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Reflections on Writing and Generative AI: A Symposium

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Introduction

This symposium is an extension of a plenary forum on generative AI (hereafter GenAI) held at the EATAW Conference at Zurich University of Applied Sciences in Winterthur, Switzerland, in June 2023. Since the conference, AI – particularly the large language models (LLMs) shaping GenAI such as OpenAI's ChatGPT – continue to develop rapidly with extensive integration and usage across disciplines and career sectors with educational and societal impacts.

Given these developments, we recognize the central role that writing instruction has in fostering critical literacies and engaged usage and, at times, non-usage of GenAI. Just as we have adapted our teaching and learning to other technological developments (see Kruse et al., 2023), so too are we now at a time of transition and adaptation. Our initial discussion at EATAW was wide-ranging, intentionally so because (1) there is so much to explore in relation to GenAI, and (2) the EATAW membership is diverse, coming from a range of academic backgrounds. Thus in our original plenary and here in this symposium we have raised issues ranging from specific pedagogical approaches to questions of program and institutional administration, to broader public issues and conversations about the relationship of humans to machines. Here in this written symposium we each raise a different issue related to GenAI and writing with the aim to foster dialogue and discussion about GenAI in writing-related contexts.

We begin with Cerstin discussing AI literacy, situating it historically and reflecting on implications for societies and then implications for teaching literacy, followed next by Alice who examines the changing nature of expertise with the rise of GenAI, considering who is a writing expert now. We continue with a focus on literacy with Chris who discusses the importance and centrality of reading when working with GenAI and how human and machine reading are very much a part of the writing process. We then move to a discussion of GenAI integration with Lisa who considers the 'two AIs' (artificial intelligence and academic integrity), how institutions can move from a compliance view to a teaching and learning view, and implications for writing centre and writing program work. We close with Heidi who discusses the opportunities and challenges that writers and educators need to consider when using AI-based technologies for feedback on writing.

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AI Literacy: A Prerequisite for Societal Participation in the Age of GenAI – Cerstin Mahlow, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

In written societies, literacy (reading and writing) is essential for people to participate in society at large – the more widespread literacy is, the more inclusion and diversity there is. Interestingly, in English, the term illiteracy is the older one: the Oxford English Dictionary notes occurrences as early as 1660 for illiteracy in the writing of Samuel Fisher, Quaker preacher and writer, but records the first occurrence of literacy only in 1880 in the Atlantic Monthly. Literacy was coined to counter the concept of illiteracy.

In the 18th century, schools in Europe started offering a basic education for all children, both boys and girls. As early as September 28, 1717, Friedrich Wilhelm I, King of Prussia, introduced compulsory school attendance for children from age 5 to 12. The main goal was likely to form 'productive members of society', but literacy empowered them to contribute to society more broadly, and not necessarily as envisaged by the authorities. This tension is even older: Martin Luther, in the first half of the 16th century, did (or rather: managed) the first full translation of the Bible from Latin into German – actually, into vernacular as there was no standard German at the time – to enable ordinary people to understand what was happening in church and society. The success was also due to the invention of the printing press in the 1440s by Johannes Gutenberg in Mainz, which enabled but also increasingly required mass literacy. Literacy in the sense of reading and writing has thus long been intertwined with technology. The result were the literate societies of the 20th century that relied on and required general literacy.

With the advent of the Internet and the Web, reading and writing expanded from paper into the digital space. Multimodal texts with hyperlinks not only required new skills in reading and understanding documents, but also demanded new skills in producing them. However, technological development happened at a pace that allowed people to adapt step by step and make good use of opportunities. The Internet and the Web, together with the general availability of computers to the general public, also caused a shift in the meaning of literacy: it started to be used more in the sense of ability and skill. The term 'digital literacy' today is thus mostly synonymous with 'being able to navigate the digital space' as it is for example defined in DigCompEdu, the European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (Redecker 2017). UNESCO's current definition of literacy refers to the ability and skill to read and write in today's digital world, and is deemed essential for being able to participate in today's digital society: "Beyond its conventional concept as a set of reading, writing and counting skills, literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world" (https://www.unesco.org/en/literacy/need-know).

With the availability of LLMs and GenAI applications 30 years after the advent of the Web, a new kind of literacy seems to have emerged: reading and writing supported or even replaced by AI. Supporting reading and writing serves inclusion: for various reasons students struggle with formulating coherent texts, structuring content logically, and articulating complex technical information in an understandable, recipient-appropriate, and grammatically correct manner. These observations are in line with research showing that issues such as ADHD contribute to perceived and objective difficulties during writing, as well as when learning how to write and to develop personal writing strategies (Cheng et al., 2022 ; Graham et al., 2016). GenAI systems producing coherent first drafts from sloppy notes or rewriting existing drafts to make them more recipient-appropriate would clearly improve both perceived difficulties in writing and quality of resulting texts. AI-based language technologies have the potential to support inclusive written language acquisition (Mahlow, 2023b). User groups with specific accessibility needs benefit from language-based assistive technologies which automatically translate texts into plain or easy language, which today often rely on AI-based approaches (Ebling et al., 2022). Additionally, the development of language-aware adaptive writing technology supports writers in general (Mahlow & Dale 2014). Given today's computing power, mature language technologies based on natural language processing (NLP) resources like LLMs finally make it feasible to realize innovative ideas for adaptive human-centered automated writing support

(Mahlow, 2023a) from the late 1980s, which at that time could only be implemented as small proofs of concept (see Sharples et al., 1994). GenAI integrated into writing tools goes beyond the idea of using additional specific tools as currently studied (e.g., Cummings et al., 2024).

In this sense, current GenAI tools support and enable literacy as reading and writing. Thus, AI literacy could be understood as the ability to utilize AI appropriately to support and extend one's own reading and writing skills. This way, the power of applications using GenAI will be leveraged to empower people to participate in an inclusive and diverse written society by being literate. Following the argumentation of Mahlow and Hediger (2019), the modifier 'AI' is used similarly to 'digital' in terms like digital education or digital literacy: as an adjective in the sense of 'contemporary' to place literacy in the 2020s.

Using both senses of literacy at the same time – i.e., ability/skill and reading/writing – we could define AI literacy as the skill to read AI-generated texts. And here reading explicitly includes interpreting and making sense of those outputs by integrating it into further activities like writing from sources, creative writing by sampling, and supporting arguments in discussions or political decisions. For this, we need to understand how automated text production by GenAI works and what its limitations are. We probably do not need to become experts in deep learning algorithms, but we should be able to critically examine GenAI output based on agreed upon and comprehensible criteria.

General technological progress (printing press, the Web) has always changed the skills needed for being literate. As a community, we need to understand what GenAI can and cannot do so that we can help people to interact with GenAI applications in a meaningful and beneficial way.

Who's the Expert Now? When Writing with AI Redefines Expertise – Alice Delorme Benites, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland

As previously shown, literacy has evolved alongside technological changes, from basic reading and writing to digital literacy and now AI literacy, which is critical for inclusive participation in today's society. Yet the rise of GenAI, exemplified by tools like ChatGPT, is not merely a technological phenomenon. It triggered a broader socio-cultural shift, influencing how different forms of expertise are perceived and valued in contemporary society. This transformation has significantly reshaped the landscape of textual expertise, elevating computer and data scientists to premier status in the public's eyes.

Meanwhile, writing scholars, who have traditionally focused on human writing processes and products, find themselves increasingly sidelined in public discussions about AI's role in writing. While their expertise is still recognized within educational institutions and the humanities, their voices are less often heard in the broader debate at the national and international levels. Their insights, which emphasize the human elements of writing such as creativity, pragmatics, and cultural context, often seem to be overshadowed by the technical prowess associated with AI development and implementation.

Concurrently, many lay users, by virtue of their frequent use or early adoption of these AI tools, prematurely claim AI expertise. This phenomenon is partly driven by the accessibility of AI technologies and the ease with which individuals can experiment with and utilize these tools in various contexts, from drafting emails to creating more complex written works. However, the self-ascribed expertise of these early adopters often lacks the depth and rigor associated with more formalized training and understanding of both text writing and machine learning, leading to a superficial grasp of AI's capabilities and limitations. This can be observed in numerous social media posts, for example listing the 'best 10 AI tools to write an essay' without clear selection criteria.

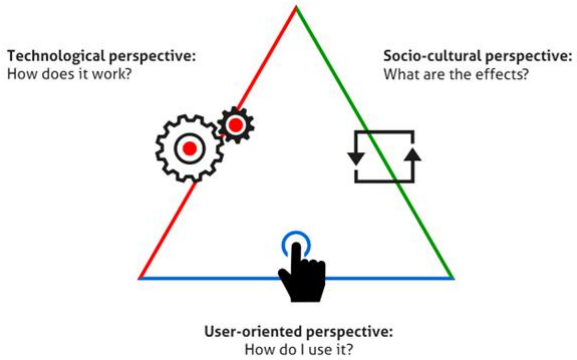

Figure 1. Triangle of Dagstuhl (created by Renate Salzmann on behalf of Beat Döbeli Honegger and licensed under CC BY-SA Version 4.0)

Interestingly, these three fairly diverse sides align with the Dagstuhl Triangle framework (Brinda et al., 2016 ; see fig. 1), which addresses the sustainable integration of digitalization in teaching and education through three interrelated perspectives: technological (computer and data scientists), socio-cultural (writing scholars), and user-oriented (early adopters). However, the triangle was not designed to represent three different entities, but rather three perspectives within the notion of expertise. This raises the critical question of how much technological, writing, and user expertise is respectively needed for a constructive integration of AI into writing practices. The answer to this question is multifaceted and context-dependent, requiring a careful balance and ongoing dialogue among the three forms of expertise.

First, technological expertise is essential for any user to understand how GenAI tools work to produce text. This expertise encompasses an understanding of algorithms, machine learning, natural language processing, and the broader field of data science. Technological experts are responsible for ensuring that AI systems are robust, reliable, and capable of producing high-quality outputs from relevant textual training data.

However, technological experts are usually not competent to assess AI-produced texts regarding the communicative context at hand. This is where writing scholars bring a critical socio-cultural perspective: their expertise on text linguistics, communication theory, and language use in general provides them with insights into the impact of AI-produced texts within human communication scenarios.

Knowing how to build a GenAI system or knowing how a text will produce the desired effect in the reader are two different types of expertise – both unrelated to the ability to use such tools in the best possible way. In that sense, user-oriented expertise, represented by early adopters and frequent users of AI tools, is equally important. The expertise of ‘power users’ mainly lies in the practical insights into human–machine interaction and the concrete uses of AI tools. Such uses often develop beyond what technological experts had foreseen when creating the tools and sometimes diverge from what writing scholars envision as possible use cases. Early adopters can identify usability issues, suggest improvements, and offer feedback on the effectiveness of AI tools in meeting their needs.[1]

The successful deployment of GenAI in any writing context, including academic writing and teaching, requires a functional triangle of Dagstuhl. Concretely, this means that the three sides of the triangle must be in constant contact with each other, facilitating a dynamic exchange of knowledge and perspectives. Since these three sides currently represent three different groups of experts, this can only be achieved by adding interactional expertise (Collins & Evans, 2002) to each side’s own contributory expertise, fostering a more integrated and holistic approach to digital education and AI integration. Interactional expertise is defined by Collins and Evans

[1] These considerations are, in fact, not new: a common problem encountered in the development of digital tools for education are the multiple user groups. Domain experts (here writing scholars) should be included, but also (writing) instructors, as well as learners and, in large institutions, administration (e.g. legal concerns, etc). This problem seems to be enhanced when it comes to GenAI.

(2002) as enough expertise to interact interestingly with experts from other areas. At the macro-level, technological experts, writing scholars, and early adopters must develop interactional expertise to engage in meaningful dialogues and work together towards common goals. At the individual level, writing experts need to gain deeper insights both in the underlying technicalities of GenAI and in the user-centered practices and discourses that surround it. Only then can text writing expertise further develop and truly embrace GenAI tools.

Of course, this interdisciplinary approach requires ongoing efforts to bridge the gaps between different groups that have not necessarily worked together before. Especially technological experts can benefit from engaging with writing scholars to understand the nuances of human writing and the complexity of text work. In return, writing scholars can benefit from an intensified dialogue with technological experts and learn more about AI generation processes, helping them to critically evaluate and integrate these tools into their teaching and research. In that sense, the triangle of Dagstuhl might be a powerful base to build up targeted interactional expertise for researchers first before it can be integrated into academic writing teaching approaches.

Interactional expertise seems to be a crucial prerequisite for both writing experts and GenAI developers to optimize human–machine interaction when it comes to text production. However, it is not yet clear how much expertise is, indeed, interactional expertise, and what it concretely entails for each group. Investigating and answering this question will build a strong base for further research in AI and human writing.

Where Else Does Learning to Write Come From? The Conspicuous Absence of Reading from Discussions of GenAI – Chris M. Anson, North Carolina State University, United States

The 1980s saw a flurry of interest in the relationships between reading and writing at the college level that generated several books and edited collections (e.g., Fulwiler & Young, 1982; Newkirk, 1986; Peterson, 1986; Sternglass, 1988) as well as many articles. Subsequently, scholarly work on these relationships faded from writing studies to the point that in 2012, Salvatori and Donahue documented a persistent absence of attention to the complex processes involved in reading and how reading and writing are interrelated. In part, the lack of interest in reading beyond primary education has reflected a belief that once a child learns to read, no further instruction is necessary except perhaps for literary interpretation or for remediation. However, in recent years, a number of scholars have been revitalizing the focus on reading in relation to writing, and new work has been appearing such as Horning, Gollnitz, and Haller's *What is College Reading?* (2017), Carillo and Horning's *Teaching Critical Reading and Writing in an Era of Fake News* (2021), and Carillo's *Reading and Writing Instruction in the 21st Century* (2021), to name a few. Empirical studies of reading and writing processes are also contributing new understandings of how these abilities develop and interrelate (see, for example, Linnemann et al., 2022).

Despite this renewed interest, a focus on reading processes is largely absent from recent work on GenAI (a search of Google Scholar and the extensive writing database CompPile yielded no results). Instead, commentary and scholarship have been overwhelmingly preoccupied with the consequences for writing, from concerns about the potential loss of writing abilities to ways that GenAI can be either subverted or incorporated into writing instruction. But what are the implications for GenAI when we look at it through the lens of the literate practice of reading? Can studying the role of reading processes during the use of GenAI restore instructional confidence and provide new ideas for teaching and learning?

From a mostly instrumental perspective, GenAI offers a solution to the task of producing bureaucratic and boilerplate-like text. Consider, for example, the ratio of writers to readers in texts such as airline safety cards, recipes, assembly instructions, weather reports, nutrition values on food packaging, press releases, reviews of hotels or attractions, product descriptions, and real estate listings: each is written by one or perhaps a small group of writers but read by thousands or tens of thousands of readers. In such contexts, reading, not writing, is the point,

and GenAI, when accurate and linguistically adept enough, frees workers otherwise bound to produce these routine texts to engage in higher-level kinds of activities. (Of course, GenAI raises a number of concerns about employment that are beyond the scope of this contribution).

In most educational settings, however, writing serves intellectually important purposes related to learning and the development of rhetorical knowledge essential in a range of activities, such as framing and presenting arguments. In the context of GenAI, an instructional focus on reading can instantiate those abilities and processes that we strongly associate with writing. New research on revised models of the writing process with the intervention of GenAI is revealing that cognitive effort is not reduced by programs like ChatGPT – the programs don't "do all the work for the writer" (Anson & Cole, forthcoming; see also Pigg, 2024). Instead, effort is shifted toward reciprocal processes of prompt composing, reading, and revising. In particular, reading the output of text produced by GenAI involves at the very least the rhetorical skills of assessing a text against exigencies and intentions for readers and context; considering style and voice and the use of language, including lexical choices; deciding how much text is enough and elaborating or condensing; considering how information is structured; matching text to features of genre and task constraints; and evaluating the quality and accuracy of information based on long-term memory or external resources. These are skills that writers need to write effectively, but they are also skills needed to decide whether a piece of writing – machine-generated or not – is accurate, compelling, written in an appropriate style and genre, and so on. Carillo and Horning (2012) call these part of the "critical reading process," which includes "lateral reading," a beyond-the-text approach that helps students determine a source's credibility by leaving the source and seeing what is said about it elsewhere. They are also processes and skills required to read others' texts-in-progress, which is why peer review is so often integrated into writing instruction. Using GenAI to augment some aspects of composing can provide the means to teach every component of the writing process, including inventing ideas.

In an Institutional Review Board-approved project I am conducting with my colleague Professor Kirsti Cole, we are identifying numerous critical reading/writing processes when experienced writers are assisted by GenAI. These include reading outputs against prompts and refining prompts for resubmission; analyzing successive outputs relative to information in long-term memory or external sources; reworking outputs into different structures, voices, and styles; cutting and pasting useable material into an ongoing text; substituting more appropriate or accurate words for those generated; removing potential bias; and occasionally rejecting all or most of an output. Participants' composing-aloud protocols, captured during screencasts of their writing episodes, show that their meta-linguistic, meta-rhetorical, and genre-related skills drive a host of productive decisions at the intersection of (re)reading, composing, and revising. In addition, students appear to be inductively learning to use syntactic structures that are not typically part of their repertoire (such as varieties of embedded clauses) through the modeling provided by generated outputs. Based on such analyses, we can effectively build GenAI into writing instruction with more robust attention to teaching students to read text critically with an eye to refinement and improvement of their writing. In addition, the role of reflection – standing back from the experience of reading and writing with or without GenAI – can provide opportunities for students to create 'parallel texts' that are genuinely theirs and give instructors a window into the development of their knowledge and abilities. Already, many such pedagogies are available for instructors to adopt, adapt, or use as the basis for their own inventive strategies (for one compelling example, see Fyfe, 2022). Far from predicting a kind of apocalypse of illiteracy, GenAI is ushering in a new era of educational innovation with reading playing a central role.

Writing Centre/Writing Program Work and AI Tools, Academic Integrity, and Students' Writing: Moving from 'Compliance' to 'Teaching and Learning' – Lisa Ganobcsik-Williams, Coventry University, United Kingdom

One way in which universities may view students' use of AI tools when completing coursework is in relation to Academic Integrity (the other 'AI'). This view has particular resonance for students' academic writing, and for writing centres and writing programs as they teach students to develop good academic practices as academic writers.

As the Head of the Centre for Academic Writing at a UK university, I serve on my institution's Academic Integrity Steering Group. Between March 2022 and June 2023, this steering group carried out a university-wide consultation to gather views on what constitutes appropriate uses of AI tools by students in their writing and other coursework assignments. One purpose of the consultation was to inform university guidance and policy to promote and support students' ethical use of AI tools in their coursework. Throughout the consultation, the steering group moved from considerations of 'compliance' and 'university regulations' to envisioning a wider 'teaching and learning' approach to students' use of AI tools. Insights provided by the consultation and its stakeholders also enabled me to understand that university writing centres and writing programs have an important role in supporting not only students, but also writing specialists and academics, in the use of AI tools in relation to promoting academic integrity and writing (Ganobcsik-Williams et al., 2023).

Students seeking support with their writing from university writing centres and writing programs increasingly bring questions about AI use in assignment-writing. Students ask if they are allowed to use AI tools like Grammarly to help improve their grammar and sentence structure, if universities provide premium versions of such tools to students, if there are regulations about using premium versions that give more input to shaping their text, whether they need to acknowledge, cite, or reference their use of such tools in their writing assignments, and if so, how to do this. Students also ask to what extent they are allowed to use GenAI in their writing (CAW, 2024). A survey of university students across the sector about their views on GenAI in higher education, conducted by the UK's Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI), voices concerns from students that "We are neither being informed, advised, instructed, or assisted to learn more about and deal with AI", and "At my university very little has been taught to us about how to appropriately and effectively use generative AI tools" (Freeman, 2024, p. 11).

Writing tutors, writing mentors, writing developers, and writing teachers are well-positioned to help students navigate how to use AI in relation to their writing assignments. A constructive approach is to frame students' use of AI tools in terms of their own writing processes and critical thinking skills, and to help students consider how AI software could be used during pre-writing, drafting, and with their near-final drafts. For example, in the pre-writing stage, students can be encouraged to look for key terms in their assignment brief and to skim read or use the 'find' tool in Microsoft Word to assess how and when source texts are using these terms. In addition to their own thoughts, students can then formulate question prompts and use a text-generating tool such as Microsoft Copilot to recommend starting points for researching their topic. In terms of planning, writing specialists can discuss with students how they could use AI tools (e.g. Copilot) to suggest an outline or subheadings for their writing, and scaffold students in evaluating and editing the AI-suggested plan. During the writing stage, writing development staff can support students to use AI software to translate words and phrases, generate and revise suggested text, select words and synonyms, and check spelling and grammar. Writing developers can also discuss with students potential uses of AI tools once their assignment draft is written, e.g. to provide feedback on the academic style, structure, argumentation, language, and tone of their writing. Students could then discuss with the writing specialist whether they agree with the AI software's feedback, how it compares to other feedback they have received, and how they might use it to improve their writing (Clifton & Ganobcsik-Williams, 2024).

Writing centre and writing program staff, both peer and professional, will need to feel confident in working with students in this new area of writing development. These staff will benefit from ongoing opportunities – such as learning and development days with guest and in-house

speakers, group email or online forum conversations, and training sessions – to share and discuss with each other their tutoring, mentoring, and teaching experiences and growing repertoires of strategies for working with students on using AI in academic writing. Essential to this support are writing centre and writing program policies on working with student writers and AI, grounded within their institution's AI tools usage guidance or policy.

Equally importantly, across the higher education sector, academics face the question of whether to "promote or criticise" students' AI use in assignments (Freeman, 2024) – and, increasingly, of how to embrace AI use (Bourjaily, 2023; Edmund, 2024). Writing programs and writing centres (which, in UK and European universities, often take on writing program functions) (Santa, 2009, p. 3, Ganobcsik-Williams, 2012, p. 503) have a key role to play in working with teaching staff to design writing assignments that enable students to engage with AI tools through Writing in the Disciplines (WID), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education (ICLHE) (Gustafsson & Jacobs, 2013), or Writing Enriched Curriculum (WEC) (Anson & Flash, 2021) approaches. Combined with university-level staff development in the use of AI tools, writing specialists can help academics to rethink formative and summative writing assignments for their courses and build in opportunities for students to use AI tools during one or more stages of their writing processes. Thus, writing specialists have a role in supporting academics to articulate which types of AI use are encouraged or permitted in their assignment instructions ; for example, using AI for inspiration (to generate research questions and search terms), planning (to suggest a title, structure, subheadings, themes), presentation (to generate graphs, charts, tables, format references), or checking (to generate proofreading and feedback suggestions) (Clifton et al., 2024).

Working together within these evolving pedagogical approaches, students, writing specialists, and academics can learn to use AI tools productively in writing for higher education and beyond.

AI for Writing Feedback: New Opportunities and Challenges – Heidi A. McKee, Miami University, United States

I have been researching AI in writing since 2017 (recent publications include Bedington et al, 2024; McKee, 2023) and for the past few years I have been integrating AI into the writing courses I teach, inviting students to explore the use of AI throughout the writing process in courses such as business writing, legal writing, medical writing, grant writing, and digital writing. Here in this reflection drawn from my years of experience, I am going to focus on GenAI in the feedback process, raising the opportunities and challenges afforded by machine-in-the-loop for writing feedback.

First, it's important to note that for decades, amid the human mix of peers, instructors, and tutors, writers have been using digital tools as aids for feedback, ranging from early programs with pre-set questions (Burns, 1979; Burns & Culp, 1980; Kemp, 1987) to spell- and grammar-checkers for copyediting. Now, using large language model (LLM) GenAI with dialogic prompting and natural language processing, writers can use GenAI and seek feedback from GenAI throughout the writing process from invention to drafting and revising on to copyediting, thus creating opportunities and challenges that students and teachers need to consider.

One of the opportunities arises from the computational processing power of GenAI. As long as there's electricity and network connectivity, GenAI can do what no human can do: generate comprehensive feedback in seconds, be available 24/7, and process draft after draft after draft without ever tiring. No human can match GenAI's speed. The question, though, is the quality of the feedback, which in part is shaped by the particular LLM's dataset and algorithmic processing and in part shaped by the extent of the prompting provided by the writer.

Because the systems can 'read' quickly, writers can, if they wish, prompt them not just by uploading drafts but also notes, assignment prompts, article sources, evaluation criteria, samples, etc. This enables a writer to provide the system with a lot of information to explain

and define more fully the rhetorical context and the genre and expectations for the writing (be it for class, for work, for public, for personal, etc.). Current LLMs have been trained on billions of parameters of data to encode a lot of human knowledge[2] in the form of predictive analytics to draw from, which, as I discuss briefly below can be helpful and challenging.

A common prompt to seek LLM feedback includes, "Please evaluate and offer comments for how this draft [pasted in] meets this assignment prompt [pasted in] with these evaluation criteria [pasted in]".[3] And a useful further prompting includes, "As you read, did you have any questions or places where you thought it could be developed more?" The level of feedback obtained can be, at times, surprisingly detailed and helpful. For example, I uploaded a draft narrative of a grant I was writing for a local historical society and included the award criteria. In seconds ChatGPT 3.5 produced a page of feedback, including the following: "Community Engagement: It might be beneficial to elaborate on how the Historical Society plans to continue engaging with the community throughout the sign design and installation process, ensuring that the project reflects the interests and desires of local residents." This was helpful feedback because I realized that I had not focused on that needed criterion in my narrative. It is also interesting to seek feedback from different AI systems because the capabilities and the parameters differ.

But sometimes AI feedback, as perhaps with human feedback, is just not that helpful or even wrong. In a legal writing class, when a student used AI for feedback on a bench trial closing argument, one AI system recommended revising a draft to directly address the jury, but US bench trials do not have a jury, only a judge. In addition, were it a jury trial, the AI-recommended address of "Ladies and Gentlemen of the Jury" is out-of-date and gender-biased and should be Members of the Jury.

Clearly, just as with feedback from humans, writers need to have the critical insights and authorial agency to choose what advice to take up and what not to. In the classes I teach and the many presentations and workshops I have given to educators on AI, I see a continuum of reactions to AI feedback among writers, ranging from the *rejectionist frame* that AI is just a machine, not human, and thus has nothing helpful to offer and should just never be used to what I think of as a *fatalist surrendering frame* that posits AI as this all-powerful machine that is so smart and has so much information it must be a good writer and therefore what it suggests should be followed and used. Between these problematic (but understandable) extremes lies the middle ground of recognizing that machine feedback can, at times, be helpful, but we need to be critical and careful in its usage, alert always for individual harms and for broader societal harms. As Joy Buolamwini (2023, p. xvii) asked in her excellent book *Unmasking AI*, "Can we make room for the best of what AI has to offer while resisting its perils?"

The perils of AI feedback include the biases and errors in the systems. These are significant and must be continually foregrounded, especially in how the systems often overwrite and devalue language usage from traditionally marginalized populations and from ESL/EFL writers (e.g., Liang et al., 2023; Owusu-Ansah, 2023) and in how the systems just make things up (a problem that only gets worse the larger the language model – see Kalai & Vempala, 2024). When we work with writing students, we need to make clear the limitations in the systems and encourage writers to exercise their agency to resist and refuse suggestions (from humans and machines).

We also need to consider the potential harms of sharing our writing with LLMs that are continually training on our inputs. While some paid systems enable you to opt out of inclusion

[2] The ethics of how that 'prior knowledge' is obtained is another matter, raising issues of concern when thinking of how without permission AI companies have scraped Web platforms, including social media platforms, for content

[3] I advise students to show the same respect to GenAI that they would show a human colleague, premised on the idea that rudeness in our communications to machines could carry over into how we communicate with humans. However, there is a flipside to this: If we treat machines as if they are sentient, feeling beings, are we assigning too much humanity to them, blurring the boundary between human and machine? A lot goes into the decision to use 'please' or not when communicating with AI.

in their databases, the free versions do not (yet another instance of the impact of the digital divide). Writers may not wish for their writing to be available for repackaging to others, especially if it is highly personal, sensitive, or groundbreakingly new (like a draft of a research article). This is a particularly important point in relation to student writing when an instructor might, perhaps, consider using GenAI to help with their instructor feedback to students. Instructors (and tutors) cannot and should not upload student writing into AI systems without student permission. Plus we are paid to provide students with our expertise and insight in our feedback, not to farm it out for AI to do, at least not entirely. The ethics of instructor use of AI for feedback are too complicated for me to discuss here in depth, but this too is another area of concern.

And, finally, we need to consider the broader impacts of AI feedback. Because AI feedback is fast and less expensive than a human, institutions might decide they do not need so many writing instructors and tutors: let's cut staffing, raise teaching/tutoring loads and increase the use of AI. We might well see institutions with fewer financial resources adopt AI for writing at scale, lessening human interaction around writing. Already we have unacceptable discrepancies in instructor-to-student ratios in writing classrooms between the financially well-off institutions and others, but AI might make this worse, leaving many students (often from marginalized backgrounds) with primarily AI feedback rather than human feedback. We need to argue for the value of the human in the feedback process and we need to ensure that GenAI is *only one part of an array of options for feedback*. GenAI does have a lot of potential and can be helpful in the feedback process, but AI feedback alone is not sufficient. Most often in our communications we are writing to humans, and having feedback from humans provides human perspective and experience that is valuable and that no computer processor and data set, no matter how large or how fast, can replicate.

Conclusion

From our classrooms and centres to workplaces and public fora, GenAI is impacting writers and the writing they create. As educators we have an imperative to engage with AI so as to critically analyze and evaluate the possible benefits and harms AI brings, to explore processes and approaches for integrating it (or not) in the writing process and in teaching, and to help the writers we work with to gain the literacy skills they need to successfully navigate this fast-changing technological landscape. We hope that you have found helpful the ideas and issues we raise in this symposium.

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