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Preface

Algorithm and Author: Retaining the Human Touch?

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I am honored to write a preface to the special issue on *Between Algorithm and Author: Rethinking Writing, Argumentation, and Voice in the Age of AI*. This unique collection of contributions could not be timelier and more relevant. Interrogating the shifting boundaries between algorithm and author, machine and human, and formula and originality is overdue as we experience generative artificial intelligence (Gen AI) disrupting our academic work and lives. Taking a step back to think through, and to critically discuss, crucial issues such as writing and authorship is a worthy endeavor when everything seems to be changing so rapidly. Turning the focus to how AI challenges our conceptualizations of authenticity and originality is very welcome. It is crucially important to debate

what we as human writers and authors can do not only to cope but to prosper in the age of AI. This cuts to the core of our craft as academic scholars.

What is happening to writing and authorship reflects the world that is increasingly complex. We experience it as exceedingly fast, ambiguous, uncertain, unpredictable, and full of tensions. It keeps surprising us. A lot of this is down to artificial intelligence as increasingly sophisticated AI systems, models, and tools are at our disposal. Gen AI is taking the world by storm, and it challenges our assumptions and habits, among other things, about what writing means and what authorship is. This is steered by immensely powerful forces. Merchants of AI products and services enchant us with their magical performances, construing an inevitable trajectory of progress (Tienari & Khoreva, 2025). They portray critical views on AI as outmoded (Vesa & Tienari, 2022).

Academia is experiencing an “exogeneous shock” with Gen AI (Krammer, 2025) and “no matter which angle is considered, and whether we like it or not, AI systems are here to stay” (Kulkarni et al., 2024, p. 207). In these conditions, outsourcing academic writing to machines seems to be a serious option for many. This is neither coincidental nor surprising. The need to adhere to strict writing conventions has become so ritualistic and widespread that in principle “one need not be a scholar to publish. Instead, one needs to learn and perfect the routines that lead to publication” (Rasheed & Priem, 2020, p. 160). Concerns about lack of authenticity, reflexivity, and dialogue in scholarly writing predate the rise of Gen AI. Saying something original and meaningful has become secondary to formulaic and instrumentalist writing that targets getting published in the right journals (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Harley, 2019; Kiriakos & Tienari, 2019; Lehman & Tienari, 2025).

Many resist uncritical adoption of AI in academia, working to retain our craft and community (Bechky & Davis, 2025) and learning (Tienari, 2025), and to safeguard our shared critical thinking skills (Larson et al., 2024). Scholars also raise concerns about what Gen AI is doing to academic knowledge production (Cornelissen, 2026; Lindebaum & Fleming, 2024) and highlight the threat that it poses to our epistemic agency as human creators of that knowledge (Lindebaum et al., 2025). Critical voices call for our reflexivity and responsibility as humans

to engage in creative, contextual, committed, and ethical research, writing, and authorship.

This seems increasingly difficult as more magic awaits around the corner (Tienari & Khoreva, 2025). Agentic AI is all the rage as AI is let loose to do its thing without human interception and steering. AI agents perceive their environment, set goals, plan, reason, and act independently of humans, and accomplish complex tasks with minimal intervention. We can expect something even more perplexing and possibly disastrous for writing and authorship in the not-so-distant future. In the worst-case scenario (or best, depending on the viewpoint), no humans are needed for producing academic knowledge. AI can do the research, write the paper, submit it, review it, make an editorial decision, publish the paper, read it, cite it... well, AI can in principle do everything that we humans can, only much quicker and more “efficiently.” Whether this makes any sense at all is another matter. Yet the low-quality AI-augmented submissions that are already overwhelming journal editors (Gartenberg et al., 2026) can be multiplied many times over until the global academic publishing system reaches a breaking point.

However, there is still some time for us to react and challenge uncritical adoption of AI. For those of us who love writing (Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018) this involves arguing for human academic writing and authorship as something to be cherished and cared for. The contributions in this special issue showcase the multiplicity of ways we can approach and study writing and authorship creatively under conditions of AI hype.

Michał Szostak explores AI-generated managerial writing in organizations and discusses the notion of “algorithmic kitsch” to capture how it lacks epistemic depth and authentic subjectivity while simulating meaning through aesthetic coherence and persuasive form. Turning to academia, Rania Za’rour and Abdel Rahman Mitib Altakhaineh show how second language academic writing, due to its conventionalized nature, may face heightened risk of false positive AI flagging in AI-text detectors.

Irena Vassileva and Mariya Chankova extend the discussion to authorship under conditions of Gen AI with its convincing imitations of human natural language and considers how the changing position of the author relates to

acknowledging the intellectual contributions of other scholars. Looking at authorship from a different angle, Adrian Holliday elucidates how when prompted, ChatGPT reflects discursive and ideological struggles in the field of intercultural communication studies by privileging unreflective positivism over critical understandings of different social settings and events. Jagat Bahadur Kunwar, in turn, explores whether Gen AI can be considered an authentic author and argues that while it can perform linguistic labor, support linguistic work, and approximate institutional markers of authorship, Gen AI cannot initiate linguistic action or assume epistemic responsibility and thereby it is unable to satisfy the conditions of authentic authorship.

Focusing on university students, Ken Hyland explores the ways in which Gen AI tools reshape students' academic writing and argues for viewing such tools as a supportive tutor rather than a proxy author in new writing contexts where human creativity and algorithmic fluency intersect. Rahmad Nuthihar et al. study university students' opinion-writing skills and highlight their difficulties in dealing with writing conventions and argumentative reasoning in the age of AI.

Taking us to the world of art, Djalel Baghzou et al. look at artistic creation and argue that Gen AI functions as a technical mediator, translating an artist's internal "mental concept" into a publicly accessible artefact whilst reconfiguring the ontic status of the artwork and the agency of the creator. With the example of a folklore figure, Muhammad Erwan Saing explores the crucial question of how algorithmic text generation and AI-mediated rewriting affect vernacular narrative tradition by reshaping narrative voice and cultural memory.

Finally, extending the discussion to the realm of politics, Binh Duong et al. address visual politics in the age of algorithms and frame it as a discursive and infrastructural process shaped by hybrid human-machine assemblages, showing how visibility operates as a provisional source of authority, accelerating affective and legitimacy effects beyond human deliberation.

Together, contributions in the special issue elucidate the multitude of issues at hand when we consider writing, authorship, argumentation, and voice under conditions of Gen AI. They remind us how we cannot sit idly as boundaries between algorithm and author, machine and human, formula and originality continue to shift and perhaps even change for good, favoring algorithm,

machine, and formula, if we stay quiet. We must take a stand, as individuals and collectives, and protect what we hold dear. In doing this, I think, it is important to note that to nurture human writing and authorship in the face of GenAI, we must also protect and save human reading. Writing and reading are two sides of the same coin as we write to be read, and we read so that we can write more compellingly.

When Gen AI threatens to take over everything in academic work, it is crucial to discuss what we as human writers and readers can do to protect and develop our craft (Bell & Willmott, 2020). This calls for action and contributions to this special issue offer important ideas and insights for envisioning what the issues at hand are and can be. As craftspeople of knowledge production—as researchers and educators, and as authors, reviewers, and editors—we have responsibilities that AI cannot handle. Our exposure to AI may be inevitable, but we can influence how exactly human-AI relations and interaction unfold. So, let's not lose the human touch in writing and authorship. It is still very much needed.

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Biography

Janne Tienari is Professor of Management and Organisation at Hanken School of Economics, Helsinki, Finland. His research and teaching interests include strategy work; people and AI; gender and diversity; identities, branding, media, and social media; and changing academia from a critical perspective. Tienari's work is published in leading international journals. He has served as Senior Editor of Organisation Studies and as Associate Editor of Organisation.

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