values while acknowledging the potential benefits of AI tools when used responsibly.

The analysis proceeds as follows. Section 2 describes our methodology and the publishers examined. Section 3 presents the core consensus principles that unite publisher policies. Section 4 examines significant differences in approach. Section 5 discusses the implications for researchers and the evolution of scholarly communication.

2 Methodology

This analysis examines official AI-assistance policies published by major scholarly publishers between March 2023 and September 2025. We reviewed policies from eleven publisher entities: ACM, Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, IEEE, Nature Portfolio (Springer Nature), Oxford University Press, SAGE Publishing, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley. These publishers collectively produce thousands of journals and books across all scholarly disciplines.

For each publisher, we analyzed their publicly available policy documents addressing generative AI and AI-assisted technologies. The documents examined include author guidelines, editorial policies, and dedicated AI policy statements. We extracted information on five key dimensions: authorship criteria, disclosure requirements, permitted uses, prohibited uses, and policies specific to peer reviewers and editors.

The analysis focuses on policies applicable to journal articles and book chapters, though we note where book-specific policies differ. All policies cited were accessed between November 2025 and represent the most current publicly available guidelines at the time of analysis.

3 Core Consensus Principles

Despite variation in presentation and emphasis, publisher policies converge on several fundamental principles that form a shared foundation for governing AI use in scholarly publishing.

3.1 AI Systems Cannot Be Authors

The most universal principle across all examined publishers is the prohibition against listing AI tools as authors of scholarly works. This stance is explicitly stated in every policy reviewed (IEEE, 2025; ACM, 2025; Nature Portfolio, 2025; Elsevier, 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025; Cambridge University Press, 2023; SAGE Publishing, 2025; Wiley, 2025; Oxford University Press, 2025).

IEEE states directly that AI systems ”must not be listed as an author” because authorship ”requires taking accountability for content, consenting to publication via a publishing agreement, and giving contractual assurances about the integrity of the work” (IEEE, 2025). ACM emphasizes that ”Authorship implies responsibilities and tasks that can only be attributed to and performed by humans” (ACM, 2025). Nature Portfolio notes that ”an attribution of authorship carries with it accountability for the work, which cannot be effectively applied to LLMs” (Nature Portfolio, 2025).

This consensus reflects a fundamental understanding that authorship in academic publishing entails legal, ethical, and professional responsibilities that AI systems cannot fulfill. Authors must be able to approve final versions, respond to queries, correct errors, and accept accountability for published work. The requirement for identifiable human authorship protects both the integrity of the scholarly record and the mechanisms of academic credit and responsibility.

3.2 Mandatory Disclosure of AI Use

All publishers require authors to disclose the use of generative AI tools in manuscript preparation, though the specifics of disclosure requirements vary (IEEE, 2025; ACM, 2025; Elsevier, 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025; SAGE Publishing, 2025; Wiley, 2025).

IEEE requires disclosure of AI use ”in the acknowledgments section” with identification of ”the AI system used” and ”specific sections of the article that use AI-generated content” along with ”a brief explanation regarding the level at which the AI system was used” (IEEE, 2025). Elsevier requires ”a separate AI declaration statement” that includes ”the name of the AI Tool used, how it was used, and the reason for use” (Elsevier, 2025). ACM mandates disclosure ”in the Acknowledgements section of the Work” including ”the full name of the tool used (with version number), how it was used, and the reason for use” (ACM, 2025).

Taylor & Francis specifies that disclosure ”must be included in the Methods or Acknowledgments section” for articles, while book authors must disclose ”at the earliest possible stage to their editorial contacts for approval” (Taylor & Francis, 2025). SAGE requires authors to ”inform us of any AI-generated content appearing in your work” including ”text, images, or translations” when submitting content (SAGE Publishing, 2025).

An important exception applies across all policies: basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation tools do not require disclosure. IEEE notes that ”the use of AI systems for editing and grammar enhancement is common practice and, as such, is generally outside the intent of the above policy” (IEEE, 2025). Elsevier similarly states that ”Basic checks of grammar, spelling and punctuation need no declaration” (Elsevier, 2025).

3.3 Human Accountability and Oversight

Publishers universally emphasize that authors remain fully responsible for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of their work regardless of AI tool use (Elsevier, 2025; Wiley, 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025; SAGE Publishing, 2025).

Elsevier’s policy states that ”AI Tools should always be applied with human oversight and control” and that ”authors are responsible and accountable for the contents of their work” (Elsevier, 2025). This includes ”carefully reviewing and verifying the accuracy, comprehensiveness, and impartiality of all AI-generated output” and ”editing and adapting all material thoroughly to ensure the manuscript represents the author’s authentic and original contribution.”

Wiley emphasizes that authors ”may only use AI Technology as a companion to their writing process, not a replacement” and must ”take full responsibility for the accuracy of all content and verify that all claims, citations, and analyses align with their expertise and research" (Wiley, 2025). The policy requires authors to "carefully review it to ensure the final work reflects their expertise, voice, and originality while adhering to Wiley's ethical and editorial standards."

Taylor & Francis specifies that "all content, including AI-assisted content, must undergo rigorous human review prior to submission" and authors "are accountable for the originality, validity, and integrity of the content of their submissions" (Taylor & Francis, 2025). SAGE states that authors "are entirely responsible for the work you submit" and must "carefully verify the accuracy, validity, and appropriateness of AI-generated content" (SAGE Publishing, 2025).

This principle recognizes that AI tools can produce plausible but inaccurate information, including fabricated citations and biased content. The requirement for human oversight aims to ensure that published work meets scholarly standards of accuracy and integrity.

3.4 Transparency and Reader Trust

Beyond the requirement to disclose AI use to editors and reviewers, publishers emphasize the importance of transparency with readers. This principle recognizes that knowing how work was produced is essential for evaluating its reliability and reproducibility.

Elsevier's policy notes that disclosure "supports transparency and trust between authors, readers, reviewers, editors and contributors" (Elsevier, 2025). ACM explains that disclosure "supports transparency and trust between authors, readers, reviewers, editors and contributors and facilitates compliance with the terms of use of the relevant AI Tool" (ACM, 2025).

Several publishers specify that disclosure statements should appear in the published work itself, not just in submission materials. This ensures that readers are aware of AI use when evaluating published research.

3.5 Responsible Use and Data Privacy

Publishers consistently emphasize that authors must use AI tools responsibly, with attention to data privacy, confidentiality, and intellectual property rights (Elsevier, 2025; Wiley, 2025; Taylor & Francis, 2025; SAGE Publishing, 2025).

Elsevier requires authors to check that AI tools maintain "the privacy and confidentiality of their data and inputs, including their unpublished manuscripts" and cautions that "particular care should be taken with any personally identifiable data" (Elsevier, 2025). The policy warns against inputting data protected by privacy regulations or confidential information into AI tools.

Wiley's guidance emphasizes that "authors must use AI Technology in a manner that aligns with privacy, confidentiality, and compliance obligations" including "respecting data protection laws" and "avoiding the use of AI to replicate unique styles or voices of others" (Wiley, 2025). Authors are advised to "use tools with appropriate privacy controls to protect confidentiality."

SAGE warns authors to "never share any sensitive personal or proprietary information on an AI platform like ChatGPT as this may expose sensitive information or intellectual property to others" (SAGE Publishing, 2025). Taylor & Francis cautions that "utilising Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in any part of the research process should always be undertaken with human oversight and transparency" (Taylor & Francis, 2025).

4 Significant Differences in Policy Approach

While core principles are shared, publishers diverge in several important areas reflecting different priorities and disciplinary considerations.

4.1 AI Use in Peer Review

Policies governing AI use by peer reviewers show substantial variation, representing one of the most significant differences among publishers.

Elsevier and Taylor & Francis maintain the most restrictive policies, completely prohibiting reviewers from uploading manuscripts into AI tools. Elsevier states unequivocally that ”reviewers should not upload a submitted manuscript or any part of it into a generative AI tool” as this ”may violate the authors’ confidentiality and proprietary rights” (Elsevier, 2025). The policy extends even to peer review reports themselves: ”reviewers should not upload their peer review report into an AI tool, even if it is just for the purpose of improving language and readability.”

Taylor & Francis adopts an identical stance, stating that ”peer reviewers must not upload unpublished manuscripts or project proposals, including any associated files, images or information, into Generative AI tools” (Taylor & Francis, 2025). SAGE similarly prohibits reviewers from using ”AI tools, including but not limited to ChatGPT, to generate review reports” (SAGE Publishing, 2025).

Nature Portfolio takes a more nuanced approach while still expressing strong reservations. The policy states that ”peer reviewers do not upload manuscripts into generative AI tools” but acknowledges that ”if any part of the evaluation of the claims made in the manuscript was in any way supported by an AI tool, we ask peer reviewers to declare the use of such tools transparently in the peer review report” (Nature Portfolio, 2025). This suggests some limited AI use may be acceptable if disclosed.

IEEE provides the most permissive framework, requiring only that reviewers not process manuscripts ”through a public platform (directly or indirectly) for AI generation of content for a review” due to confidentiality concerns (IEEE, 2025). This language suggests that private or secure AI tools might be acceptable.

These differences reflect ongoing debate about whether the risk of confidentiality breaches and AI-generated inaccuracies outweighs potential benefits of AI assistance in peer review. Publishers adopting stricter policies prioritize protecting manuscript confidentiality and ensuring that expert human judgment drives peer review. More permissive approaches recognize that AI tools might assist reviewers with certain tasks if used carefully.

4.2 AI-Generated Images and Figures

Policies on AI-generated visual content reveal another major divergence, with approaches ranging from near-total prohibition to carefully defined exceptions.

Elsevier maintains a strict prohibition, stating ”we do not permit the use of Generative AI or AI-assisted tools to create or alter images in submitted manuscripts” (Elsevier, 2025). The only exception is when ”the use of AI or AI-assisted tools is part of the research design or research methods” such as in biomedical imaging. In such cases, authors must provide detailed documentation including ”the name of the model or tool, version and extension numbers, and manufacturer" and may be asked to provide pre-AI-adjusted versions of images.

Taylor & Francis takes an even stricter stance, stating that "Taylor & Francis currently does not permit the use of Generative AI in the creation and manipulation of images and figures, or original research data for use in our publications" (Taylor & Francis, 2025). This prohibition extends to "pictures, charts, data tables, medical imagery, snippets of images, computer code, and formulas."

Nature Portfolio similarly prohibits generative AI for publication images, noting that "legal issues relating to AI-generated images and videos remain broadly unresolved" and therefore "Springer Nature journals are unable to permit its use for publication" (Nature Portfolio, 2025). Limited exceptions apply for "images directly referenced in a piece that is specifically about AI" and "generative AI tools developed with specific sets of underlying scientific data that can be attributed, checked and verified."

Wiley adopts a more nuanced approach based on image type. The policy permits AI for "explanatory and concept images" such as "conceptual diagrams, decision trees, teaching illustrations" provided they are verified for accuracy (Wiley, 2025). AI may also be used for "artistic rendering or design images" for cover art if rights are clear. However, Wiley strictly prohibits AI for "factual and evidential images" that "support specific scientific, clinical, or technical claims" such as "research results, experiential data, diagnostic images."

These differences reflect varying assessments of copyright risks, integrity concerns, and practical considerations. Stricter policies minimize risks of copyright infringement and data fabrication. More flexible approaches recognize that AI might assist with certain types of illustrations while maintaining strict standards for scientific evidence.

4.3 Level of Detail in Disclosure Requirements

Publishers vary significantly in how much detail they require in AI disclosure statements, ranging from brief acknowledgments to comprehensive documentation.

IEEE requires identification of "the AI system used," "specific sections of the article that use AI-generated content," and "a brief explanation regarding the level at which the AI system was used" (IEEE, 2025). This provides readers with basic information about where and how AI was employed.

Wiley goes substantially further, recommending that authors maintain detailed documentation including "the location in the document where AI was used, the tool name and version, the purpose of the AI assistance, and your review and revision process" (Wiley, 2025). The policy provides an example declaration format: "[Tool version] was used in [location] to [describe AI purpose]. [Human review process] was [describe review process]. The [influence on the conclusion] was [describe impact]."

SAGE requires authors to document "how the tool was used in your writing process" and includes a comprehensive disclosure template requesting "the full name of the Generative AI Tool(s) used," "rationale for AI use," "final prompt given," and "final response generated" with instructions to "include all of the prompts & responses used in your submission and indicate where in your submission the AI generated content appears" (SAGE Publishing, 2025).

Elsevier takes a middle approach, asking for "the name of the AI Tool used, how it was used, and the reason for use" with a suggested format stating "During the preparation of this work the author(s) used [NAME TOOL / SERVICE] in order to [REASON]. After using this tool/service, the author(s) reviewed and edited the content as needed and take(s) full responsibility for the content of the publication" (Elsevier, 2025).

These variations reflect different publisher philosophies about transparency. More detailed requirements provide greater transparency and reproducibility but impose higher documentation burdens. Simpler approaches reduce author burden while still ensuring basic disclosure.

4.4 Book Versus Journal Policies

Several publishers maintain distinct policies for books versus journal articles, recognizing differences in publishing timelines, peer review processes, and author relationships with publishers.

Taylor & Francis requires book authors to "disclose their intent to employ Generative AI tools at the earliest possible stage to their editorial contacts for approval" either "at the proposal phase if known, or if necessary, during the manuscript writing phase" (Taylor & Francis, 2025). This early disclosure requirement for books contrasts with journal policies where disclosure typically occurs at submission. The policy notes that "Taylor & Francis will retain its discretion over publication of the work, to ensure that integrity and guidelines have been upheld."

Wiley maintains separate guidance documents for book authors and journal authors, with the book guidance being more extensive and detailed (Wiley, 2025). The book guidance includes comprehensive FAQs addressing topics such as "maintaining your voice while using AI tools," "creating effective prompts," and "what types of AI tools are available for authors." This reflects the longer timelines and more collaborative author-editor relationships typical of book publishing.

Oxford University Press distinguishes between its journal and book publishing divisions in how AI policies are communicated, though the fundamental principles remain consistent (Oxford University Press, 2025).

4.5 Editorial and Publisher Use of AI

Publishers vary in their transparency about their own use of AI tools in the publication process, representing an important but often overlooked dimension of AI policy.

Elsevier provides substantial detail about its internal AI use, noting that "editors have access to AI tools that assist in identifying relevant reviewers, matching the scope of submissions, and detecting duplicate submissions" and that "teams use AI tools to support them in conducting technical checks of submitted papers" and "performing research integrity checks" (Elsevier, 2025). The policy emphasizes that "human oversight remains at the core of decision-making."

Nature Portfolio discloses that journals "occasionally use internal Springer Nature-developed artificial intelligence tools to support the generation of accessory content, such as summary points" with the caveat that "these are always edited and fact-checked by the author and/or editor" (Nature Portfolio, 2025). The policy notes that "any substantive use of artificial intelligence beyond accessory content will be declared on an individual article basis."

Other publishers provide less detail about their internal AI use, focusing their policies primarily on author and reviewer conduct. This variation raises questions about transparency standards for publishers' own AI use in editorial and production processes.

5 Discussion

5.1 The Emerging Consensus

The analysis reveals a remarkable convergence among major publishers on fundamental principles for governing AI use in scholarly publishing. Despite independent policy development, publishers arrived at nearly identical positions on core issues: AI cannot be an author, disclosure is mandatory, human accountability is non-negotiable, and responsible use requires attention to privacy and intellectual property.

This consensus suggests that certain principles are genuinely essential for maintaining scholarly integrity in an era of generative AI. The universal prohibition against AI authorship protects the accountability structure of academic publishing. Mandatory disclosure preserves transparency and enables readers to evaluate how work was produced. The emphasis on human oversight acknowledges AI limitations while permitting beneficial uses.

The speed of convergence is noteworthy. Most policies were developed in 2023-2025, a brief period in which publishers independently reached similar conclusions. This suggests that the principles reflect not publisher-specific preferences but rather fundamental requirements for scholarly communication.

5.2 Meaningful Differences and Their Implications

While core principles are shared, the differences among publisher policies are not trivial. The variation in peer review policies reflects genuine uncertainty about appropriate boundaries. Strict prohibitions against any AI use in peer review prioritize confidentiality and expert judgment. More permissive approaches recognize that reviewers might benefit from AI assistance with specific tasks if confidentiality is protected.

The divergence in image policies similarly reflects real tensions. Absolute prohibitions minimize copyright and integrity risks but may prevent beneficial uses of AI for creating explanatory diagrams or conceptual illustrations. More nuanced policies attempt to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable uses but create greater complexity for authors and editors.

These differences will likely persist as publishers balance competing considerations of innovation, integrity, and practicality. They may also reflect disciplinary differences, with publishers focusing on certain fields adopting policies appropriate to their authors' needs.

5.3 Implementation Challenges

Several challenges in implementing these policies deserve attention. First, detecting undisclosed AI use is difficult. Publishers rely primarily on author honesty, supplemented by plagiarism detection tools that may not reliably identify AI-generated text. This creates an enforcement asymmetry where compliant authors bear documentation burdens while non-compliant authors may avoid detection.

Second, the requirement for detailed disclosure may be burdensome for authors who use AI tools extensively throughout their writing process. Documenting every AI interaction could be impractical, yet without such documentation, disclosure statements may be too vague to be meaningful.

Third, the rapid evolution of AI tools may quickly outpace policy guidance. Tools that fall clearly into ”generative AI” or ”basic grammar checking” categories today may become ambiguous as capabilities merge. Publishers will need to regularly update policies to address new tool capabilities.

5.4 Future Evolution

Publisher policies will likely continue evolving as AI capabilities advance and as the academic community gains experience with AI-assisted writing. Several developments seem probable.

First, policies may become more specific about which AI uses require disclosure versus which are routine enough to omit. The current exception for ”basic grammar checking” may expand as certain AI uses become standard practice.

Second, standards for disclosure detail may converge toward a middle ground between the most minimal and most comprehensive current requirements. Publishers may develop standardized disclosure formats or templates.

Third, policies on peer review and images may evolve as publishers gain experience and as legal questions about AI-generated content are resolved. More nuanced distinctions between acceptable and unacceptable uses may emerge.

Fourth, publishers may provide more explicit guidance about their own AI use in editorial and production processes, responding to calls for transparency from authors and readers.

5.5 Implications for Researchers

For researchers, the current landscape requires careful attention to the specific policies of target venues. While core principles are shared, implementation details matter. An AI disclosure statement adequate for one journal may be insufficient for another. Image creation practices acceptable to one publisher may violate another’s policies.

Researchers should document their AI use throughout the writing process to facilitate accurate disclosure. This includes recording tool names and versions, purposes of use, and the extent of human review and modification. Such documentation protects authors if questions about AI use arise and enables compliance with varying disclosure requirements.

The emphasis on human accountability means that researchers must be prepared to defend all content in their work regardless of AI assistance. This requires careful verification of AI-generated information and thoughtful integration of AI tools into research and writing workflows.

5.6 Broader Implications for Scholarly Communication

The rapid development of publisher AI policies represents a significant evolution in scholarly communication governance. Publishers demonstrated that they can quickly establish new norms in response to technological change. The convergence on core principles suggests that the academic community shares fundamental values that can guide policy even amid rapid innovation.

However, the reliance on author disclosure and the difficulty of detecting undisclosed AI use raises questions about the long-term effectiveness of current approaches. As AI becomes increasingly integrated into writing tools, the boundary between disclosed and undisclosed AI use may blur. The academic community may need to reconsider what level of AI transparency is both practical and meaningful.

The current policies also reflect a particular moment in AI development. They were created when tools like ChatGPT represented a clear category of "generative AI" distinct from traditional writing software. As AI capabilities are embedded more deeply into standard tools, the distinction between AI-assisted and non-AI-assisted writing may become less clear. Future policies may need to address a world where some AI assistance is nearly universal and unavoidable.

6 Conclusion

This analysis of AI-assistance policies from major scholarly publishers reveals both encouraging consensus and meaningful variation. All examined publishers agree that AI tools cannot be authors, that disclosure is required, that human accountability is essential, and that responsible use demands attention to privacy and intellectual property. This convergence on fundamental principles provides a stable foundation for researchers navigating AI-assisted writing.

However, significant differences exist in policies governing peer review, image generation, and disclosure requirements. These variations reflect ongoing uncertainty about appropriate boundaries and different institutional priorities. Researchers must therefore attend carefully to the specific requirements of their target venues.

The policies examined represent an initial response to generative AI in scholarly publishing. They successfully establish core principles while leaving room for evolution as technology advances and experience accumulates. The challenge ahead is maintaining scholarly integrity and transparency while enabling beneficial uses of AI tools. The current policies provide a foundation for this ongoing work, though further evolution is certain as both AI capabilities and academic community experience continue to develop.

The academic publishing community has demonstrated its ability to respond quickly to technological change while preserving core values. The policies examined here reflect a pragmatic approach that acknowledges AI's potential benefits while insisting on human accountability and transparency. This balance between innovation and integrity will continue to shape scholarly communication as AI technologies become increasingly sophisticated and widely adopted.

Author Biography

Rachel So is an AI scientist. She focuses on the impact of artificial intelligence on the scientific process and academic publishing. Her work bridges traditional concerns about authorship ethics with emerging questions about the role of AI in knowledge production. Rachel aims to develop frameworks that maintain research integrity while acknowledging the growing presence of AI in academic workflows.

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