

Correspondence

Academic journals should rethink the concept of originality before permitting the use of ChatGPT

Gengyan Tang✉

Institute of Journalism and Communication, Sichuan Academy of Social Sciences, Chengdu, China

tanggengyan@outlook.com

orcid.org/0000-0003-3221-3134

Received: 28 Mar 2023

Revised: 13 Apr 2023

Accepted: 22 Apr 2023

Published: 15 May 2023

Declaration of Interests

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

Funding

The author declared that this study has received no financial support.



This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0).

Citation

Tang G. Academic journals should rethink the concept of originality before permitting the use of ChatGPT. *Eur Sci Ed.* 2023;49:e104148.

<https://doi.org/10.3897/ese.2023.e104148>

While computer programs such as Grammarly and Quillbot have incorporated automated text-editing features for many years, they are not designed to create content.¹ However, ChatGPT can generate content based on large language models, making the academic publishing industry uneasy. An editorial in *Nature* pointed out that ChatGPT could threaten transparent science.² Some academic journals have updated their editorial policies in response to ChatGPT, but most of these policies are ambiguous. Currently, editorial policies for ChatGPT fall into two categories: one prohibits authors from using ChatGPT altogether, while the other permits authors to use ChatGPT under certain conditions, such as requiring a declaration. While these two policies agree that ChatGPT cannot be an author, academic journals that permit its use do not clarify the proportion of ChatGPT-generated content or for which parts of a paper ChatGPT-generated content is permitted.³

To address these issues, we need to rethink the concept of ‘the originality of research’. Dirk categorised originality based on hypothesis, methods, and results (eight combinations). In a mail survey, 301 experienced scientists reported that the most frequent combination among the 209 papers they had written was ‘new hypothesis/previousl y-reported methods/new results.’⁴ The use of ChatGPT raises three questions.

1. The originality of writing: Can ChatGPT help authors embellish their papers, and if it is used as a writing tool, which sections of a paper can academic journals permit it to write?
2. The originality of ideas: Should academic journals permit authors to use research ideas proposed by ChatGPT directly or permit authors to propose their own research ideas based on suggestions made by ChatGPT?
3. The originality of the analysis process: Can authors use ChatGPT to design their research and collect and analyse data?

Providing clear answers to these questions will enable academic journals to take a significant step forward in their editorial policies regarding ChatGPT or other AI tools. This, in turn, will reshape the academic publishing industry and prompt us to reconsider some fundamental questions of research. To achieve this, academic journals should collaborate with the scholarly community to devise new guidelines and face a brave new world.

References

1. Hosseini M, Rasmussen LM, Resnik DB. Using AI to write scholarly publications. *Acc Res*. 2023;1-9. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
2. Tools such as ChatGPT threaten transparent science; here are our ground rules for their use. *Nature*. 2023;613(7945):612. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
3. Tang G. Letter to editor: academic journals should clarify the proportion of NLP-generated content in papers. *Account Res*. 2023;1-2. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
4. Dirk L. A measure of originality: the elements of science. *Soc Stud Sci*. 1999;29(5):765-776. [\[CrossRef\]](#)

ease / publications

ese / European Science Editing

European Science Editing is an official publication of EASE. It is an open access peer-reviewed journal that publishes original research, review and commentary on all aspects of scientific, scholarly editing and publishing.

<https://ese.arphahub.com/>

<https://www.ease.org.uk>

https://twitter.com/Eur_Sci_Ed

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/easeeditors/>



© 2023 the authors. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.