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# Authorship for Chatbots on Scholarly Publications: The Time Has Not Yet Come

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In a recent viewpoint article, Teixeira da Silva<sup>1</sup> argued that scholarly journals should recognize the right of artificial-intelligence-based chatbots to co-author articles. This topic has attracted considerable attention in the last few years.<sup>2</sup> Anyone who is convinced of the nearly human-like nature of chatbots might find abusive and inhuman the decision of many journal editors to deny chatbots the privilege of authorship. On the other hand, a person who views the ability to consent to authorship as important in the publishing process could adamantly consider that chatbots cannot co-author articles. Apparently, chatbots themselves seem to be divided on the issue. Recently, King<sup>3</sup> organized a dialogue on this topic among three chatbots: ChatGPT, Bing, and Bard. Whereas Bard seems sympathetic to the idea of authorship in the future, ChatGPT and Bing are clear about the fact that authorship is not sensible now and that the situation is not likely to change rapidly.

The ability to consent to authorship, to take responsibility for the content of an article, and to defend it against criticism are sometimes viewed as key criteria for authorship. The debate about chatbots being co-authors is often articulated along those lines. However, as the official description of the present journal reminds us, originality is the first and foremost criterion that should determine whether manuscripts get published. When a journal's "Instructions to Authors" state that a manuscript submitted for publication should present "original research," it does not mean simply that the work should not already have been published elsewhere. The intent of the requirement clearly is that the work should be truly novel and should constitute a significant advancement of knowledge. Thus, one could legitimately argue that to be a co-author of an article, one should have made a decisive contribution to its originality. Any other contribution should, in principle, be handled in the acknowledgement

section. As both ChatGPT and Bing readily acknowledge in King's dialogue, originality at this level is not something that chatbots are designed to achieve, and they are not likely to evolve in that direction in the foreseeable future. Therefore, until they do, any consideration of authorship for chatbots would appear premature, and the current attitude of many journal editors seems appropriately cautious.

A frequent counterargument against the above perspective is that chatbots can still be useful in providing an original perspective on the scholarly literature. Undoubtedly, chatbots have proven that they can retrieve and synthesize sources much faster than human researchers can through traditional search engines. In that context, a tool like Scite is potentially extremely valuable and can greatly facilitate research, but only provided it is properly supervised. Indeed, since experience has shown repeatedly that chatbots can make references up entirely,<sup>4-7</sup> human researchers need to double-check what chatbots are doing and should not rely on them blindly. For that, it is still absolutely required for human researchers to read the literature in depth and familiarize themselves with it.

Beyond retrieving bibliographical sources, however, it is not clear at all that chatbots can come up with truly original perspectives on the literature, the way a well-read, experienced researcher might be able to. Even in a situation of a discipline undergoing a paradigm shift, with, say, 95% of the articles sticking to the traditional view and the remaining 5% advocating for a novel approach, chatbots, intrinsically, are not likely at all to conclude that the minority view has more merit and is the way forward. I tried that exercise and found systematically that chatbots just tend to conform to the majority view and do not appear able to generate an original perspective on the literature, which means practically that, if chatbots were relied upon extensively by researchers to delve into the literature,

that would likely slow down any evolution of thought that is taking place.

For all these reasons, it seems appropriate, as does Bing in King's dialogue, to view chatbots just as "tools that can assist humans in certain tasks." Beyond that, authorship for chatbots on scholarly publications does not appear warranted at all at this juncture.

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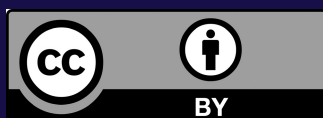
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