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Australian Authors' Sentiment on Generative AI

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About the Report

This report presents the findings of a survey of 419 Australian authors and illustrators. It explores their attitudes towards generative AI, including views on the use of creative works to train AI tools, their own use of generative AI in professional practice, their understanding of how these tools work, and their perspectives on the potential for labour displacement in the creative industries. Uniquely, it provides insight into whether authors and illustrators consent to their works being used to train generative AI systems, distinguishing between existing and future works, and the minimum amount of compensation they require for such use.

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Key Findings

1

Most respondents believe it is possible, or even likely, that generative AI will displace their current income-generating work as writers and illustrators.

2

An overwhelming majority believe it is unfair for writers' and illustrators' works to be used to train generative AI tools without compensation.

3

The vast majority of respondents would not consent to their works being used to train generative AI tools, regardless of whether compensation was offered. Authors and illustrators expressed this view consistently across both existing and future works.

4

Among those who would permit their works to be used for AI training in exchange for payment, around half would not accept less than \$1,000 per work.

5

Respondents were uncertain about whether their published works have been used to train generative AI systems. Very few reported receiving any compensation for such use.

6

Most respondents reported at least a moderate understanding of how generative AI tools are trained using published works, though some authors and illustrators are not yet fully informed.

7

Respondents reported minimal use of generative AI tools in their own professional practice as writers or illustrators.

8

A substantial majority believe that generative AI outputs are likely to reflect the identifiable style of specific creators.

Background

At the end of 2024, we conducted an online survey of members of the Australian Society of Authors (ASA), the peak national association for Australian authors and illustrators. We used the corresponding responses to empirically examine Australian authors' and illustrators' use of generative AI, their attitudes towards generative AI, and their expectations for compensation should their existing or future works be used to train generative AI models.

In recent years, AI has presented new opportunities to boost productivity across a range of sectors (Damioli et al., 2021; Yang, 2022; Czarnitzki et al., 2023). However, there remain concerns about AI's risks, including its potential to displace human labour (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Such concerns are particularly live in the creative sector, where generative AI's capacity to produce new content raises unique considerations with respect to intellectual property rights and the potential devaluation of human creativity.

In Australia's book industry, these fears have already been realised. An Australian publisher has recently sought authors' consent to their works being included under a broad licensing agreement with a third-party generative AI company (Burke, 2025). More concerningly, powerful generative AI models, such as Meta's LLaMA, have been trained on the US-based Books3 dataset, which — without consent or remuneration — included several Australian authors' copyrighted works (Heath, 2023).

Recently, it has been revealed that more Australian authors have been impacted by Meta's use of a larger dataset of books from the pirate website Library Genesis (LibGen) to train their AI models (Taylor, 2025). Our survey of ASA members was conducted prior to Meta's use of the LibGen dataset becoming public knowledge.

Anecdotally, authors have had a lot to say about generative AI's impact on their craft. Booker Prize-winning novelist Richard Flanagan called the Books3 dataset "the biggest act of copyright theft in history" (Burke, 2023), whilst author Laura Jean McKay said that receiving a request to allow her works to be used to train generative AI was like "being asked to sign our own death warrant" (Burke, 2025).

Yet, there is a lack of independent and large-scale empirical research into authors' perspectives on generative AI. OpenAI — the developer of ChatGPT — has claimed that it is impossible to create powerful generative AI tools without access to copyrighted material (Milmo, 2024). Authors and illustrators are essential suppliers of these copyrighted works, and their point of view is crucially important to navigating generative AI's potential impact on Australia's book sector. This was the focus of our study.

We Sought To Discover

1

What minimum dollar amount, if any, authors and illustrators would need to be paid to consent to their work being used to train generative AI models.

2

Whether authors and illustrators think it is fair for generative AI to be trained using authors' and illustrators' works without corresponding compensation.

3

Whether authors and illustrators are using generative AI in their profession, and for what purposes.

4

The extent to which authors and illustrators are aware of generative AI tools being trained on copyrighted works, including their own published works.

5

Whether authors and illustrators have previously received compensation from their work being used to train generative AI.

6

The impact of generative AI on authors' and illustrators' job opportunities and pay.

Methodology

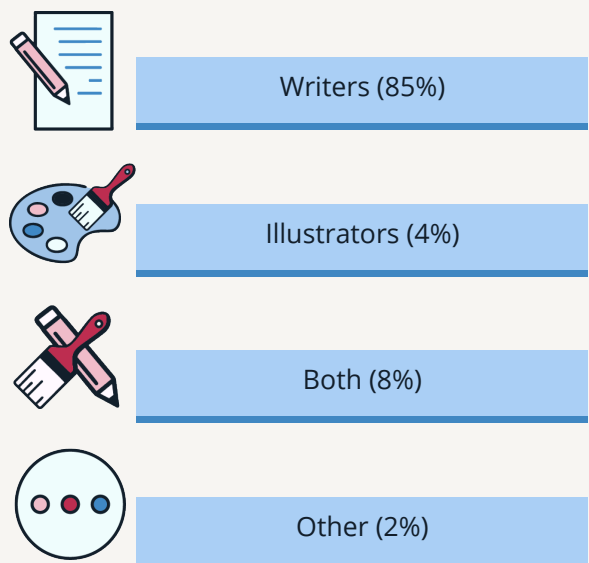
Data was collected through an online survey which was distributed to ASA members in November and December 2024. The ASA played an integral role in facilitating the survey and encouraging members' voluntary participation. To incentivise participation, three \$200 prizes were offered.

The survey contained five main sections, incorporating questions about the respondents'

- Professional background
- Engagement with generative AI
- Understanding of generative AI & compensation expectations
- Views on the labour displacement effects of generative AI
- Demographic information

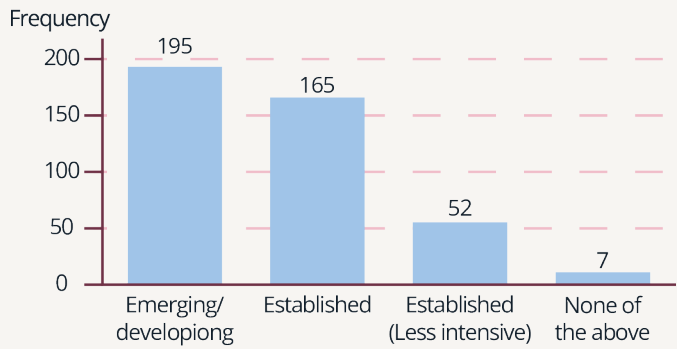
This report offers a summary of the descriptive findings from the study. A more detailed econometric analysis will be published separately and made available following the peer review process.

Who Are The Respondents?



We received 419 responses to the survey. Most of the respondents were writers (85%), with a smaller proportion identifying as both a writer and illustrator (8%), and the remainder identifying solely as illustrators or in some other professional role.

What best describes your level of establishment as a writer/illustrator?



The respondents identified primarily as emerging professionals (47%) or established professionals (39%). A smaller subset of respondents reported reduced professional activity (12%), with few falling outside these categories. Most respondents worked as full-time (33%) or part time (31%) writers or illustrators. The remaining respondents were semi-professional, professionals in another field where writing or illustrating was an important output, or they didn't fall within any of these categories.

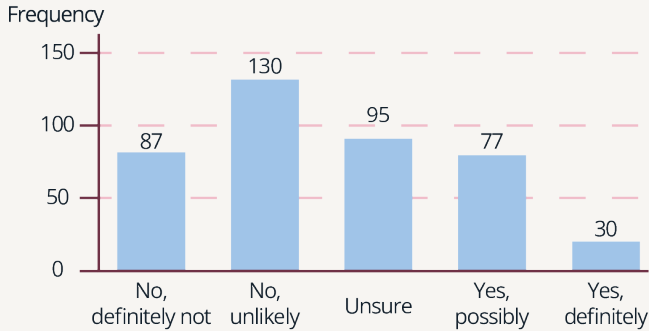
Literary fiction (11%) was the most important category of publication for the largest group of respondents, with children's picture books (9%) and fiction romance (8%) following closely behind.

Three quarters of the respondents identified as female. Most had completed tertiary level education (94%), and the largest age group consisted of respondents aged 65 and above (27%), with few respondents aged younger than 35 (10%). More than half of the respondents lived in either Victoria or New South Wales at the time of the survey (56%).

Our Findings

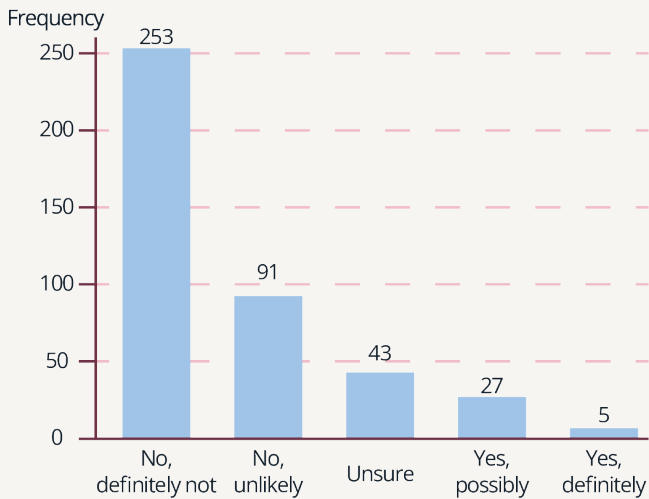
Most respondents believe it is possible, or even likely, that generative AI will displace their current income-generating work as writers and illustrators.

Have you lost job opportunities due to generative AI?



Only a small proportion of respondents were certain they had lost job opportunities due to generative AI (7%). Some were less certain but reported that it was possible (18%). Comparatively more respondents reported that they definitely had not lost job opportunities due to generative AI (21%) or thought it was unlikely (31%). The remainder were unsure (23%).

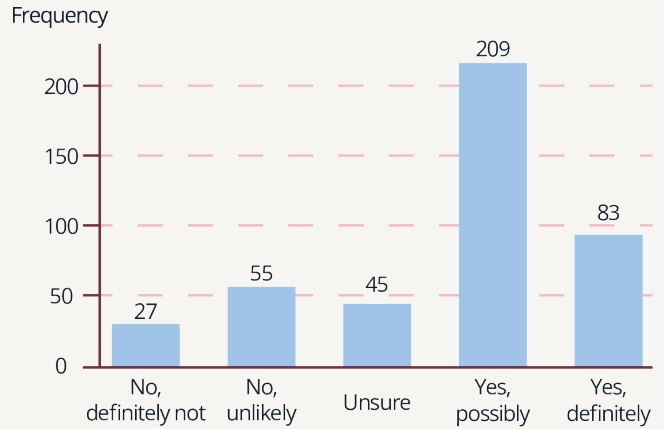
Have you been asked to accept a lower rate of payment because of an assumption you will use generative AI in text or image generation?



A very small minority of respondents were certain they had been asked to accept a lower rate of pay because of an assumption that they would use generative AI in text or image generation (1%). Some respondents were less certain but reported that it was possible (6%). Most respondents were certain that they had not been asked to accept a lower rate of pay because of such an assumption

(60%) and the remaining respondents were either unsure (10%) or thought it was unlikely (22%).

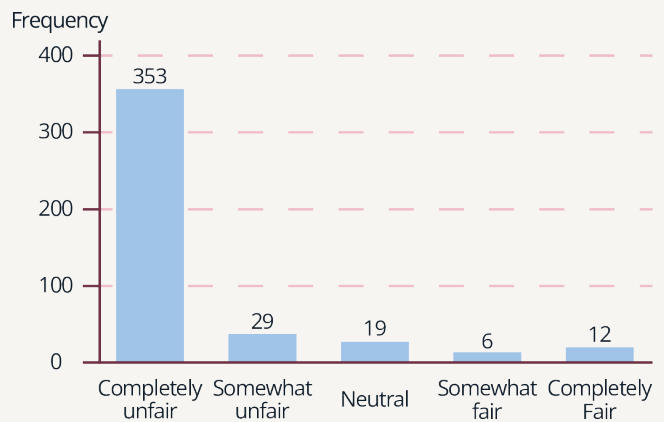
Do you believe any of your current income-generating work will be replaced or substantially diminished due to generative AI?



The majority of respondents thought it was at least possible that generative AI would pose a threat to their current income-generating work in the future (70%). The remaining respondents thought it was unlikely (13%) or believed that generative AI definitely would not displace their jobs (6%). A number of respondents indicated that they were unsure what the effect of generative AI would be (11%).

An overwhelming majority believe it is unfair for writers' and illustrators' works to be used to train generative AI tools without compensation.

How fair do you think it is for the work of writers and illustrators to be used to train generative AI tools without compensation?

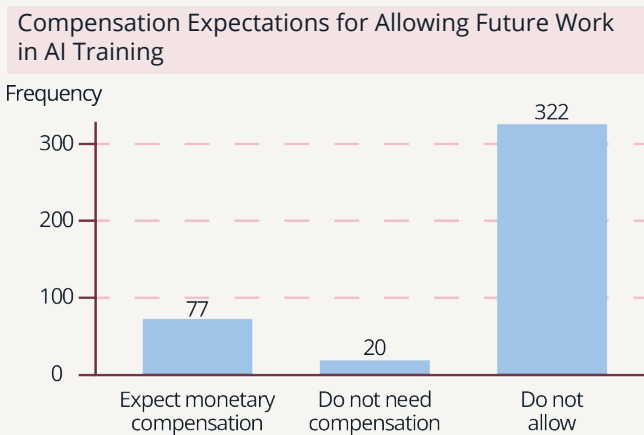
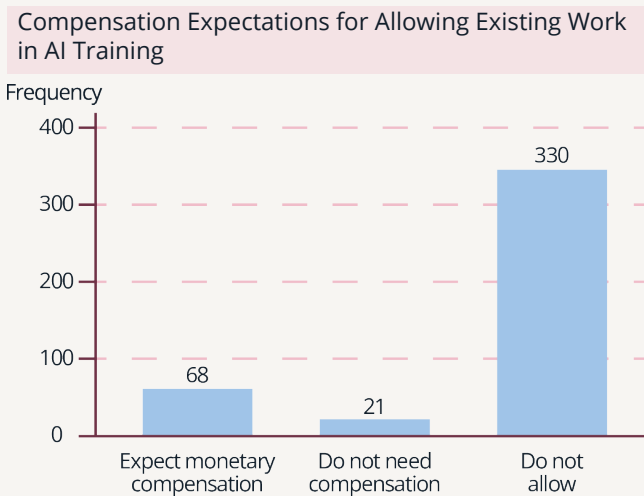


A substantial majority of respondents thought it was completely unfair or somewhat unfair for writers' and illustrators' works to be used to train generative AI tools without compensation (91%). Of the respondents who thought it was fair,

a slightly higher proportion said it was completely fair (3%) than somewhat fair (1%). The remaining respondents did not have a strong view one way or the other.

The vast majority of respondents would not consent to their works being used to train generative AI tools, regardless of whether compensation was offered. Authors and illustrators expressed this view consistently across both existing and future works.

We asked whether respondents would allow their works to be used to train generative AI tools. In this question, we distinguished between existing works and future works.



A substantial majority of respondents said that they would not allow their existing works to be used to train generative AI tools, regardless of whether they received compensation (79%). Slightly fewer respondents, but still a substantial majority, had the same attitude towards future works (77%).

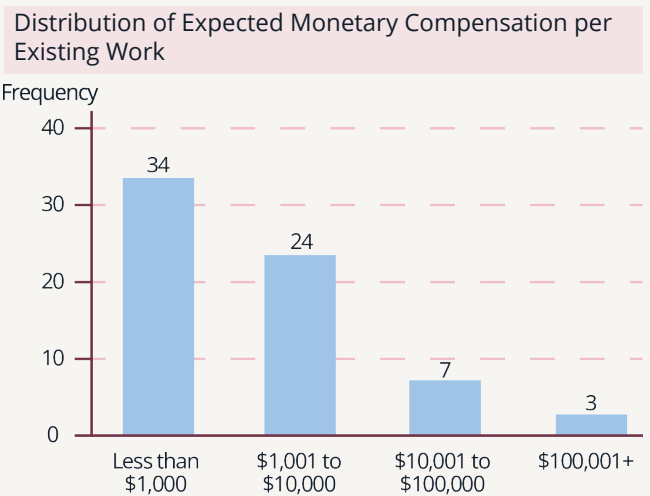
Of the respondents who would allow generative AI tools to be trained on their existing works, most stated that they would expect monetary compensation in return (76%).

A slightly greater proportion of respondents would expect monetary compensation for use of their

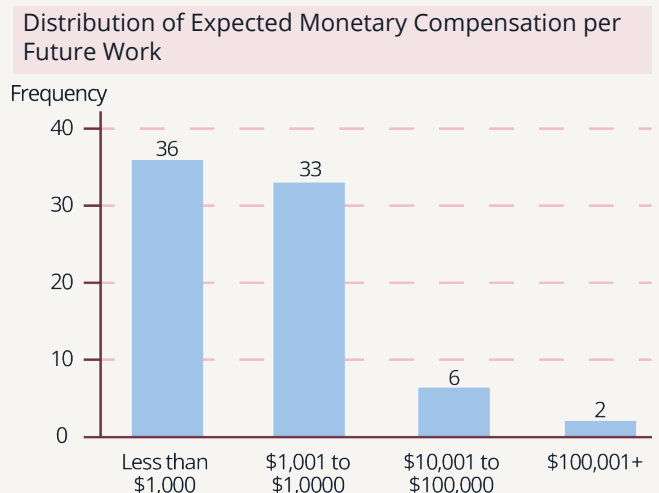
future works (79%), than for the use of their existing works.

We then went a step further and asked respondents to identify the minimum amount of compensation they would require to consent to their works being used to train generative AI tools. Respondents were able to write in any dollar amount they felt was appropriate.

Among those who would permit their works to be used for AI training in exchange for payment, around half would not accept less than \$1,000 per work.



Exactly half of the respondents who would allow their existing works to be used to train generative AI in exchange for compensation would not accept less than one thousand dollars per work for this use. Just over a third would require between one thousand and ten thousand dollars per existing work (35%), and a number of respondents would require between ten thousand and a hundred thousand dollars per existing work (10%). Very few respondents would require more than a hundred thousand dollars per existing work (4%).

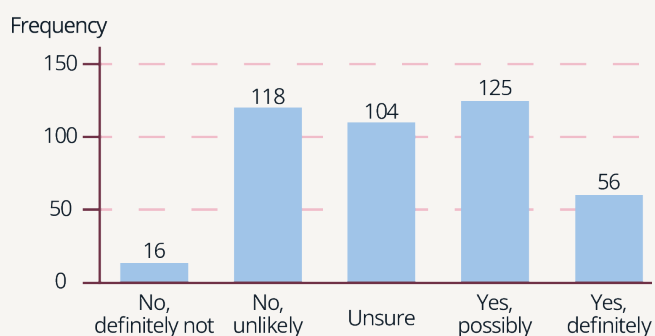


For future works, slightly more than half of the relevant respondents would not accept less than one thousand dollars per work (53%). The largest category of responses indicated that respondents would seek between one thousand and ten thousand dollars per future work (43%). A number of respondents would require between ten thousand and a hundred thousand dollars per work (8%) with very few requiring more than a hundred thousand dollars per work (3%).

Respondents were uncertain about whether their published works have been used to train generative AI systems. Very few reported receiving any compensation for such use.

Very few respondents reported having any certainty about whether their own published works had been used to train generative AI tools.

Do you believe your own published works to date have been used in training generative AI tools?

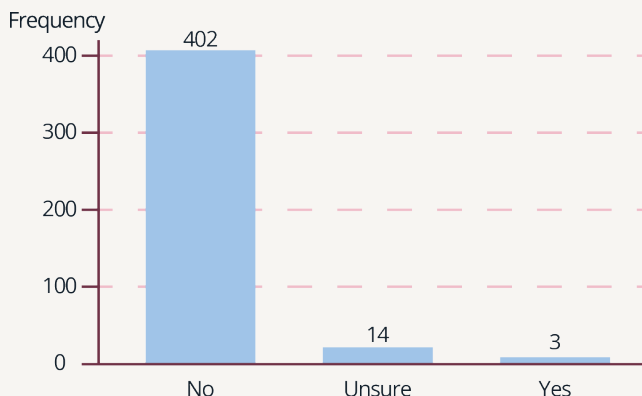


More respondents were certain that their own published works had been used to train generative AI (13%) than those who were sure that their works had not been used (4%). However, the remaining respondents were somewhat uncertain, with roughly the same proportion of members thinking it was unlikely (28%) as those who thought it was possible (30%) that their own works had been used to train generative AI tools. A quarter of respondents simply stated that they were unsure.

Journalists at *The Atlantic* have sought to redress this lack of transparency by making available a searchable database which allows authors to identify whether their works were included in the LibGen dataset used by Meta to train their generative AI systems (Australian Society of Authors, 2025). As such, if respondents were asked the same question today, their answers may differ.

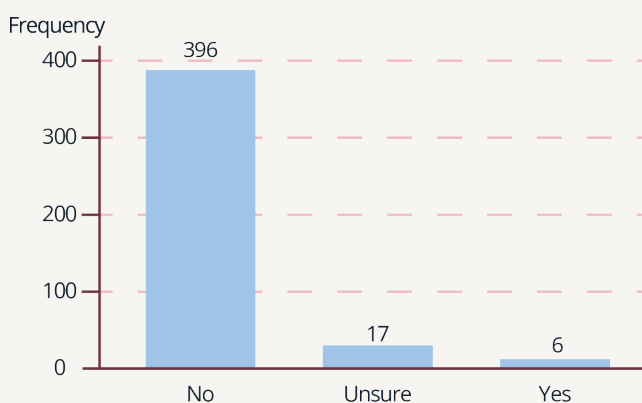
Whilst 13% of respondents were certain that their works had been used to train generative AI, only a few respondents reported receiving any compensation for this use.

Have you received any compensation from your publisher or publishing agreement for your work being used to train generative AI models?



Less than one percent of respondents received any compensation through a publisher agreement in relation to their work being used to train generative AI. A few more respondents received compensation through other avenues (1%), but the substantial majority continued to report that they had not received any compensation (96%). A number of respondents were unsure whether they had received any compensation for such a use, either by way of publisher agreements or otherwise (3%).

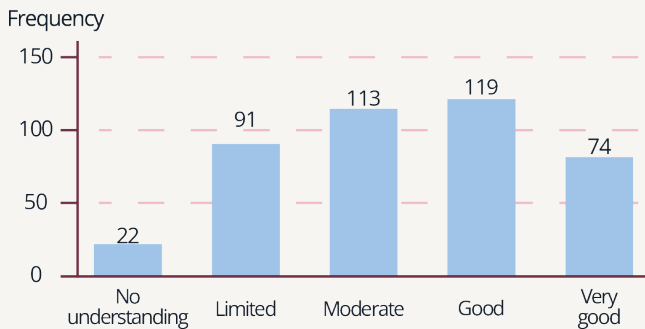
Have you received any compensation for your work being used to train generative AI models outside of your publishing agreements or publisher?



Most respondents reported at least a moderate understanding of how generative AI tools are trained using published works, though some authors and illustrators are not yet fully informed.

Respondents were asked to rate their understanding of how generative AI tools are trained using pre-existing published works.

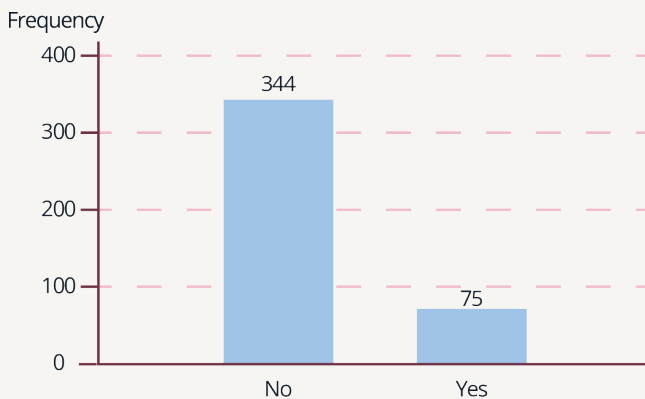
How would you rate your understanding concerning how generative AI tools are trained using preexisting published works?



Almost half the respondents rated their understanding as good or very good (46%), and more than a quarter had a moderate understanding (27%). However, a proportion of respondents still reported only a limited understanding of how generative AI is trained on published works (22%), with some saying that they had no understanding (5%).

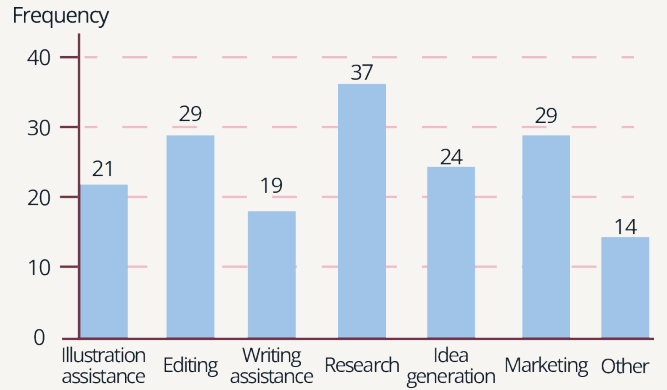
Respondents reported minimal use of generative AI tools in their own professional practice as writers or illustrators.

Have you used generative AI tools in your professional work as a writer or illustrator?



The vast majority of respondents had not used generative AI in their work as a writer or illustrator (82%).

Purposes of Generative AI Use in Professional Work

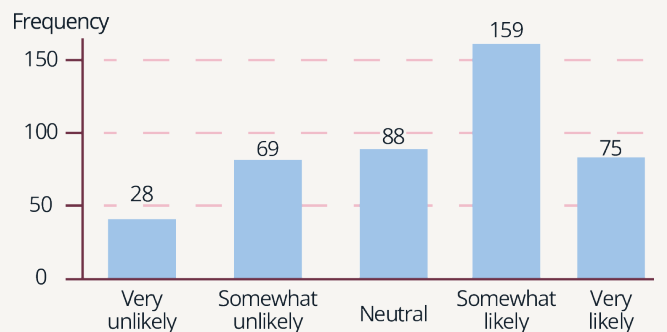


For the 75 respondents who had used generative AI in their professional work, the most common uses were for research (49%), editing (39%), and marketing (39%), with comparatively fewer respondents using it for writing (25%) or illustration assistance (28%).

A substantial majority believe that generative AI outputs are likely to reflect the identifiable style of specific creators.

More than half the respondents believed it was somewhat likely or very likely that the output of generative AI tools would identifiably reflect a specific writer's or illustrator's work (56%). Fewer respondents believed it was very unlikely or somewhat unlikely (23%), and the remaining respondents had no particularly strong view one way or another.

How likely do you think output from generative AI tools, would identifiably reflect the published work of a specific writer or illustrator?



Discussion

Our findings reflect a widespread reluctance among Australian authors and illustrators to engage with generative AI. The majority of respondents did not support their works being used to train AI tools, regardless of whether compensation was offered. Few reported using generative AI in their own professional practice, suggesting these technologies have not yet delivered meaningful productivity gains for this group.

This reluctance does not appear to stem from a lack of awareness. Most respondents reported at least a moderate understanding of how generative AI tools are trained using published works. If opposition were driven purely by commercial value, we might have expected greater willingness to allow the use of older works or to accept higher payments in exchange for participation. Instead, we observed consistent reluctance across both existing and future works, and across a range of compensation thresholds.

A strong sense of fairness emerged as a central concern. Respondents widely rejected the notion that their work should be used without compensation, and very few had received any remuneration for such use. Many also expressed concern about the long-term impact of generative AI on their livelihoods. Taken together, these findings suggest that the reluctance to engage is shaped by both economic and ethical considerations.

In addition to these individual concerns, the findings point to broader systemic issues. There is a clear tension between the goals of generative AI developers, who rely on large volumes of high-quality copyrighted material, and the interests of the creators of that material. This tension reflects a wider imbalance of power, where individual creators often lack visibility or influence over how their work is used in developing AI technologies. If the advancement of AI is to be equitable and sustainable, this imbalance must be addressed through more inclusive and transparent systems.

Efforts to address this imbalance are already underway at the policy level, both in Australia and internationally. In Australia, the federal government's Copyright and AI Reference Group released a discussion paper in late 2024, emphasising the importance of transparency in addressing copyright-related challenges posed by generative AI (Copyright and AI Reference Group, 2024). The paper highlights the need for stronger requirements around disclosing the use of copyrighted materials in training AI systems.



This is a crucial first step in responding to the concerns raised in this study, particularly given that over 80% of respondents were uncertain whether their works had already been used in this way. However, our findings indicate that transparency alone may not be sufficient. Addressing the divide between AI developers, publishers and the creative community will require further policy development and sector-wide collaboration.

We hope that the insights from this study contribute to the development of more ethical and sustainable AI practices in Australia's book industry. These practices should respect the contribution of authors and illustrators, provide fair compensation, and ensure that creators have a voice in shaping the technologies that affect their futures.

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