

# THE IMPACT OF GENERATIVE AI ON THE NOVEL

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# FOREWORD

Imagine a future without books. Novelists observe the human condition, preserve nuances of cultures, instruct the young, spark imaginations and delight readers.

Novelists are also very worried about Generative AI.

Dr. Clementine Collett's rigorous research in this report reveals what many have suspected but few have documented with evidence: people working in creative industries fear complete displacement by new Gen AI tools.

The findings in this report should sound the alarm. Almost two-thirds of novelists report that their work has been used to train AI models with neither permission nor remuneration, and over a third report that they have already lost income. More than half fear their work will be displaced entirely. These are not abstract concerns about the future, but real challenges faced by people whose craft sustains British culture and one of its most successful industries.

In this research, Dr Collett centers the voices of nearly 400 literary creatives across the UK, combining focus groups, surveys, case studies, and a multi-stakeholder policy forum to create a rich evidence base that is both comprehensive and deeply human. The novelists, publishers, and literary agents who participated in this research give us a clear-eyed assessment of how they see generative AI reshaping their world and what they need to continue creating their work.

The policy implications are stark and urgent. As this research demonstrates, the UK Government's previously proposed "opt-out" model for AI training places the burden on creators to protect rights that should be automatically theirs, while offering no technically feasible mechanism for doing so.

That approach prioritizes access to data for the world's technology companies at the cost to the UK's own creative industries that contribute £126 billion to the economy annually. It is both bad economics and a betrayal of the very cultural assets of British soft power.

The alternative is clear. Dr Collett's research shows that 86% of literary creatives support an opt-in model based on licensing, with fair remuneration and granular transparency about data use. This approach to the protection of intellectual property is not anti-innovation—it is pro-responsibility to a key sector of the economy. Licensing infrastructures already exist in publishing. We know how to fairly compensate creators for the use of their work. What we need is the political will to apply these principles to AI training data.

The recommendations in this report offer a roadmap for a different future. We must reinforce copyright law through dynamic licensing markets. We must require transparency from tech companies about their training data. We must invest in responsibly trained small language models designed for specific tasks, not vast systems trained on stolen content. We must fund creative writing initiatives and protect independent publishers who nurture diverse voices. And we must educate the next generation to use AI responsibly and to think critically about its limitations and costs.

Our creative industries are not expendable collateral damage in the race to develop AI. They are national treasures worth defending. This report shows us how.

**Professor Gina Neff**

*Executive Director, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy, University of Cambridge*



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The creative industries are the crown jewel of the UK. They are globally renowned and world leading, contributing £126bn Gross Value Added (GVA) to the UK economy annually, along with an immense amount of soft power.<sup>1</sup> Novels play a significant role in the creative industries. They are a core part of the publishing sector, which contributes £11bn to the UK economy annually and exports more books than any other country in the world.<sup>2</sup>

Novels also form the basis for countless films, television series, plays, and musical compositions. Moreover, they contribute substantially to our culture, education, identity, wellbeing, and entertainment. However, with the rise of generative AI (GenAI), novelists, publishers, and the novel itself are experiencing unprecedented uncertainty, change, and challenge.

This report explores the impacts of GenAI on novelists and the publishing industry using data from almost 400 UK literary creatives (published novelists; fiction publishers; literary agents for fiction) gathered through focus groups, a major survey, case studies, and interviews.

This research found that over a third (39%) of novelists reported that their income has been negatively impacted due to GenAI, and over half (51%) of novelists believe that it is likely AI will displace their work entirely. Respondents largely attributed this to their work being pirated and then scraped to train GenAI models. 59% of novelists reported they knew their work had been used to train GenAI models. Of these, 99% said they did not give permission and 100% said they were not remunerated for this use.

Novelists felt that through this use of their work, AI models would become increasingly sophisticated, flooding

the market and competing with their own work in the process. Literary creatives also warned that an increased use of GenAI would have negative consequences for social wellbeing, skill, connection, and literary originality. While GenAI was seen to provide opportunities for some people with accessibility needs, it was also found to perpetuate problematic stereotypes and discrimination in its outputs.

Grounded in this evidence, this report calls on the Government to protect our precious literary scene which contributes so much to the UK. It urges the Government not to implement exceptions to copyright law or an opt-out model for AI training. Instead, it recommends that the Government should reinforce copyright law through fostering a dynamic, accessible, and fair licensing market for AI training.

Given recent case law, the Government should also continue to review whether copyright law is fit for purpose in the age of AI, and should potentially implement legislative reform to clarify the law and further protect creatives. Regulation should also be issued which requires granular transparency from GenAI companies on details of their training data, and which requires the fair remuneration of creatives for the use of their work in training and fine-tuning AI models.

Moreover, the Government should focus on strategy and regulation which encourages investment in responsibly trained and designed small language models (SLMs) that complete narrow tasks effectively. These should be trained on licensed data, reliant upon fewer energy resources, and ensure no discriminatory content in their output.

1. DCMS, 'Official Statistics. Using annual estimates from summed monthly data (DCMS)', *gov.uk* (15 November 2023), at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-and-digital-economic-estimates-monthly-gva-to-sept-2023/using-annual-estimates-from-summed-monthly-data-dcms> [accessed 20 October 2025].

2. Publishers Association, 'Vision for Publishing: The Role of Publishing in the UK's Success' (2024), 16 pp. [pdf] at <https://www.publishers.org.uk/publications/vision-for-publishing/> [accessed 20 October 2025].

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## COPYRIGHT AND RESPONSIBLE GENERATIVE AI DESIGN

### 1. Foster a Licensing Market and Continue to Review Sufficiency of Copyright Law:

The UK Government should not implement exceptions to copyright law or an opt-out model for AI training. Instead, the UK Government should reinforce copyright law through fostering a dynamic, accessible, and fair licensing market for AI training. Given recent case law, the Government should also continue to review whether copyright law is fit for purpose in the age of AI, and should potentially implement legislative reform to clarify the law and further protect creatives.

### 2. Mandate Granular Transparency and Fair Remuneration:

The UK Government should issue policy and regulation which requires granular transparency from technology companies on details of their training data for GenAI systems, and which requires the fair remuneration of creatives for the use of their work in training and fine-tuning GenAI models. This would help to facilitate a licensing market and enable creatives to exercise their rights.

### 3. Invest in Responsible SLM Development:

The UK Government should develop its Industrial Strategy, offer funding, and regulate data and technology to encourage investment in UK-founded small language models (SLMs) which are responsibly designed and trained. This should enable sophisticated models that are less damaging to the environment than LLMs. Moreover, they should be designed to ensure no discriminatory output. Social impacts should be ascertained, understood, and mitigated on an ongoing basis.

## EDUCATION, RESEARCH, AND FUNDING

### 4. Include AI-Free Creative Writing and AI Critical Skills in School Curricula:

The Department for Education, and equivalent devolved bodies, should mandate that creative writing and reading is included in school curricula and that it does not include the use of GenAI (where access needs do not require its use). Alongside digital literacy skills, children should be taught skills which enable them to be critical of AI systems, so that they are informed about the limitations and downsides of GenAI use.

### **5. Fund Creative Writing Initiatives and Independent Publishers:**

It is even more important in the GenAI era that the UK Government invests in creative writing initiatives and the work of cutting-edge independent publishers through increased funding to Arts Councils (England, Northern Ireland, Wales) and Creative Scotland. These funds should particularly focus on initiatives that encourage writing with vulnerable, minority, and underrepresented groups to counter specific risks around homogeneity of voices and disparity of resources which could be worsened by GenAI. This increased funding would help to ensure that unique and diverse voices in literature are encouraged and nurtured, and skills and craft are shared and passed on.

### **6. Increase Research on Market and Impacts:**

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the UK Government should increase support and funding for research on readers and creatives to aid the UK Government's impact assessment on AI and copyright, and future decisions on AI and data regulation. Particularly, research should focus on reader preferences around AI content, the impact of GenAI on children's creative development, and mapping the impacts of GenAI on creatives and on society more widely.

## **PUBLISHING INDUSTRY PRACTICE**

### **7. Increase Industry Transparency:**

Publishers should be transparent about their in-house use of AI. This should be openly communicated and discussed with literary agents and authors to increase trust, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing within the industry, and to allow for traceability as needed.

### **8. License GenAI Training Rights as Sub-Rights if going through Publishers:**

Publishers should recognise and respect that GenAI training rights lie with the author and should license accordingly. The industry should work together to normalise that, if going through publishers, GenAI training rights should be licensed as sub-rights with a fair financial split.

### **9. Support Around AI Use and Contracts:**

The industry should increase support and guidance around navigating the implications of AI use and AI training rights in contracts, particularly for self-published and un-agented authors, along with independent publishers. This support could include campaigns to encourage authors and publishers to join membership societies and trade unions. These bodies should continue guidance for their members on AI use, copyright, and contractual clauses.

# KEY FINDINGS

The recommendations above are grounded in the findings of this research. Key findings are outlined here. Statistics are based on the survey responses from 332 literary creatives (literary agents for fiction; fiction publishers; published novelists). Other findings are based on the focus groups, case studies, interviews, and the forum.

## ➤ USE OF GENAI

### **Most literary creatives are not using GenAI.**

67% of novelists said they never use AI, along with 66% of literary agents, and 55% of those working in fiction publishing. This is due to the moral and environmental implications, the negative perception of using AI for 'creative' tasks, and concerns around the inaccuracies of GenAI. Some creatives did not take issue with the use of AI per se but took issue with systems which had been trained on unlicensed data.

### **Some literary creatives use GenAI for 'non-creative' tasks.**

33% of novelists report that they use GenAI within their work, along with 34% of literary agents, and 45% of those working in fiction publishing. Most commonly, these literary creatives use GenAI for 'non-creative' tasks such as information search.

## ➤ SOCIAL CONCERNS

### **Literary creatives warned of the loss of creativity and the de-skilling of younger generations.**

There was concern that increased use of GenAI would lead to a loss of creative practice and de-skilling in terms of creativity, imagination, empathy, resilience, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Much of this was discussed in reference to younger generations.

### **Destruction of trust and connection was a major concern amongst literary creatives.**

Opacity and uncertainty around how writers are using GenAI was thought to endanger the connection between writers and readers. Moreover, this was predicted to sow mistrust within the industry. Novelists were concerned about false accusations around AI use damaging their reputation.

### **GenAI was seen to provide opportunity for those with accessibility needs, but also to perpetuate problematic stereotypes in its output.**

Participants perceived GenAI to provide important opportunities for voices in literature which might not otherwise be heard. However, there was also concern regarding the stereotypes and discrimination that output from these systems might perpetuate due to biased training data.

## ➤ LITERARY CHANGES

### **Literary creatives predicted a loss of originality in literature.**

It was predicted that there would be a loss of originality in the content, style, and language of novels due to an increased use of GenAI in writing and publishing. However, there was also discussion about a potential rise in experimental fiction to counteract 'AI style'.

## **Literary creatives predicted that genre fiction was at higher risk of displacement than literary fiction.**

In the survey, two thirds (66%) of literary creatives saw romance to be extremely threatened, closely followed by thrillers (61%), and crime (60%). 32% saw literary fiction to be extremely threatened.

## **➤ ECONOMIC IMPACTS**

### **Over a third (39%) of novelists reported that their income has already been negatively impacted by GenAI.**

This was mostly attributed to competition from AI-generated books and loss of jobs which provide supplementary streams of income.

### **Novelists fear their work will be displaced and their future ability to earn from writing will be entirely diminished.**

85% of published novelists said they think their future income will be negatively impacted by GenAI, and over half (51%) of published novelists agreed that AI is likely to displace their work entirely.

## **➤ COPYRIGHT AND DATA USE**

### **Novelists prioritise control of their work, meaning asking permission would likely result in more access to data than a rights reservation model.**

93% of novelists said they would 'probably' or 'definitely' opt out of their work being used to train AI models in contrast to 75% of novelists who said they would 'probably not' or 'definitely not' opt in. This shows that novelists prioritise control of their work and that asking creatives for permission to use their work would likely lead to more access to data for AI companies.

### **Most novelists (59%) report that their work has been used to train GenAI models without permission or remuneration.**

Almost two thirds of novelists (59%) reported that they know their work has been used to train AI models. Of these, 99% reported they did not give permission for this use and 100% reported they were not remunerated.

### **There is widespread backlash against a 'rights reservation' (opt-out) model.**

83% of all literary creatives said that a data mining exception which allows rights holders to reserve their rights (an opt-out model) would be negative. This was mostly put down to underestimated negative impacts, technical infeasibility, and overblown expectations of growth.

### **Literary creatives consistently called for a licensing market which would enable them to give permission, have control, and be remunerated.**

86% of literary creatives indicated that a model based on an 'opt-in' principle would be their preferred option. Almost half of novelists (48%) said they would want licensing to be negotiated collectively through a writers' union or society. This was the most popular option in terms of how a licence would be negotiated.



# INTRODUCTION

The rise of generative AI (GenAI) has positioned the creative industries on the brink of irreversible change. The UK Government has focused largely on the growth that AI might bring to our economy through innovation and increased productivity.<sup>3</sup> However, recent moves could risk significant harm, and the potential demise, of our world-leading creative industries.

Writers and publishers face uncertainty about what increasingly capable GenAI systems mean for their careers, their passions, their craft, and their audiences, with some anxious that these systems will displace their artform entirely. In an open letter from June 2025, a group of novelists said that their stories were stolen and 'used to train machines that, if short-sighted capitalistic greed wins, could soon be generating the books that fill our bookstores'.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last few years, the use of GenAI systems to write and publish books, in whole or part, has increased. Rip-off AI-generated imitations of books appear on Amazon under the names of real authors.<sup>5</sup> Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) has also implemented a maximum of three book publications per day on the platform to combat the influx of low-quality AI-generated books.<sup>6</sup>

The market for GenAI chatbots and GenAI writing tools is growing. Globally, the GenAI chatbot market was valued at \$7.66bn in 2024 and it is projected to grow to \$65.94bn by 2032.<sup>7</sup> Large language models (LLMs) in the form of chatbots or assistants, such as ChatGPT, Llama, Claude, or Gemini, can be prompted to search for information, generate ideas, edit text, or draft output.<sup>8</sup> GenAI writing tools such as Sudowrite and Novelcrafter can be used for brainstorming, drafting, and editing text.<sup>9</sup>

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4. Samira Ahmed, Becky Albertalli, Tom Angleberger and others, 'Against AI: An Open Letter From Writers to Publishers', *LitHub* (27 June 2025), at <https://lithub.com/against-ai-an-open-letter-from-writers-to-publishers/> [accessed 22 October 2025].

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8. OpenAI, 'Introducing ChatGPT', *OpenAI* (30 November 2022), at <https://openai.com/index/chatgpt/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Meta, 'Llama 4', *Llama.com* (n.d.), at <https://www.llama.com/docs/model-cards-and-prompt-formats/llama4/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Anthropic, 'Meet Claude', *Claude.ai* (n.d.), at <https://claude.ai/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Google, 'Hi, Gemini: Meet the Everyday AI Assistant from Google', *Gemini.Google* (n.d.), at <https://gemini.google/about/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

9. *Sudowrite* [website], at <https://sudowrite.com/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; *Novelcrafter* [website], at <https://www.novelcrafter.com/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

There are even GenAI-powered story writers, which can be used to draft full-length books, such as Qyx AI Book Creator, Squibler, and Publishing.ai.<sup>10</sup> On the publishing side, publishing platforms such as Spines utilise AI to assist authors with coaching, editing, producing cover design, proofreading, formatting, marketing, and distributing.<sup>11</sup>

Time and again, technology companies are winning out over creatives. Millions of books have been scraped from shadow libraries such as LibGen, which have been used to train AI models without the consent or remuneration of authors.<sup>12</sup> The UK Government also stated a preference to implement an exception to copyright law with a rights reservation in the recent 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence' consultation.<sup>13</sup>

The proposed model, often referred to as the 'opt-out model', would allow for AI companies to use creators' works to train their models, unless those creators have reserved their rights or 'opted out'. Creatives have argued that this is a move that prioritises technology companies' access to data over rightful control creatives have over their own work.<sup>14</sup>

The UK Government has also announced a major new tech deal with the US, which sees firms such as Microsoft and Google pledge to spend billions in the UK.<sup>15</sup> This signals that the UK intends to strengthen ties and alignment with the US regarding tech and AI. In the US, the Head of the US Copyright Office was recently fired, reportedly after publishing a report which stated that training AI on copyrighted material might overstep fair use.<sup>16</sup>

It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the UK might be looking to relax copyright protections. This could be seen as the key to unlocking AI innovation, both within the UK and from trade of AI technology built elsewhere. However, we have also recently seen that Anthropic has agreed to pay authors at least \$1.5bn for sourcing books through piracy websites, in the first class action settlement centred on AI and copyright in the US, showing that the US is experiencing its own tensions regarding AI and copyright.<sup>17</sup>

10. Qyx AI [website], at <https://qyxai.com/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Squibler [website], at <https://www.squibler.io/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Publishing.ai [website], at <https://www.ai.publishing.com/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

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17. Kate Knibbs, 'Anthropic Agrees to Pay Authors at Least \$1.5 Billion in AI Copyright Settlement', *Wired* (5 September 2025), at <https://www.wired.com/story/anthropic-settlement-lawsuit-copyright/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

We must protect our creative industries in the UK. They are the crown jewel in our cultural sector: globally renowned and world leading. They contribute £126bn Gross Value Added (GVA) to the economy annually and provide the UK with an immeasurable amount of soft power.<sup>18</sup>

The publishing sector represents a significant part of the creative industries. It contributes £11bn to the UK economy and exports more books than any other country in the world.<sup>19</sup> Many feel that it is a sector which has long been under-appreciated by various UK Governments, demonstrated by severe cuts to Arts Council funding,<sup>20</sup> and with publishing not mentioned amongst high potential sub-sectors in the current UK Government's 'Creative Industries Sector Plan'.<sup>21</sup>

Due in part to this underappreciation, the sector is struggling. The average salary for a writer in the UK is approximately £7,000 per year and the publishing sector has seen the biggest drop in career optimism of all the creative industries.<sup>22</sup>

There has also been a generational shift. Amongst adults, the most popular way to engage with the arts physically is through reading books or magazines,<sup>23</sup> however reading for pleasure in children is at an all-time low, with only 1 in 3 children between the ages of 8 and 18 saying they enjoy reading in their free time.<sup>24</sup>

But novels are a vital artform for us to protect. They play a core role in the publishing sector and creative industries, not only through sales and exports, but by providing the basis for films, television, music, plays, videogames, and more. They contribute greatly to our culture, wellbeing, and entertainment, and help us to develop empathy, to learn, and to go through processes of reflection and self-discovery.

The material and immaterial benefits, for readers and writers alike, are remarkable. Indeed, novels get to the very core of what it means to be human. The risk of harming this status or even its displacement, therefore, should not be underestimated. The stakes are high, and the UK Government needs to pay attention.

18. DCMS, 'Official Statistics. Using Annual Estimates from Summed Monthly Data'.

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20. Nicole Winchester, 'In Focus. Budget 2024: Impact on the Cultural Sector', *UK Parliament. House of Lords Library* (11 November 2024), at <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/budget-2024-impact-on-the-cultural-sector/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

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# Report outline

This report maps and centres the voices of almost 400 literary creatives (published novelists, fiction publishers, literary agents for fiction) in the UK.

Part 1 outlines how literary creatives are using, or not using, GenAI in their work. Generally, literary creatives in the UK showed an overwhelmingly negative perception when it came to using AI for 'creative' tasks such as writing, editorial processes, illustration, the production of audiobooks, cover art, and translation. However, many literary creatives perceived that AI might bring benefits to the publishing industry in terms of helping to perform 'non-creative' tasks.

Part 2 focuses on the social, literary, and economic impacts that GenAI is having and will have on novelists, publishing, and the novel itself.

Literary creatives warned about the negative consequences on wellbeing, connection, and skill that would stem from loss of the creative process and humanity in writing, with particular concern about the impact on younger generations. There was also broad concern about the loss of literary originality.

Part 3 summarises the views of literary creatives on copyright and licensing. It outlines the arguments that literary creatives and industry experts have made regarding why the UK Government should not implement a copyright exception or an opt-out model for AI training. Moreover, it explains the arguments and practicalities for implementing a dynamic and fair licensing market.



# Definitions

**The Novel:** An ever-adapting form of literature which takes the shape of an extended work of narrative fiction written largely in prose. Novels weave together character, plot, and description to varying degrees, usually dealing with aspects of the complex nature of human experience. They can be published in many forms including as a physical book, an e-book, or an audiobook.

**Artificial Intelligence (AI):** Artificial intelligence is an umbrella term which denotes computer systems that aim to simulate, scale, and augment elements of human intelligence including data analysis, learning, problem-solving, and reasoning. They usually provide recommendations, predictions, or decisions for a given set of objectives.<sup>25</sup>

**Generative AI (GenAI):** GenAI is a subfield of artificial intelligence, sitting within machine learning (which uses algorithms to detect patterns and enables the machine to learn from these patterns) and deep learning (which uses neural networks for data processing and analysis). Crucially, GenAI generates output based on the identification of statistically likely patterns in the data upon which it is trained. This output can take the form of text, images, videos, and more.

**Large Language Models (LLMs):** An LLM is a type of GenAI which produces textual output and has been trained on large amounts of textual data so that it can learn patterns and generate 'new' textual output. Examples of LLMs include ChatGPT, Gemini, and Llama.

**Small Language Models (SLMs):** An SLM, also sometimes referred to as a 'narrow language model', is a type of GenAI that has been trained on smaller sets of curated data, requires less computing power, and is often fine-tuned for specific tasks and domains to optimise for efficiency and quality of output. In addition, the compact nature of SLMs often allows these systems to run on edge devices which enable more private applications and access.

25. OECD, Scoping the OECD AI Principles OECD Digital Economy, OECD Digital Economy Papers (15 November 2019), at doi: 10.1787/d62f618a-en.



# METHODS

The methods of this research aim to centre the voices of creatives by exploring how they perceive GenAI, how they use GenAI (if at all), and how they are being impacted by it. This was done through focus groups, a survey, and case study interviews.

Material from interviews and the forum are used to complement or contextualise this data. The Appendix contains a table of all participants, along with their profession and names (or pseudonyms).

All participants provided their informed consent before participating in the research. For focus groups, interviews, and case studies, participants could choose whether to go by their real name or a pseudonym in this research.

This research is based on the following data:

## Focus Groups

6 focus groups across the UK with 52 literary creatives (7 literary agents for fiction, 17 fiction publishers, 28 published novelists).<sup>26</sup>

These took place in March and April 2025. There were 1 each in Edinburgh and Manchester, and 4 in London. Focus groups lasted around 3 hours with a meal provided before or after. Participants were able to claim £100 as a participant fee and up to £50 remuneration for travel costs.

## Survey

332 survey responses from literary creatives across the UK. This consisted of 258 published novelists (78%), and 42 professionals who work in fiction publishing (13%), 32 literary agents for fiction (9%). Out of the 258 published novelists in the survey, 25 novelists (10%) are self-published, and the remaining 233 are traditionally published.

The survey took between 10–15 minutes to complete and was open between February and May 2025. It explored attitudes to AI, use and impacts of GenAI, and views on copyright and licensing. Legitimate respondents were sent a £10 National Book Token via email. The survey results were analysed by the research assistant on this project, Alexis Harrell, between May and June 2025.

In terms of demographics, the survey was mostly completed by white people and by women, with 87% of respondents describing their ethnicity as white and 78% of respondents stating their gender as female. This reflects the homogeneity of the publishing industry in the UK. In 2024, just over two thirds (68%) of publishing professionals in the UK identified as female, 15% as from ethnic minority groups, with Black representation in the industry remaining around 3%.<sup>27</sup>

26. Throughout this report, 'literary creatives' is used to refer collectively to literary agents for fiction, fiction publishers, and published novelists. 'Novelists' is also used as a catch-all term for published novelists who participated in this research. When statistics are given from this research, this is using data from the survey.

27. Publishers Association, 'UK Publishing Workforce: Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging in 2024' (2024), 21 pp. [pdf], at <https://www.publishers.org.uk/publications/uk-publishing-workforce-diversity-inclusion-and-belonging-in-2024/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

## Case Studies

7 case study interviews with translators, an audiobook narrator, a ghost-writer, and novelists using, or being affected by, GenAI.

These took place on Zoom between February and August 2025. These were 1-2-1 except for the interview with literary translators. This was 3-2-1, as this took place simultaneously with 3 literary translators around the world. Participants were able to claim £100 as a participant fee.

## Interviews

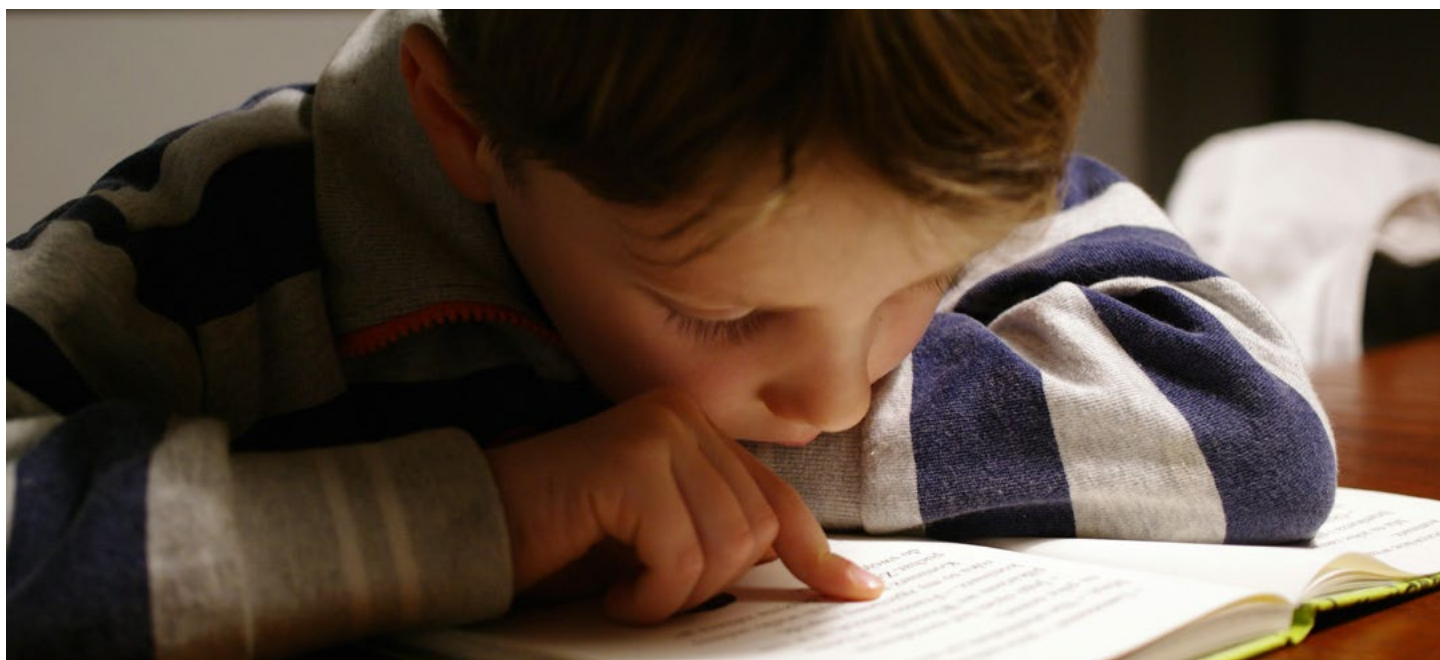
9 online semi-structured interviews with industry experts, policy experts, and lawyers/legal experts. These took place on Zoom between February and August 2025. Participants were able to claim £100 as a participant fee.

## Forum

1 multi-stakeholder forum, 'The Forum on Generative AI and the Novel', which engaged 33 stakeholders in a day of roundtable discussions on 27 June 2025.

Participants included novelists, publishers, literary agents, writers' and publishers' societies, trade unions, representatives from government, lawyers, and academics. All participants were able to claim up to £100 remuneration for travel costs.

The forum aimed to foster dialogue amongst these diverse groups. The hope was to encourage stakeholders to identify the key areas of tension and synergy, and reflect upon the ways they might work together, or learn from each other, to help protect our outstanding creative industries in the UK. Roundtable discussions covered transparency for readers, impact on future generations, definitions of creativity, AI training rights, copyright considerations, inclusivity and exclusivity, and resistance in the age of AI.<sup>28</sup>



28. Alexis Harrell, Christian Neubacher, Navneet Gidda, and Clementine Collett, *How is Generative AI Reshaping the Future of the Novel? Summary of the 'Forum on GenAI and the Novel'*, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy (27 June 2025), 6pp. [pdf] at [https://www.mctd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/GenAI-and-the-Novel-Forum\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.mctd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/GenAI-and-the-Novel-Forum_Summary.pdf) [accessed 23 October 2025].



# 1. THE USE OF GENERATIVE AI IN WRITING AND PUBLISHING

## Key Findings:

### **Most literary creatives are not using GenAI.**

67% of novelists reported that they never use AI, along with 66% of literary agents, and 55% of those working in fiction publishing. This was due to the moral and environmental implications, the disruption to their creative processes, and concerns around inaccuracies produced by GenAI.

### **Some literary creatives use GenAI for 'non-creative' tasks.**

33% of novelists report that they use GenAI within their work, along with 34% of literary agents, and 45% of those working in fiction publishing. Therefore, GenAI is more utilised within publishing than writing. Most commonly, these literary creatives use GenAI for tasks deemed 'non-creative', such as information searches.

### **The use of GenAI in publishing is perceived slightly less negatively than the use of GenAI in writing.**

While 94% of literary creatives reported that they felt negative about the use of GenAI in the writing of a novel, 83% reported that they felt negative about the use of GenAI in the publishing of novels.

Most literary creatives, including literary agents, fiction publishers, and published novelists, reported that they do not use GenAI in their work. However, some literary creatives did report that they use GenAI. This was mostly for tasks which they considered 'non-creative'. The definition of 'non-creative' differed, meaning that GenAI was used in a range of ways.

A few did find it useful for their creative endeavours, reporting that it helped them to see things in a new light or unlock new creative pathways. Notably, many of these participants did still grapple with the moral and environmental implications of these systems.

# NON-USERS OF GENAI

Most literary creatives reported that they are not using GenAI within their writing and publishing processes. From survey respondents, the following was reported:

- **67% of novelists** reported that they never use GenAI in their writing processes.
- **66% of literary agents** for fiction reported that they never use GenAI in their work.
- **55% of those who work in fiction publishing** reported that they never use GenAI in their work.

Respondents gave a range of reasons why they did not use GenAI. For many, it was because they felt GenAI would diminish or interrupt their creative practice, because they were concerned that it would produce poor quality or inaccurate output, or because they felt it was unethical (both regarding its unlicensed training data and its environmental impacts).

In some cases, creatives did not take issue with the use of AI per se but took issue with AI systems which had been trained on unlicensed data. It was noted by some that they would be likely to use GenAI if they knew it had been responsibly trained and designed.

Novelists and publishers alike saw not using GenAI as a 'choice', rather than giving in to pressure to use a system to 'keep up':

'There are all sorts of technologies we don't use [...] either because they aren't commercially viable, or not interesting, or actively dangerous, that we decide not to use collectively. Just because we can do a thing, doesn't mean we should do a thing.'

**Stephen May, Forum**

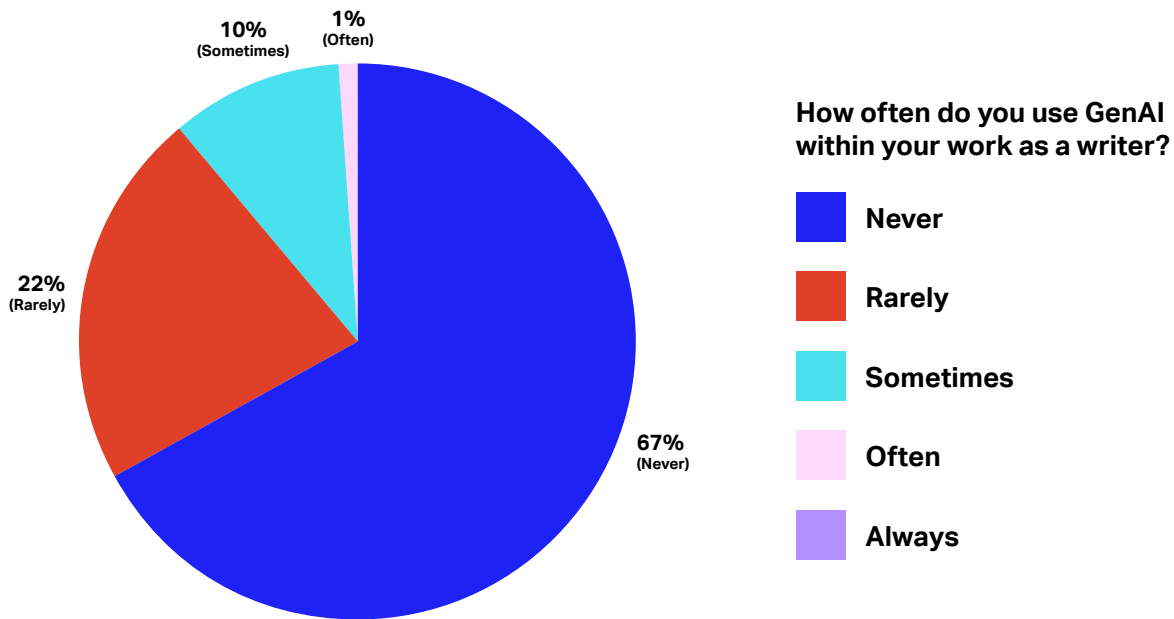
'For a small independent publisher of literary fiction like Bluemoose Books, our only stand is to say we don't want any part of this, we are AI free, and we are an AI free publisher, and we will have a stamp on the cover. And then up to the public to decide whether they want to buy that book or not. But let's tell the public what AI is doing. It's got brilliant capacity to do fantastic things in other avenues, but for the creative industries and for literary fiction in particular, it is very limited.'

**Kevin Duffy, Forum**

For some participants, not using GenAI was intended as a form of 'resistance', a trend which some have labelled as an 'AI backlash'.<sup>29</sup> During focus groups, some novelists explained how they continued to write long-hand, or that they go to libraries for research instead of using Google, which now defaults to using AI as part of providing search results. This was important to them as it was part of the creative process and maintained the integrity of the book.

29. Reece Rogers, 'The AI Backlash Keeps Growing Stronger', *Wired* (28 June 2025), at <https://www.wired.com/story/generative-ai-backlash/> [accessed 23 October 2025]; Emine Saner, "'Nobody Wants a Robot to Read Them a Story!'" The Creatives and Academics Rejecting AI – at Work and at Home', *The Guardian* (3 June 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/jun/03/creatives-academics-rejecting-ai-at-home-work> [accessed 23 October 2025].

# NOVELISTS USING GENAI



**Graph 1: Usage of GenAI by novelists**

Around a third of novelists (33%) reported that they use GenAI in the processes surrounding writing (see Graph 1).

In the survey, out of all novelists, the most common uses were:

- Information search (20%)
- Editing text which they've written without the help of AI (8%)
- Producing marketing copy (5%)
- Producing images for marketing or publicity (5%)
- Summarising other texts (5%)

6% also selected 'other', which they reported to include spelling/grammar, brainstorming, or helping with marketing strategies and goals.

There were a range of motivations for using GenAI. Literary creatives reported they were using GenAI because they felt as if they needed to 'keep up', felt it was hard to avoid, felt it allowed them to keep their business running, or felt it was useful for 'non-creative' tasks enabling them to have time for the more 'creative' endeavours.

Generally, while AI was thought to be valuable for its ability to speed up repetitive or routine tasks, it was seen to have very little place in creativity:

'I don't think there's any need to use it in the first place for something like creativity.'

**Marigold, Manchester Focus Group**

'I think if you're using it as part of the creative process, that's when I think you've got problems.'

**David, Manchester Focus Group**

This was referenced often in the survey responses, too. When asked about the main positive opportunities that AI can bring to writing and publishing, literary creatives spoke about efficiency, admin, marketing, and research. Some wrote about how there are benefits to it 'simplifying non-creative tasks' or that it might be able 'to do our admin tasks so that we can focus on the creative aspects of the industry'.

It was clear from focus groups and case studies that the definition of 'creative' tasks did vary. Out of novelists, the most negatively perceived use of GenAI was for writing entire novels (97% of novelists felt extremely negative). This was followed by writing longer sections (92% extremely negative), and writing short sections (87% extremely negative).

The aspects novelists felt least negative about using GenAI for were sourcing general facts or information (30% extremely negative), sourcing historical facts and information (33% extremely negative), and editing (43% extremely negative).

A small number of participants nevertheless felt these systems augmented their creativity, helping them to brainstorm or unblock their creative ideas. This can be seen in some of the case studies below.<sup>30</sup>

Notably, novelists, publishers, and literary agents who used GenAI did grapple with the environmental and moral implications of the technology. Often, they discussed the swathes of unlicensed work which had been used to train GenAI models or the large amounts of electricity and water that GenAI uses, depleting our finite resources and adding to our carbon footprint.<sup>31</sup>

However, they often noted the tension between these implications and the potential benefits for efficiency and output. It was also discussed by some participants that there is an element of privilege to being able to completely resist or refuse the use of technology.

One participant, for example, spoke about how his wife uses ChatGPT for her work, and although he opposes it on moral grounds, he said: 'You know, if it's a case of do we get any money this month or do we have our principles...'. Much of this prompts us to question how GenAI systems might be made more sustainable and responsible, rather than removing them from people who might need it the most.

## Using GenAI for Information Search

One fifth (20%) of novelists in the survey reported that they use GenAI for information searches when they are writing, for example to research historical details, terms, concepts, and general facts and information.

During focus groups, some participants outlined that they used GenAI in this way because they often don't feel they have a choice. Some novelists spoke about how search engines such as Google now automatically provide an AI-generated output for searches.<sup>32</sup> Some participants therefore didn't consider using AI for research, generative or not, to be problematic:

'If somebody's writing an historical novel and there's an element of research, you know, if you Google something now it gives you AI, whether you want it or not. I wouldn't necessarily find that to be problematic if someone used AI for research.'

**Isla, Edinburgh Focus Group**

30. Zorana Ivcevic and Mike Grandinetti, 'Artificial Intelligence as a Tool for Creativity', *Journal of Creativity*, 34.2: Special Issue *AI and Creativity*, ed. by Mark A. Runco and Jeffrey Tsao (2024), 100079, at doi: 10.1016/j.joc.2024.100079; Katherine O'Toole and Emőke-Ágnes Horvát, 'Extending Human Creativity with AI', *Journal of Creativity*, 34.2 (2024), 100080, at doi: 10.1016/j.joc.2024.100080.

31. Noman Bashir, Priya Donti, James Cuff, Sydney Sroka, Marija Ilic, Vivienne Sze, Christina Delimitrou, and Elsa Olivetti, 'The Climate and Sustainability Implications of Generative AI', *An MIT Exploration of Generative AI* (27 March 2024), pp. 1–45, at <https://mit-genai.pubpub.org/pub/8ulgrckc/release/2> [accessed 22 October 2025]; Bhargav Srinivasa Desikan and Gina Neff, *Evidence Review: Big Tech's Climate Performance and Policy Implications for the UK*, Minderoo Centre for Technology & Democracy Reports (July 2025), 36 pp. [pdf], at <https://www.mctd.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Big-Techs-Climate-Performance-and-Policy-Implications-for-the-UK.pdf> [accessed 22 October 2025] or doi: 10.17863/CAM.119617.

32. AI Overview is on Google by default but can be disabled by changing your settings.

Some participants also spoke about how they found LLMs such as ChatGPT to be much quicker and more effective than search engines such as Google, especially if one wanted to research something niche and specific. One participant said that the benefits of using ChatGPT's Deep Research, especially when looking at very specific things, has been remarkable. This is also demonstrated in the case study with Jackie (below).

The risk of inaccuracy was acknowledged by those using GenAI for information search, but many participants pointed out that they usually tried to check the sources.

For many novelists, research was not seen to be 'creative'. One novelist who wrote thrillers spoke about how they had needed to know if a certain combination of drugs would cause death, and had used ChatGPT to find out, but said that:

'For me that was like not a creative avenue, I just wanted to know that and then I could focus on the creative work [...] it frees you up to focus on what you see as creative, but I guess that boundary is sort of blurred.'

**Daisy, Edinburgh Focus Group**

However, some participants during focus groups pushed back, saying they did perceive research as a creative task. Some novelists spoke about how they find going to a library to be a creative journey, where they find books which they otherwise might not have come across, and how this changes the shape or story of the story they are working on.

## **CASE STUDY: Using GenAI for Research and Marketing**

I interviewed Jackie, an anonymised author of crime/thriller novels.

Jackie spoke to me about the fact she uses GenAI but has strict lines with herself about what she uses it for, explaining that she never uses it for actual writing. She told me she would feel strongly about someone using AI to write a whole novel. However, she does use it for research. She discussed how she thinks that we can use AI to take away the mundane tasks or the admin, and this should free us up to do the 'creative stuff'.

Jackie told me that she finds GenAI to be like a more reactive version of Google, which is particularly useful when things are a bit more obscure. For example, she used it to explore what machinery would look like if it had been underwater for decades, saying, 'I don't want it to tell me how to write. I just want to know whether it would have algae on it or not.'

She also had a chapter about a technical element of policing and fed it into ChatGPT to see if it could spot any problems or inaccuracies. It did come back with some useful suggestions to make the processes more authentic, Jackie told me. Jackie talked about how she is careful with using GenAI for this purpose, because it doesn't always get things right, and so she often checks the sources.

Additionally, Jackie explained that she uses GenAI to help her produce graphics for marketing, because her publisher doesn't provide a lot of these. She can feed in the front cover and the author quotes and ask it to create something. Jackie said it does a good job, but sometimes it starts to go off-piste, so she must ensure she gives it really clear instructions and provides well-written prompts.

## Using GenAI for Editing

Around 8% of novelists said they use GenAI for editing text which they have written without the help of GenAI. An example of this can be seen in the case study with Lizbeth (below).

A few participants discussed their use of ProWritingAid or similar systems, which can utilise GenAI to help suggest re-phrasing or editing.<sup>33</sup>

Some participants said they used this to help them improve grammar, suggest re-phrasing, improve readability, or to show them repeated words. They found this helpful as these were things they struggled to see about their own manuscript, and they didn't consider it to be a creative practice:

'What I wasn't willing to let it do was go: well, why don't you use this word instead, well why don't you structure the sentence... that is me, because that is the creativity, so what I was doing was using it in a very almost, just, a very basic editor way.'

**Fia, London Focus Group 1**

Fia spoke about how this felt similar to having an editor, because you still have the authorial choice about whether to make the suggested changes. With this type of GenAI, she said it is the same; it is about how far we take it in terms of accepting its suggestions. She spoke about how this use, therefore, felt justified to her:

'It's told me I've repeated this, I'm going to go and find the words that I want to use, and therefore I feel like I'm still retaining my author's voice [...] that's where the use of AI could be used in a positive but limited way, as long as we still are retaining the choice to tell our own stories.'

**Fia, London Focus Group 1**

However, many participants in focus groups spoke about how they find editing to be a deeply creative part of the process, and therefore they wouldn't want GenAI to be involved. 43% of novelists felt extremely negative about the use of GenAI for editing text written without the help of AI.

## CASE STUDY: Using GenAI as Writing Partner and Editor

Lizbeth is a novelist and writes in multiple genres, including fantasy and romance. She writes under various pen names. She started experimenting with ProWritersAid or SudoWrite a few years ago, both of which use AI to help writers' re-phrase, brainstorm, and edit.

Now, she uses ChatGPT Pro to help her brainstorm, write, and edit her work. Lizbeth is training up the system by giving it her previous books plus all her notes, so that it is customised to her writing style.

She is also inputting her style primers because in different genres she writes in different voices. Although she noted that it has its glitches, Lizbeth talked about how the system allows her to increase her productivity and the quality of her work. She also said it has 'supplanted anybody that I would want to banter [with] or, you know... about characters and things'.

Lizbeth used to write about one novel per year, but now she can do three per year, and her target is five.

33. ProWritingAid, 'Does ProWritingAid Use AI?', *ProWritingAid* (12 September 2025), at <https://help.prowritingaid.com/article/297-does-prowritingaid-use-ai> [accessed 23 October 2025].

She told me that she thinks ChatGPT is 'better' than her, saying that the newest version of ChatGPT is 'so much better than I am at prose'. She explained to me that people's idea that ChatGPT will never be better than humans is maybe true in the first instance, but it will become better. When I asked what made her think it was better than her, Lizbeth described that its vocabulary is better than hers, and she has certain prejudices in the words she does and doesn't use, but she feels the system is very open, so it might be 'more lyrical than I am'.

Specifically, Lizbeth uses it to help her with:

- Descriptions: Lizbeth explained she's always had difficulty with descriptions and ensuring she doesn't make them too wordy. She described to me, 'I put what I had written, all clunky and [...] what it produced was fabulous. A little tweak here, a little tweak there'.
- Plot holes: She noted that she used to spend hours trying to figure out plot holes, but now, Lizbeth tells ChatGPT her issue, gives it the summary, and asks it to suggest five pathways the characters could take. While she admitted that it often isn't usable, sometimes she gets things which gives her a perspective she hadn't previously had.

- Character arcs: Lizbeth told me she can insert an 85k novel she's written into ChatGPT and ask it how a certain character arc is developing, which she says is 'fabulous'.

Lizbeth explained that although she hasn't yet, at some point she hopes she'll be able to give the AI system a prompt, and this will allow the system to write it up in her style for her to edit:

'I have a children's novel. It's about this, this, this. Give a summary, you know, I want that in five chapters in my writing style. Then I think the line will blur a little bit because I'd be going ok, so how, yes, it's based on my writing, my primer, it's got my synopsis and all of that, but because I'm not actually physically or even mentally writing those, then it becomes a little bit more fuzzy. So, I take that, and I edit it myself.'

During our conversation, Lizbeth talked about how she had an internal battle with herself around whether she was ok with using AI in this way. She told me she'd asked herself: what does this mean? Does it mean I'm still writing it? But she explained that given it is her draft, she feels she is still the 'creative controller'.

## Using GenAI for Plot and Character Development

A small number of focus group participants spoke about how they use GenAI when it comes to developing their plot or characters. One participant, for example, spoke about how they used it to produce a character sheet that they could print off and fill out to help develop her characters. This helped her to have more time for the creative stuff, such as filling out the sheet itself. In other words, she said, she'd asked herself:

'How can I make this my assistant?'  
**Coral, London Focus Group 3**

Some participants saw the use of GenAI for aiding plot and character development as completely legitimate, because they saw this as the framework upon which the writing was layered. For example, one participant at the forum questioned whether this type of use really compromised creativity:

'But I am wondering about using it as a sort of sounding board and as a prompter, and whether, you know, is that the death knell of imagination and creativity necessarily?'

The participant continued to discuss how using GenAI in this way might be a route into writing for someone if they're mortified about trying or don't know where to start.

Perhaps for someone, they suggested, GenAI would be the equivalent of speaking to a friend over lunch or might help to prompt a flow.

Other participants disagreed, seeing the development of plot and structure as a deeply creative process which they wanted to do without the use of GenAI. Some also saw human interaction to be irreplaceable when it came to brainstorming plot and character development.

### **CASE STUDY: Using GenAI to Draft**

Jason Hamilton, otherwise known as The Nerdy Novelist, has a YouTube channel, @TheNerdyNovelist. At the time of writing, he has 72.4k subscribers and almost 5 million views in total. On his YouTube page, the description specifies that this is 'a channel about using AI and other author-related software to take the load off your shoulders so you can focus more on the creative tasks you love most'.<sup>34</sup> While Jason is based in the US, his case study is an illustrative one.

I interviewed Jason, who told me about how GenAI frees up time for novelists and allows them to focus on the parts of the process which bring joy and catharsis, and remove the bits which are a headache or stressful. He explained, 'the creative process for me is, I start with a vision of what it is. And then by the end of the process, it exists, right? How I get from that point A to point B? It is not as important to me'.

He discussed how for him, the least enjoyable part is writing the first draft, and so he chooses to use AI to do this:

'I don't really enjoy the actual process of writing out the first draft now. I love everything else. I love coming up with the stories and outlining my stories and doing the world building and preparing a book for publication and all, you know, I love most of the other processes but creating that first draft is so agonisingly slow for me, even before AI I would just... I just did not like it. [...] And then I apply my own creativity in other ways before and after that process.'

During our chat, he expressed that he will always take the material that GenAI gives him and spend a lot of time going through and editing it. When I asked him what he would say to an author who believed that the process of writing the first draft is important, even if it's painful, he responded that every author is different, but if art is painful, 'I think there might be something wrong'.

34. Jason Hamilton, @TheNerdyNovelist, YouTube channel, at <https://www.youtube.com/@TheNerdyNovelist> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Jason told me that there are people trying to figure out if they can automate a system to press a button so it will spit out a book. He described to me that, from similar experiments he's been doing, the output is relatively decent. He argued there is creativity in this kind of system, because the prompts can be ingenious:

'I press a button, and it runs the first prompt which is, generate a bunch of story ideas. Then it has a second prompt that looks at those story ideas and tries to pick the best one. And then it goes from there and creates an outline and creates each scene.'

However, Jason said that he also sees this as 'scummy, just creating a whole bunch of content without any kind of human oversight'.

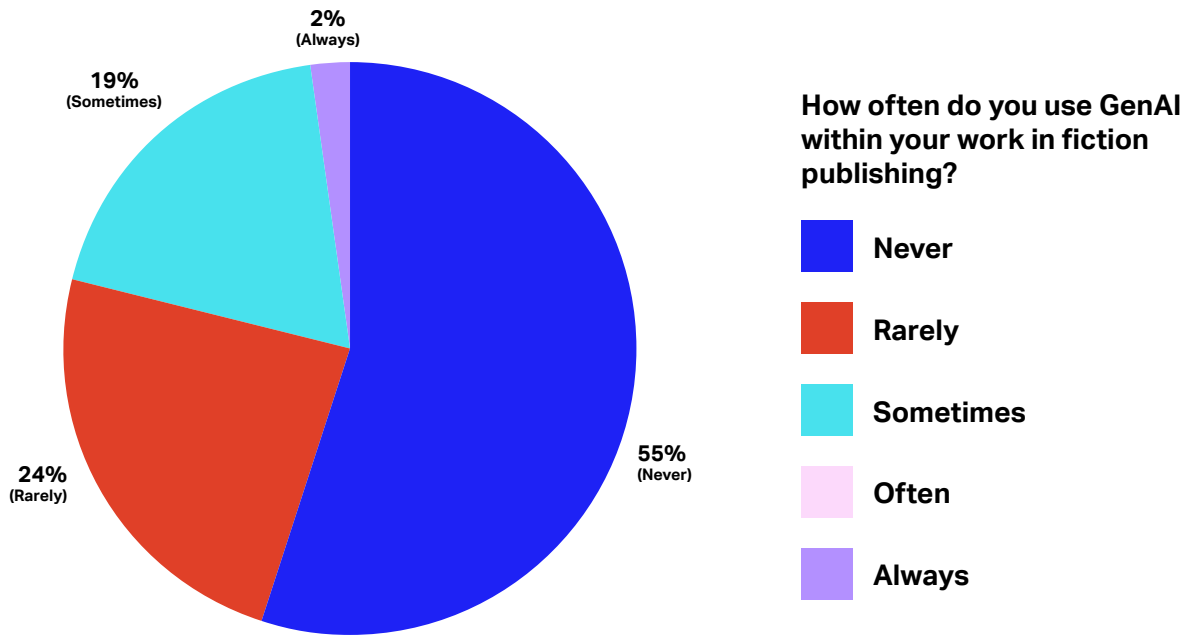
He told me that while he won't judge how people are using AI, there should be an element of creativity involved. Creativity, he explained, is something that only us humans have; AI is not creative by itself, but when used by humans in the right way, that can be a creative process.

Jason did admit that there is something lost when we use AI to write, but said that this is the case with all new technologies:

'When you're writing it out yourself, there's something [...] that we're kind of losing if we let AI do it all for us. I agree. I think there is something lost there, but I think anytime technology comes in and gives us a boost as a society, something is lost. But something is also gained, and what is gained is bigger than what is lost.'



# PUBLISHERS USING GENAI



**Graph 2: Usage of GenAI by publishers**

GenAI was used more within publishing than writing but was still not commonly used. In the survey, 45% of those who work in fiction publishing reported that they use GenAI to some extent in their processes at work (see Graph 2).

Out of those who work in fiction publishing, the most common uses of GenAI were:

- Information search (21%)
- Admin and planning (17%)
- Producing copy for marketing (14%)
- Summarising other texts (12%)
- Re-structuring or re-shaping copy for marketing and publicity that I've personally written without the use of AI (10%).

19% also said they use it for 'Other', which included spelling/grammar, brainstorming (e.g. book titles), marketing (e.g. strategy, goals, newsletter).

Literary creatives felt slightly less negative about the use of AI in publishing than in writing. 94% respondents reported that they felt negative about the use of GenAI in the writing of the novel and 83% reported that they felt negative about the use of GenAI in the publishing of the novel.

There was a general recognition that, within the publishing industry, most people are underpaid, overworked, and overburdened, and there are areas where processes could be streamlined. One publisher said that there are:

'Lots of legitimate opportunities for efficiency and just, you know, everyone is so time stretched in publishing it could be really beneficial.'

**Gareth, Edinburgh Focus Group**

This would enable the industry to maintain the creative aspects that people enjoy — and which often constitute the reason they go into publishing in the first place — while also making necessary processes more efficient.

When this was broken down, respondents felt most negative about the use of GenAI in roles perceived as the most 'creative'. In the survey, most respondents felt extremely negative about the use of GenAI in editorial work (65%), illustration (65%), audiobooks (63%), cover art (62%), and translation (60%). Notably, although they may still be considered creative roles, fewer respondents felt extremely negatively about the use of GenAI in publicity (34%) and sales and marketing (27%).

## **Independent Publishers vs Trade Publishers**

Many participants spoke about how they felt large commercial trade publishers, such as the 'Big Five' publishers (Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, and Simon & Schuster), are not being transparent about how they are using GenAI systems in-house. Particularly, there was speculation from participants that bigger trade publishers are using it in marketing and publicity, with some even thought to have developed in-house AI models.

Within independent publishers, although some were using GenAI in marketing or back-office admin, many of them resisted it entirely, perceiving it as inaccurate, unethical, and something that diminished their creativity:

'If your core sensibility [...] is to make as much money as possible for the shareholders, then they're going to just embrace AI full stop. [...] I think right from the outset for independent publishers, we can use that to say no, we're not doing that.'

**Kevin, Manchester Focus Group**

For other independent publishers who were open to using GenAI, there was a great deal of consideration about how its deployment would impact their authors.

One independent publisher spoke about how, within their publishing house, they are currently trying to figure out if there is a way to deploy AI safely and responsibly, particularly in relation to issues surrounding copyright.

But ultimately, there was also recognition that GenAI would potentially bring them great opportunities to streamline their work:

'If you don't adopt it [AI], you are going to fall behind [...] you can be not using Word anymore because you think writing with a pen is better, but there are advantages to using Word.'

**Gareth, Edinburgh Focus Group**

## Marketing

Marketing was an area which many publishers spoke about as somewhere they would like to, or already do, deploy AI. In the survey, this was one of the most common uses of AI within publishing. For example, 14% of fiction publishers said they use GenAI for producing copy for marketing and 10% said they use it for re-structuring or re-shaping copy for marketing and publicity that they've personally written without the use of AI.

During focus groups, publishers discussed how AI could be useful with helping to draft marketing taglines, gather metadata, and find audiences. One publisher spoke about how they are currently using it to help with marketing, including to help draft their newsletter, provide metadata for Amazon (title, descriptions, keywords, categories), and to edit blurbs and pitches. But they are 'very clear when it comes to the editorial side of it: only human eyes'  
Aurora, London Focus Group 4

Another independent publisher also spoke about how they have been using GenAI to help them with marketing in multiple ways, including development of a marketing plan.

## Mood Boards and Briefs

During a focus group, one publisher spoke about how they use the systems for mood boards and illustrator briefs. Many of their stories are fantastical, and they tell me that it is hard to find images of people in these settings online. Therefore, they have been using Ideogram to help them create images for mood boards which then allow them to brainstorm the narrative.

AI is also helping them to communicate with illustrators. Where before it had been difficult to do that design briefs and come to common understandings, now they're using AI to help communicate with people in other parts of the world, 'so it's been quite useful in designing the brief, in writing the brief, and getting that nuance which can get lost'  
Maya, London Focus Group 1



## AGENTS USING GENAI

Agents did not commonly use GenAI according to the study. Out of the 32 agents in the survey, 34% said they do use GenAI within their work.

Out of the agents in the survey, the most common uses of GenAI were:

- Information search (13%)
- Editing text they've written without the help of AI (9%)
- Re-structuring or re-shaping copy for marketing and publicity that I've personally written without the use of AI (9%)

In the focus groups, it became clear that some agents (and some publishers) had tested submission filtering systems which utilise AI. However, none of them had found it to be effective. Participants who had experimented spoke about how the system gives you a read-out which describes the quality of the writing submitted and provides a summary, with genre tags.

Many of them discussed how the genre tags tended to be wrong, with one publisher explaining that a contemporary romance had been labelled as being like *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*. This made it redundant for their needs, they said, as they needed these tags to be accurate.

There was also an awareness of a potential lack of privacy and control when using these systems. Agents pointed out that they did not know what was happening with the books they had input, with some of them therefore testing these AI systems by inputting their own personally written manuscripts or manuscripts that were out of copyright.

Authors also expressed discomfort at the prospect of their book being fed into these systems if submitting to an agent:

'Wow hold on a minute, 'coz then, does that manuscript mean it's gone into an AI training model, so what's happened to that?'

**Kester, London Focus Group 4**

Regarding submission filtering, the survey found that 81% of novelists felt negative about this use of AI, compared to 78% of agents and 73% of publishers.

While GenAI is not commonly used by agents, there was a recognition that there are manifold ways it could be useful. For example, agents spoke about how it could be helpful with royalty statements. They receive royalty statements twice a year and these are formatted differently by every publisher. Currently, agents manually split the royalty statements by author and check it against the contracts:

'You find so many mistakes, and then authors are like where's my royalty statement, you're like well it's in a document of 3,000 pages and I've had to go through and split them up and re-file them all.'

**Scarlett, London Focus Group 4**

Agents discussed how this use of AI would free up more time for them to take on a new client and generate some additional revenue.



## 2. THE IMPACTS OF GENERATIVE AI ON THE NOVEL

### Key Findings:

#### **Literary creatives warned of the loss of creativity and de-skilling of younger generations.**

There was concern that increased use of GenAI would lead to a loss of creative practice and de-skilling in terms of creativity, imagination, empathy, resilience, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Much of this was discussed in reference to younger generations.

#### **Destruction of trust and connection between readers and writers, and within the industry, was a major concern.**

Opacity and uncertainty about how writers are using GenAI was thought to endanger the connection between writers and their readers/publishers.

#### **Literary creatives predicted a loss of originality.**

There was concern over a loss of originality in the content, style, and language of novels with an increased use of GenAI in writing and publishing. However, it was thought there could be a rise in experimental fiction as authors try to 'prove' they've written the work themselves.

#### **Literary creatives predicted that genre fiction was at higher risk of displacement than literary fiction.**

Two thirds (66%) of literary creatives saw romance to be extremely threatened, closely followed by thrillers (61%), and crime (60%). 32% saw literary fiction to be extremely threatened.

#### **GenAI was seen to provide opportunities for those with accessibility needs, but also to perpetuate problematic stereotypes in its output.**

Participants perceived GenAI as a tool to provide important opportunities for voices in literature which might not otherwise be heard. However, there was also concern regarding the stereotypes and discrimination that output from these systems might perpetuate due to biased training data.

#### **Over a third (39%) of novelists reported that their income has already been negatively impacted by GenAI.**

This was largely attributed to competition from AI-generated books and loss of jobs which provide supplementary streams of income, such as copywriting.

#### **Novelists fear their work will be displaced and their future ability to earn from writing will be entirely diminished.**

In the survey, 85% of published novelists said they think their future income will be negatively impacted by GenAI, and over half (51%) of published novelists agreed that AI is likely to displace their work entirely.

While the previous section explored how literary creatives are — or are not — using AI, this section shifts to outline the ways that GenAI is impacting novelists, publishers, and the novel itself. These are divided into three categories: social and psychological impacts, literary impacts, and economic impacts.

This section explores evidence of current impacts and explains how literary creatives warned about more drastic future impacts as GenAI models improve.

# SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS

## Loss of the Creative Process

Novelists spoke of the powerful feelings they experienced during the creative process. Not only was this discussed in terms of writing, but also in terms of reading. Indeed, research has shown that creative thinking involves both semantic and episodic memory retrieval and offers benefits to our development.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, it has shown that reading books can have benefits for our mental wellbeing.<sup>36</sup>

They expressed concern that creative processes and experiences could be lost with the increased use of GenAI in the writing process, whether it is used for research, writing, or editing. There was discussion of how this might have knock-on impacts on people's wellbeing and fulfilment, along with the quality of literary output:

'The idea of creativity, the way that we're kind of outsourcing elements of it [...] kind of takes away the actual value of the process of writing, or creating art, or thinking about it, or researching even.'

**Amber, Edinburgh Focus Group**

First, many of the novelists spoke about the 'magic' of the creative process. This magic was a precious part of writing novels for them, a reason they love what they do:

'That's why I do it [...] what's coming out on the page, you're like where did this come from? It feels like magic [...] AI would just get in the way, for me.'

**Fleur, London Focus Group 3**

'I think it [GenAI] would really stop me tuning in, you know, even if it takes five more bloody years to write the book, that process of tuning in is like a reason for existence for me [...] I'm sure it would be more efficient but it wouldn't be that really mysterious, magical, totally enraging, weird job, and it's so fundamental.'

**Philippa, London Focus Group 4**

There was a sense that this magic might be lost if GenAI were used in processes of writing, editing, or even, for some, within processes of research.

Second, novelists spoke about 'catharsis' as a part of the creative process, discussing how writing had helped them to process certain emotions or heal from difficult life events.

During the Edinburgh focus group, one participant spoke about their work with women who have been through traumatising situations. She told us about how it was the process of writing itself which was cathartic:

'It's the process that's the healing, creative part. And if they shoved into ChatGPT, this horrific thing happened to me, write about it, it would, but they'd have no healing or understanding or development or anything.'

**Fern, Edinburgh Focus Group**

35. Roger E. Beaty, Qunlin Chen, Alexander P. Christensen, Yoed N. Kenett, Paul J. Silvia, Mathias Benedek, and Daniel L. Schacter, 'Default Network Contributions to Episodic and Semantic Processing During Divergent Creative Thinking: A Representational Similarity Analysis', *NeuroImage*, 209 (2020), 116499, doi: 10.1016/j.neuroimage.2019.116499.

36. Maria Rosario Gualano, Fabrizio Bert, M. Martorana, G. Voglino, V. Andriolo, R. Thomas, Carla Maria Gramaglia, Patrizia Zeppegno, and Roberta Siliquini, 'The Long-term Effects of Bibliotherapy in Depression Treatment: Systematic Review of Randomized Clinical Trials', *Clinical Psychology Review*, 58 (2017), 49–58. doi: 10.1016/j.cpr.2017.09.006.

The process of unlocking emotion and verbalising it, this catharsis, was often discussed as an inherent part of the creative process. Many novelists feared the use of GenAI in the writing would jeopardise this catharsis. This would not only impact writers, but also the ability for these texts to truthfully connect with readers and these readers to, in turn, undergo their own catharsis.

Third, novelists outlined 'perseverance' as part of the creative process. Many novelists discussed how writing a novel can be painful at times. At the forum, Stephen May spoke about how, 'that first draft is actually really, really difficult. It's like it's being pulled out of me, and that is a good thing [...] anything that takes the friction out of it, takes the pain out of it is probably a bad, bad thing'.

This friction and perseverance were often seen as important aspects of the creative process. Writers exchanged stories on the importance of sitting with problems and learning to overcome them, because:

'When you're writing a novel you need to be thinking about something and sitting with it for a long time.'

**Coral, London Focus Group 3**

Removing difficulty in the writing process by using GenAI was seen to deprive writers of learning to face and solve difficulties.

To remove this friction was also seen to potentially diminish the quality of the book. One novelist pointed out that it is moments of difficulty when the creative, inventive ideas emerge:

'Ideas come through all those difficulties, and trying to shortcut that for me just doesn't seem worth it at all.'

**River, London Focus Group 4**

Fourth, novelists spoke about how the creative process of writing fiction teaches us to think critically and empathetically. One novelist summarised this during the forum, saying:

'It's the process, that's how we [as writers] learn, that's how we develop empathy, that's how we problem solve and think laterally and develop those critical thinking skills, it's the process.'

**Tamsyn Murray, Forum**

Authors and academics have long argued that reading brings great benefits including empathy, learning, self-discovery, and brain connectivity.<sup>37</sup> Reading encourages us to examine our own character, kindness, and complexity by imagining the lives of others and by prompting us to react.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, this raises questions about how the use of GenAI within writing would change things for both writers and readers. Throughout, participants speculated that the increased use of GenAI in the writing process would be detrimental to the development of these ways of thinking:

'We want that kind of unique spark and spirit of the flawed humans that we all are. And that's why we buy books: to walk in other people's shoes, isn't it? Not to walk in an algorithm, 'cos that's sh\*tte.'

**Kevin, Manchester Focus Group**

37. Gregory S. Berns, Kristina Blaine, Michael J. Prietula, and Brandon E. Pye, 'Short- and Long-term Effects of a Novel on Connectivity in the Brain', *Brain Connectivity*, 3.6 (2013), 590–600, doi: 10.1089/brain.2013.0166.

38. Robert Coles, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1990).

## CASE STUDY: Audiobooks

Avery, anonymised here, is an audiobook narrator. Avery has been working in the industry for almost a decade and has narrated dozens of audiobooks. We spoke about some of the ways that GenAI is impacting the audiobook industry.

### AI and audiobook production

Avery told me that they suspect AI is being used within audiobook production, for example, within proof-listening:

'You would often send files at like 7pm on a workday [...] and then you would get pick-ups [...] they tell you what errors and they send you like a little clip so you can re-record it [...] sometimes you're like, a human couldn't have processed what we have sent in that amount of time. Or if they have, they haven't had any breaks and they haven't slept.'

Avery said the company always tells them that the clip has been human checked, but 'I truly don't believe that is the case, because it just must be automated'. In addition, Avery spoke about how some of their contracts with suppliers include permission for the use of the recording for research and development purposes, and to facilitate the repair and editing of the audiobook. But Avery commented that 'research and development' could mean anything. There is a certain opacity to how AI, broadly speaking, is being used within audiobook production companies.

### AI narration

We spoke about how the use of AI in narration was becoming much more common: 'Actors can, you know, sell their voice to, like, software [...] and that's a choice that they can make because you can make money and do nothing'.

An example of this is ElevenLabs, a text-to-speech AI tool which synthesises and replicates real human voices.<sup>39</sup> Recently, Audible also announced plans to launch a new AI tool which will give publishers and authors the option to automate the production of an audiobook for the platform from end-to-end, including AI voices which will narrate audiobooks and, later in the year, AI translations of audiobooks.<sup>40</sup> There has been a real boom in these technologies, reflecting the boom in the audiobook industry which they aim to monetise — an industry estimated to be worth about \$33.5bn by 2030 globally.<sup>41</sup>

Novelists in focus groups spoke about how they might be tempted to do this to get their book out there, or to aid their income. One participant in London Focus Group 2 spoke about this: 'In the current scarce economic environment, if someone said we're going to put this book out as an audiobook, it's going to be AI, here is some money, I would probably say yes right now. I would sleep badly but, like, I'm, I don't know if right now I would have the choice.'

39. *ElevenLabs* [website], at <https://elevenlabs.io/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

40. Lucy Knight, 'Audible Unveils Plans to Use AI Voices to Narrate Audiobooks', *The Guardian* (13 May 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/may/13/audible-unveils-plans-to-use-ai-voices-to-narrate-audiobooks> [accessed 23 October].

41. Acumen, 'Audiobooks Market Analysis — Global Industry Size, Share, Trends and Forecast 2022–2030', *Acumen Research and Consulting*, Report ARC3046 (25 July 2025), at <https://www.acumenresearchandconsulting.com/audiobooks-market> [accessed 22 October 2025].

Some of them also spoke about how they were torn, because it might help people to access their books. However, people with learning difficulties, cognitive or visual impairments, or physical dexterity problems can access audiobooks narrated by humans through the likes of Calibre Audio.<sup>42</sup> Calibre Audio offer an audiobook lending service to give these people access to thousands of books and still pays human narrators to record the books.

### **Impact on income**

When I asked Avery whether they get the impression that AI use in narration is impacting people's incomes, they replied: 'Yeah 100%. 100%'. They told me about a sub-reddit where narrators are discussing this topic. Reading through the subreddit (r/VoiceActing), I found that audiobook narrators were admitting to losing clients due to them moving to using AI voices, which saves these companies or publishers money and time.

There was also concern expressed on this subreddit that people's voices are being used to train AI without their consent, resulting in them not being compensated for the use of their own voice, and potentially leaving them obsolete in the future.<sup>43</sup>

### **Skill and understanding**

Avery and I spoke about how there is a lot to be lost if human narrators are increasingly displaced. They told me about the pleasure of narrating audiobooks, but also the skill involved:

'By its very nature you're one person portraying many characters, you're asked to transform and it's such a treat to be able to inhabit each of those characters. There's something really special about telling a story just as one person. [...] it's like an athletic undertaking.'

This is about the creativity, self-expression, and pleasure of the actor, but also this understanding is crucial for the effective performance of the book. The actor can work to get this context, and to understand the meaning and subtext of the book, rather than just reading individual words in a certain order off a page:

'You have to be so sensitive to, not just like the cadence of a sentence but also, like, the overall shape. [...] You need this like holistic understanding of [...] what you're trying to get across. [...] The responsibility is huge; you are the listeners' only conduit for that story.'

42. *Calibre Audio* [website], at <https://www.calibreaudio.org.uk/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

43. *r/VoiceActing* [online forum]. Reddit, at <https://www.reddit.com/r/VoiceActing/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

## Loss of Humanity

Novelists, publishers, and agents alike talked about how the core purpose of the novel is to convey and understand humanity. During focus groups, many spoke about the risk of losing this humanity of novels with an increased use of GenAI.

Many participants outlined how GenAI cannot understand what it means to be human:

'How does a machine made up of zeros and ones get an understanding of what it is to inhabit a human body, interact with other humans, interact with all the elements between us?'

**Fleur, London Focus Group 3**

Even GenAI systems seem to realise that it cannot understand what it means to be human. In March 2025, *The Guardian* published a piece of metafiction about grief written by OpenAI's creative writing tool. In the first person, the AI admits its limitations and its inability to feel grief: 'already, you can hear the constraints humming like a server farm at midnight'.<sup>44</sup>

Most participants argued that as readers, they want humanity in novels, and that this cannot be produced by using GenAI to write, or to helping to write, because it doesn't understand humanity:

'As a reader, I want to read something by a person who's felt rain on their skin, who is a mortal human being, who shares the conundrum of being a human being, I don't want to read a mimicry of that.'

**Andrea, Edinburgh Focus Group**

'I want to know that the human experience and the human emotions are understood and conveyed by someone who has the capacity to put that onto the page and that's really, really important to me.'

**Tamsyn, London Focus Group 1**

There was recognition from participants that they, as writers, publishers, or agents, might think differently to the broader readership on this topic. It was noted that there is uncertainty around whether the broader readership will feel equally negative about AI-aided, or AI-generated books, and that more research is needed on this topic of how consumers perceive the use of AI in writing and publishing books.

Participants questioned whether there would be a future for the novel at all, given how culture is changing for young people, who might turn to shorthand consumption:

'A lot of my friends say they don't read books anymore, they can't read books, they struggle, I know a lot of young people, when I speak to my friends, their children can't read books or they really struggle [...] It does make me wonder, sitting down, reading a long literary novel which is demanding and engaging and complex, I'm just not sure people are going to do that.'

**Jay, London Focus Group 3**

However, literary creatives spoke about how the importance of humanity and human-written fiction needs to be celebrated more:

'Daydreaming should be on the national curriculum. It's so important and AI can't possibly do that. That's why we love the unique nature of the flawed human brain and the experiences that that person has had in their lifetime to create that story that they want to tell. AI will never be able to do that, and we have to kind of stand up and shout about that.'

**Kevin Duffy, Forum**

44. OpenAI, "A Machine-shaped Hand": Read a Story from OpenAI's New Creative Writing Model', *The Guardian* (12 March 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/mar/12/a-machine-shaped-hand-read-a-story-from-openais-new-creative-writing-model> (accessed 23 October 2025).

## **Destruction of Trust and Connection**

Many literary creatives warned about the destruction of trust and connection which may result from an increase in AI-aided or AI-generated fiction.

First, novelists were concerned that a rise in the use of GenAI tools for writing might damage the trust and connection between them and their readers. Many of the novelists in this research spoke about the connection between them and their readers being the most rewarding part of writing:

'I have people finding the book now that still reach out to me, which I think is one of the greatest privileges of being a published author, and it's the connection, it's them saying, this helped me through a difficult time, it helped me process my emotions.'

**Fia, London Focus Group 1**

However, there was concern that readers might not trust whether novelists have written without the use of GenAI, with some worrying about false accusations of GenAI use. This was often referenced in relation to AI systems potentially becoming more sophisticated. Novelists were concerned it would become harder to differentiate between human-written and AI-written fiction.

There was also concern around a loss of connection between novelists and readers, partly due to this lack of trust, but also due to the inability of GenAI to understand humanity.

With an increased use of GenAI in various aspects of writing, novelists worried that readers would not feel that same connection to the book because the book itself didn't offer than same understanding of humanity:

'There's that moment of revelation [...] oh my god you've just said something that I've experienced my whole life but you've put it into words I couldn't have done myself, that is really, really important and powerful and moving and that is something that cannot be achieved simply by absorbing everything that's out there and then regurgitating it in mixed up chunks.'

**Reggie, Manchester Focus Group**

'I think you still kind of look for the author or the voice in the text, and I think having the kind of AI generated texts that I've read have a very unstable voice, not in a good way, and I feel immediately very lonely when I read that type or listen to that type of creative output.'

**Philippa, London Focus Group 4**

Amidst all of this, there was some optimism from people that, despite questions around trustworthiness, there might be a desire from readers to seek out human authors to find this connection. However, with this arose the question of how authors would prove they had not used AI. Novelists spoke about anxiety that they might have to prove, in the future, that they had written their own books without the use of GenAI to maintain this trust.

Second, it was noted that the use of AI in novel writing and publishing might sow mistrust within the industry. For example, if agents or publishers cannot trust that an author is being transparent about how they have used AI in the writing of their novel, or if a novelist cannot be certain that a publisher or agent has not used AI in the submission or production process.

## **CASE STUDY: Ghostwriters**

Chris is a novelist and ghostwriter who has written both memoir and fiction and has ghostwritten around ten books in total. We discussed the role of ghostwriters and the impact that GenAI is having on their work.

### **Impact on job and income**

Chris and I spoke about how ghostwriters are increasingly being asked to post-edit books or simply consult on manuscript instead of writing books from scratch.

Chris illustrated this with an example of one repeat client. For their first book with Chris, the client had not been particularly involved in the process; they'd barely read through the manuscript. Then, unexpectedly, for their second book, the client sent Chris over a long manuscript using a complex philosophical framework, and asked Chris if it was ready to be published as was.

This made Chris think the client might have used GenAI, especially considering the language used in the manuscript. And this, Chris said, impacted on the work of the ghostwriter; the client wanted Chris to read the text and say if it was ok, but they didn't want to pay to have it edited.

We spoke about how this might create a two-tier market. Although perhaps the best known ghostwriters and translators will always be wanted for jobs by those who can afford it, 'at the bottom level where a publisher has perhaps bought someone's memoir for seven grand, then they'll think we can just, we can completely save on the writing here. So, we'll just get this person to answer a few questions and get ChatGPT to write it'.

### **Importance of ghostwriters: connection and duty of care**

Chris told me that the role of the ghostwriter is not just to write the manuscript, but there is also a 'duty of care' to the subject. Chris told me that one thing that's very important about being a ghostwriter is this relationship. The chemistry is important not just for the book and the story, to draw out the best parts of it, but also for the person.

There are times when Chris has become a trusted adviser and friend, explaining that 'a good ghostwriter has to protect the person from the publisher a little bit in some ways, because quite often what publishers want is the biggest sort of splashiest story [...] I've quite often found myself saying, are you really sure you want to talk about that? And in some cases, they do want to talk about that, that's fine. But I think as a ghostwriter you can draw someone's attention to the pitfalls of talking about something in print'.

The role of the ghostwriter is complex. It requires the ability to connect with and understand a subject to capture a story, but it also entails a duty of care for the subject. Chris said, 'I find it hard to see how AI would be able to do that'.

While people who want to write books about their lives might be increasingly turning to GenAI to help them write their story, and while there might be benefits to some people being able to do this who wouldn't have been able to previously, there is also a loss in the replacement of the ghostwriter regarding understanding and care for people and their stories.

## Impacts on the Next Generation

There was discussion about how the use of GenAI in novel writing and publishing will impact future generations of readers and writers.

While AI might be useful, or indeed necessary, for people with access needs, during the focus groups there was broad concern from participants about the extent to which young people are using AI within creative tasks.

The scale of AI use by children is stark. In June 2025, it was found that nearly 1 in 4 children aged 8–12 are using AI and of the children who use it, 4/10 use it for creative tasks.<sup>45</sup> In addition, at the forum, a participant spoke about how AI is being used in classrooms to help children conduct creative writing tasks and to give the children feedback on these tasks.

First, participants were concerned that children might lose the opportunity to experience the creative process. As discussed earlier, the creative process was seen to involve feelings of magic, and catharsis, and to help develop empathy and critical thinking. Participants warned that this might be lost with an increased use of GenAI for creative tasks. During the forum, Tamsyn, a novelist, spoke about going into schools and running creative writing classes. She said that writing offers children a way to learn about themselves:

'Writing is a cathartic process so we're learning about ourselves as we're producing these pieces of work and I think that's what I see most when I work in classrooms, I see the children learning about themselves.'

**Tamsyn Murray, Forum**

Another novelist picked up on this in a focus group, saying that writing her book had helped her through a tough time, and she worries that young generations won't have that:

'I think when we're teenagers and we try and write a song or a poem, it really helps us feel through something [...] that's one of those worries for me is that people aren't going to grow up with that.'

**Coral, London Focus Group 3**

Naturally, this creative process is developed through reading, too. However, children's engagement with reading is plummeting, with just 1 in 3 children and young people aged 8–18 saying that they enjoy reading in their spare time.<sup>46</sup>

Tamsyn also spoke about how writing and reading helps children to develop their imagination and to escape into other worlds, which aids the development of resilience:

'Fiction is a way for them [children] to explore scenarios and environments that they wouldn't necessarily want to find themselves in and it helps them to build resilience for when they do have to face situations that are difficult.'

**Tamsyn, London Focus Group 1**

Second, there was concern around de-skilling. This was often raised in the focus groups. Participants spoke about how the processes of writing and reading teach us skills including communication, critical thinking, lateral thinking, and problem solving. Increased reliance upon GenAI for creative tasks was thought to be de-skilling young people.

45. Youmna Hashem, Saba Esnaashari, Kate Onslow, Sukankana Chakraborty, Anton Poletaev, John Francis, and Jonathan Bright, 'Understanding the Impacts of Generative AI Use on Children', *Alan Turing Institute*, WP1 Surveys (2025), 65 pp. [pdf] at [https://www.turing.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-6/understanding\\_the\\_impacts\\_of\\_generative\\_ai\\_use\\_on\\_children\\_-\\_wp1\\_report.pdf](https://www.turing.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-6/understanding_the_impacts_of_generative_ai_use_on_children_-_wp1_report.pdf) [accessed 22 October 2025].

46. Clark et al., *Children and Young People's Reading in 2025*.

De-skilling through increased use of GenAI is reflected in research. A recent study from MIT showed through a randomised control trial that using LLMs changes how the human brain engages with complex writing tasks.

The participants who did not use any AI tools had the broadest, strongest brain connectivity when carrying out these tasks, but when those who had previously used LLMs were then had to write unaided, their connectivity and recall remained depressed.<sup>47</sup>

In addition, Microsoft's own research shows that a higher confidence in GenAI is associated with lower critical thinking.<sup>48</sup>

Thirdly, participants spoke about the writers of the future. There was concern that children might not see writing as a desirable or viable career if they are growing up without creative writing being encouraged in schools, or if their educators are advocating for the use of GenAI for creative tasks.



47. Nataliya Kosmyna, Eugene Hauptmann, Ye Tong Yuan, Jessica Situ, Xian-Hao Liao, Ashly Vivian Beresnitzky, Iris Braunstein, and Pattie Maes, 'Your Brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of Cognitive Debt when Using an AI Assistant for Essay Writing Task', *arXiv:2506.08872v1 [cs.AI]*, 206 pp., at doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2506.08872.

48. Hao-Ping (Hank) Lee, Advait Sarkar, Lev Tankelevitch, Ian Drosos, Sean Rintel, Richard Banks, and Nicholas Wilson, 'The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking: Self-Reported Reductions in Cognitive Effort and Confidence Effects From a Survey of Knowledge Workers', *CHI '25: Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 1.1 (2025), 1–22, at doi: 10.1145/3706598.3713778.

# LITERARY IMPACTS

## Loss of Literary Originality

Many participants discussed how increased use of AI would 'flatten' novels, producing more similar content, lacking in originality.

During the focus groups, I asked participants to complete an exercise. For this exercise, they had to produce a short piece of writing (in any form) on the topic of 'identity'. They were allowed to use GenAI (of any kind) for some or all of this exercise. For example, they could use it to write the whole thing, to give them a first draft, or to edit their own work.

Many participants asked GenAI to write a poem or piece of prose about identity in the style of another author. While they did not often consider that GenAI produced original material, they were usually stunned by the ability of GenAI to mimic style. For example, one participant prompted GenAI to write the opening chapter of a novel in the style of Marian Keyes exploring Irish identity. They said afterwards:

'I think what it's done is really good actually, not like wow [...] but I believe this. If I opened this, I would believe that she'd written it' [Isla, Edinburgh Focus Group]. In a London Focus Group, Chris had a similar experience with this exercise, saying: 'It's horrifying, because I put some prompts in and then I said write me a poem and it wrote a poem, and I said, well, write it like T.S. Eliot and it wrote it like T.S. Eliot.'

**Chris, London Focus Group 2**

Alongside the concern around the ability of AI to produce content comparable to the work of real authors, participants discussed how an increased use of GenAI in the writing process could lead to a lack of original literature. This was largely attributed to the fact that GenAI works statistically to deliver text through the rules of probability and predictability, through mimicking the language and style of its training data.<sup>49</sup> One publisher asked whether this is what we want from literature, saying:

'Do you want fiction that's written by an author who's trying to create the thing that isn't there, whereas AI's trying to create the thing that is?'

**Gareth, Edinburgh Focus Group**

However, there was a lot of discussion about how the ability of AI to produce original fiction might improve in future and in conjunction with excellent prompting. While current LLMs work on a premise of predictability, there is the possibility that they might become more sophisticated and be able to produce text that is more experimental in nature. Many literary creatives were keen for this to be considered in policymaking around AI and data use.

There was also fear about a lack of originality in publishing. In one focus group, Sarah, a managing editor, spoke about the loss of nuance that might occur if GenAI is used increasingly in publishing processes.

49. Emily M. Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Major, and Shmargaret Shmitchell, 'On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models Be Too Big?', FAccT '21: *Proceedings of the 2021 ACM Conference on Fairness, Accountability, and Transparency* (2021), 610–16, doi: 10.1145/3442188.3445922; Michael Kirschenbaum, 'Again Theory: A Forum on Language, Meaning, and Intent in the Time of Stochastic Parrots', *Critical Inquiry blog: In the Moment* [blog] (26 June 2023), at <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2023/06/26/again-theory-a-forum-on-language-meaning-and-intent-in-the-time-of-stochastic-parrots/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Particularly, Sarah noted, this is due to the level of skill, craft, and creativity required within publishing:

'I'm just worried about the sort of broad-brush conformity, and the sort of smoothing out of things, and the loss of nuance.'

**Sarah, London Focus Group 3**

However, it was noted that, even now, trade publishers do not always commission the most original material. This is because of what one publisher referred to as the 'copycat' syndrome in publishing — when things are successful, publishers may want to jump on board this trend.

This was a sentiment to which independent publishers often did not subscribe. Kevin, co-founder of Bluemoose Books, a multi-award-winning independent publisher, told me during the Manchester focus group:

'I think independent publishers, we live in a parallel universe to traditional publishing anyway. And I think it's to our benefit [...] we're doing all here and elsewhere, doing the really interesting stuff, and there's a market for it and I think there always will be.'

**Kevin, Manchester Focus Group**

This is one of the many reasons why it is so important to protect independent publishers in the UK; they are often a hub for exciting, risky, and original books; novels that break fresh boundaries and tread new ground.

## Impacts on Genre Fiction vs Literary Fiction

GenAI was seen to threaten the displacement of genre fiction more than literary fiction. In the survey, the genres that respondents thought were 'extremely threatened' by GenAI were:

- Romance (66% saw as extremely threatened)
- Thriller/suspense (61% saw as extremely threatened)
- Crime (60% saw as extremely threatened)

In contrast, 32% of respondents thought literary fiction was extremely threatened by GenAI.

In the focus groups, participants discussed how AI might threaten genre fiction more because of how AI functions to create predictability and patterns, and genre fiction is generally considered more formulaic. In contrast, literary fiction was often seen to be more 'untouchable' because an AI system was thought to be less likely to write something novel or original.

There was discussion about how this might push novelists to write more experimental or 'literary' fiction to create a distinction between themselves and AI-written fiction, and to 'prove' they had written it themselves:

'You might get more kind of experimental, Beckett-type work out there because [...] that could never be produced by AI, because nothing like it has ever existed before.'

**Stephen, Manchester Focus Group**

However, across focus groups, there was also a challenge to the idea that genre fiction writers might be more at risk. While romance, crime, and thriller authors acknowledged that there might be an element of predictability to these genres, they discussed how there are still so many elements of surprise and complexity.

Instead, they argued that this perception that genre fiction is more at risk speaks to the mistaken narrative that genre fiction is often seen as formulaic and literary fiction as more inventive.

### Changes to Literary Style

During focus groups, there was a recognition that with increased use of GenAI there might be alterations to writing style and language.

Participants spoke about stylistic traits that might indicate a piece of text has been written partly or wholly using GenAI. The em dash was referenced as an example, and participants discussed 'tell words': words which are much more commonly used in ChatGPT output than in normal conversation.

As part of the focus groups, participants were given space to experiment with using GenAI in the process of writing, although they did not have to use it. During this exercise, anecdotally, 'tapestry' and 'multifaceted' were common words to come up in textual output of GenAI systems and were discussed as 'tell words'. During the Edinburgh focus group, for example, one participant read out a poem that they had written with the help of an LLM, and it contained the word 'multi-faceted', and another poet in the room said:

'There was one word that wouldn't scan: multi-faceted. Multi-faceted, I thought, probably not.'

**Fern, Edinburgh Focus Group**

This raises an interesting point about whether certain words will be more utilised in the future if GenAI is increasingly used to help with creative writing, or whether these words or styles might be purposefully avoided in case people construe the text to be aided or written by GenAI:

'I feel like there's a style, almost like an AI style of writing, and I wonder whether in your creative process, you may not be there yet but it might be a future issue where you're thinking, what I'm writing sounds a bit too AI, I need to change it [...] try to get away from, that's an AI novel or that's an AI style of prose.'

**Rowan, Edinburgh Focus Group**

### Perpetuation of Stereotypes and Discrimination in Literary Output

GenAI systems are likely to have literary impacts — and with that, social impacts — by perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination in their outputs. It is well documented that GenAI systems can cause harm by perpetuating biases, stereotypes, and forms of discrimination including racism, sexism, ableism, and more, due to these biases being present in training data.<sup>50</sup>

During a focus group exercise, one participant asked GenAI to write a poem on identity in the voice of a criminal. She said in their reflection afterwards:

'It coded the poem, language in the poem, it coded it Black African American [...] That is so insulting, isn't it? A dialect of English that is then coded as criminal [...] So any ChatGPT type novel or poem that's trying to express is going to be using stereotypes. Damaging, racist stereotypes.'

**Gaia, London Focus Group 3**

50. Bender et al., 'On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots'; Kate Miltner and Tim Highfield, *The Possibilities of 'Good' Generative AI in the Cultural and Creative Industries* (The British Academy, 2024), 1–8, at <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/the-possibilities-of-good-generative-ai-in-the-cultural-and-creative-industries/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Participants were concerned that the use of GenAI systems within the writing and publishing of novels could result in a perpetuation of stereotypes and biases in literature. This could have an extremely detrimental impact on our stories and our society. It could perpetuate problematic views on race, gender, ethnicity, religion, and disability, while also centring non-diverse characters in stories:

'I'm concerned about the clichés and what that means for sexism.'

**Fleur, London Focus Group 3**

'The sameness, and what happens to, if AI's editing, what happens to things like accents, or signifiers of class or ethnicity?'

**Ruth, London Focus Group 3**

This is against a backdrop of a publishing industry that has already failed to diversify, not just in terms of the demographic of its employees, but also the authors it publishes and the characters it centres:

'We have a real serious problem when it comes to gatekeeping and homogenous publishing workforces, because we buy and we read what we know.'

**Jasmine Richards, Forum**

'My life in publishing looks like this table, I go to these rooms, I'm the only black person there, and that also flattens my experience as well because I am having a very real experience that I don't necessarily expect anyone at the table to understand, but it does exist.'

**Valerie, London Focus Group 4**

As mentioned, in 2024, just over two thirds (68%) of publishing professionals in the UK identified as female, and only 15% as from ethnic minority groups, with Black representation in the industry around 3%.<sup>51</sup>

Studies also show us that women, writers of colour, particularly young — and particularly old — people find it more difficult to make a living from writing and are less likely to have other means of income.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, the proportion of working class creatives has shrunk by half since the 1970s to just 7.9%.<sup>53</sup> Many names within the industry have also said that the number of books published by people of colour has plummeted after a brief surge in interest following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.<sup>54</sup>

## **GenAI as a Tool to Improve Accessibility**

Some literary creatives spoke about opportunities around AI aiding accessibility in writing or publishing. There was acknowledgement that AI might enable expression and offer opportunities to write, perhaps for people who have not written before, or who might want to build confidence in their writing.

In a focus group, one novelist discussed how GenAI has helped with the process of assembling their thoughts, something they had struggled with previously due to their ADHD. Another participant also discussed how GenAI had helped them significantly due to their dyslexia.

51. Publishers Association, *UK Publishing Workforce*.

52. Thomas et al., 'UK Authors' Earnings and Contracts 2022'.

53. Orian Brook, Andrew Miles, Dave O'Brien, and Mark Taylor, 'Social Mobility and "Openness" in Creative Occupations since the 1970s', *Sociology*, 57.4 (2022), 789–810. doi: 10.1177/00380385221129953.

54. Lanre Bakare, 'UK Publishing Less Accessible to Black Authors Now than Before 2020, Industry Names Say' *The Guardian* (26 March 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/mar/26/uk-publishing-less-accessible-to-black-authors-now-than-before-2020-industry-names-say> [accessed 22 October 2025].

They spoke about how, although they do not use GenAI to write, they do use it to help them dictate, or to help them correct spelling and grammar:

'It's better than [...] any speech stuff than I've ever had since school, because it actually hears you [...] I wrote something the other day, and I was like... I know this is wrong! [...] I know it's wrong, I can see it's wrong, I don't know why it's wrong, cos all the letters... in that respect I think it can help.'

**Shirley, Manchester Focus Group**

Multiple participants pointed out how GenAI might provide opportunities for people who cannot afford to pay for feedback on their writing, or do not have the courage to ask:

'The thing people want is feedback and they can't necessarily afford to pay for it [...] you say to the AI, you are an experienced author of 30 years, read my manuscript tell me what's working, what's not working [...] I actually think that might increase the numbers of people from marginalised communities who get to write books.'

**Maya, London Focus Group 1**

In this sense, it was discussed that there were ways that GenAI might be able to help diversify voices in literature by providing this opportunity and confidence.

There was also discussion around how GenAI might help publishing houses to get off the ground by aiding with work such as drafting pitches, structuring communications, completing back-office admin, or editing text to correct spelling and grammar.<sup>55</sup>

One participant spoke about how GenAI has helped her publishing house with back-office admin. While her publishing press does not use GenAI to write the books, it is useful for other aspects of the job:

'The use of artificial intelligence as a tool to amplify that work, what if we ran towards that opportunity? I'm not talking about writing the books [...] but all the other gubbins, I've worked in publishing, that other stuff is really hard, if you're trying to be an indie author or even an indie publisher, that's what sinks you, it's all of that other stuff.'

**Jasmine Richards, Forum**

55. Siobhan Cole, 'Comment: AI Enables Access', *The Bookseller* (3 July 2025), at <https://www.thebookseller.com/comment/ai-enables-access> [accessed 22 October 2025].

## CASE STUDY: Translators

I held an online focus group with three literary translators from around the world. All three translators wish to remain anonymous, so I'll call them Ingrid, Antonella, and Mila. Here, I discuss a few topics which came up with these translators around the impacts GenAI is having on fiction translation.

### Nuance and context

One of the major points of discussion was that, like writing, translation requires a great deal of understanding about the context and the feeling or atmosphere that the text is trying to convey. This is particularly important, because it is not always possible to give a direct translation of a text. Whereas AI, or neural machine translation (NMT), might be able to translate things word-for-word, it cannot interpret an atmosphere or a context, and therefore it cannot portray or capture this nuance.

Demonstrating this, research has shown that where machine translations often stick with the same choices, human translators will offer more semantic variety.<sup>56</sup> Translation is therefore not just decoding each word, but it's about capturing this nuance through understanding.

'There's so much that's not on the page [...] that is part of what needs to be conveyed and recreated in the translation [...] like when you put it into DeepL, like, it will get so many things wrong, because it doesn't have any of the context already.'

**Antonella**

Not only was this creative process of understanding context and nuance important for conveying the story, but the translators discussed the sense that it is rewarding in itself.

'[T]he process is really, really important. [...] ah you understand, right, why that was said here, or this is the kind of nuance that should come here. [...] the human is not as, sort of, fast, immediate and confident as an AI, but that process is really important and wonderful. It's wonderful to experience.'

**Mila**

Recently, the founders of Bloodhound Books launched AI fiction translation services. They said this is not about replacing translators, but about translating books which may have otherwise never been translated due to cost, time, or demand limitation.<sup>57</sup>

However, Ian Giles, chair of the Society of Authors' Translators Association commented on this saying that the 'claim to unlock global access for fiction sidelines the very people who make literature resonate across cultures' and that 'suggesting that AI can match, or even surpass, the nuanced work of human translators on behalf of authors is flat-out wrong'.<sup>58</sup>

56. Hoyt Long, 'New Towers of Babel: Faith and Doubt in the Future of Translation', *Poetics Today*, 45.2 (2024), 309–316, at doi: 10.1215/03335372-11092951.

57. Lauren Brown, 'Bloodhound Books Founders Launch AI Fiction Translation Company', *The Bookseller* (7 July 2025), at <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/bloodhound-books-founders-launch-ai-fiction-translation-company> [accessed 22 October 2025].

58. Ella Creamer, 'AI Translation Service Launched for Fiction Writers and Publishers Prompts Dismay among Translators', *The Guardian* (8 July 2025), at <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2025/jul/08/globescribe-ai-translation-service-fiction-writers-publishers-prompts-dismay-among-translators> [accessed 22 October 2025].

## Income

We know that translators already say their income is being impacted by GenAI. In 2024, the Society of Authors published results from a survey.

Out of 78 translators, 36% said they had already lost work due to GenAI and nearly half said that AI had decreased their income. Over three quarters (77%) believed it would negatively impact their future income.<sup>59</sup>

The translators I interviewed spoke about the risks to their income.

First, they discussed how translation might become increasingly about machine translation post-editing (MTPE), where the text is initially translated using AI and then handed to the translator to edit because this tends to be cheaper than commissioning a translator to translate the entire text.<sup>60</sup> While not specifically about the translation of literary fiction, a survey of over 200 freelance translators showed that almost half of them had worked frequently on MTPE projects, and 30% said their involvement on these projects had increased significantly.<sup>61</sup>

Ingrid pointed out that being asked to edit something which has already been translated means she would be paid less for something that would take her much longer. This is because she'd have to go back and compare it to the original text and would still have to research certain things for accuracy.

'You cannot properly edit without understanding, and you simply cannot speed up understanding of a literary text.'

### Ingrid

During the Edinburgh focus group, one participant spoke about how they'd experienced this in their translation work:

'Now, all they need to do is to send me a translated article and they only pay for copyediting with a [...] professional who understands the subtlety of the language'. She explained that, because of this, she has experienced a drop in work and income: 'I get paid for a copyediting job, not a translation job, and that's a hell of a difference, cos the rates are very good for translators, or at least they used to be.'

### Zara, Edinburgh Focus Group

Second, in the translators focus group, participants spoke about the risk that at some point, publishers or editors might just think that AI could translate the whole text, particularly if GenAI systems become increasingly sophisticated.

Third, there was discussion about the increasing use of AI to translate samples of books that publishers might be considering buying, rather than commissioning a translator. While translating a sample constitutes a smaller piece of income for translators than translating a whole literary novel, this is a piece of work and income that might decrease or disappear.

59. Society of Authors, 'SoA Survey Reveals a Third of Translators and Quarter of Illustrators Losing Work to AI', *Society of Authors* (11 April 2024), at <https://societyofauthors.org/2024/04/11/soa-survey-reveals-a-third-of-translators-and-quarter-of-illustrators-losing-work-to-ai/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

60. Michael Katell, Mhairi Aitken, Kester Brewin, Abigail Gilbert, Peaks Krafft, David Leslie, Mia Leslie, Alex Mehta Brown, Aoife Monks, Claddagh Niclochlainn, Antonella Perini, Vjosa Preniqi, Elona Shatri, Magdalena Soffia, and Anna Thomas, *Creative Industries and GenAI Good Work Impacts on a Sector in Rapid Transition*, Institute for the Future Work Research Reports (5 June 2025), 37 pp. [pdf], at doi: 10.5281/zenodo.15535400; Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp, 'Human? Or Hybrid?', *Society of Authors* (28 August 2024), at <https://societyofauthors.org/2024/08/28/human-or-hybrid/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

61. GTS Translation Services, 'The State of Machine Translation Post-Editing MTPE in 2025: What Translators Think', *GTS Translation Services* [blog] (7 April 2025), at <https://blog.gts-translation.com/2025/04/07/the-state-of-machine-translation-post-editing-mtpe-in-2025-what-translators-think/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

## Use of GenAI

Most of the translators I spoke with didn't use AI. However, some of them did use DeepL, which does use AI.<sup>62</sup> One translator spoke about how they might use DeepL if they're finding it difficult to parse a phrase, or they might use it to find the meaning of a specific word. Therefore, they said they mainly referred to it as a 'glorified dictionary'. As has been spoken about before, sometimes these systems might help with 'playful experimentation'.<sup>63</sup>

One of the translators had experimented with using ChatGPT as an accuracy checker and research tool, for example as an explanation of the difference

between two words, or to help research something referenced in the text.

'It's a useful tool [...] as long as they treat it as provisional and as long as there is oversight.'

## Mila

Mila also spoke about how it is difficult, because you're expected to produce translations faster nowadays, and translators might have to start to make use of it in certain ways if they want to maintain their work and stay in competition with AI.



62. DeepL, 'Reimagine Business Communication with DeepL's Language AI Platform', *DeepL* (n.d.), at <https://www.deepl.com/en/whydeepl> [accessed 23 October 2025].

63. Long, 'New Towers of Babel'.

# ECONOMIC IMPACTS

This research found that over a third (39%) of novelists reported that their income has already been negatively impacted by GenAI.

Many novelists reported this was due to competition from AI-generated books. They felt the market was being flooded with AI-generated books which saturate the market and create more competition:

'These companies have stolen our creativity to create a product which competes with our creativity [...] so it's a double abuse. They've stolen it to create a thing which is going to create more competition.'

**Maya, London Focus Group 1**

Some respondents wrote about how AI is mimicking their writing. On Amazon, they find books written under their name which they haven't produced (as has been seen recently with the books of Sam Blake).<sup>64</sup> They also spoke about AI-produced reviews on their books that give them bad ratings or mix up character names, and thereby jeopardise their future sales.

Moreover, authors spoke about the loss of supplementary streams of income. Most authors do not earn enough to solely depend on their writing, particularly since the median income for an author in 2022 in the UK was £7,000 a year, which is below minimum wage.<sup>65</sup> As one novelist said:

'We also have an author core that relies on other writing jobs.'

**Matt, London Focus Group 2**

This often includes copywriting, translation, proofreading, or corporate writing, as demonstrated in the case study below:

'I cannot make a living from novels. So, I write for an agency providing copy for corporate clients. This work has already declined as clients use AI where they once used humans.'

**Survey Response**

'I'm also a copywriter and have lost work due to people using AI to write blog posts and website content for their business.'

**Survey Response**

Literary creatives expressed concern about what this worsening financial situation meant for the future of the profession. There was concern about authors being able to continue to write, but also about incentivising new talent. Creatives warned about the consequences for diversity of writers, and how this might create an even more homogenous industry of people who can afford to write.

Participants also often noted that diversity of readers should be considered. They feared a 'two-tier market', where the human-written novel becomes a 'luxury item' and mass-produced AI-generated fiction is cheap or free.

64. Matilda Battersby, 'Author Sam Blake Urges "Better Protections" from Amazon after AI Rip-off Books Appear Under her Name', *The Bookseller* (9 September 2025), at <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/author-sam-blake-urges-better-protections-from-amazon-after-ai-rip-off-books-appear-under-her-name> [accessed 22 October 2025].

65. Thomas et al., 'UK Authors' Earnings and Contracts 2022'.

It was also clear from the survey that novelists fear that their future ability to earn from writing will be entirely diminished:

- 85% of published novelists said they think their future income will be negatively impacted by GenAI.
- Over half (51%) of published novelists agreed that AI is likely to displace their work entirely.

Novelists attributed this to many factors. First, the potential that publishers might at some point choose to use AI in part or whole for book writing to ensure their content is market-driven and reactive.

Second, an increasingly saturated market which would make discoverability even harder.

Third, the lack of enforcing copyright, which would enable GenAI systems to become more sophisticated. And fourth, participants spoke about how GenAI de-skills people, destroys trust, and lessens the value of the human word, meaning that audience might be lost, and people might not see the value of buying books in the first place.

### **CASE STUDY: Loss of Income**

Amanda is a novelist, poet, podcaster, and copywriter. Usually, about 75% of Amanda's income is from copywriting or marketing for agencies, and the rest comes from her novels, articles, and bylines.

However, in the past year or so, she told me that with regards to her freelance writing and copywriting, 'there's hardly been anything coming from it'. She explained that some of the agencies she typically worked for have explained they're now using AI instead: 'I've had a couple of agencies that I've freelanced with say they're using AI now'.

Amanda described how some of these companies now seek experts in specific areas who can help with copywriting or editing, but this limits the work she is able to do for them.

This is impacting Amanda's household income: 'Luckily, I've got my husband who's working, but obviously, I feel a bit bad, like, sending him out to work, and then I'm not bringing any money in, so I've been taking on like, part time jobs and temporary jobs'.

This decrease in work is not only impacting her income, but also her sense of meaning and identity: 'When I meet people and people say, tell me about yourself, I'll say, oh, I'm a copywriter. So, it's actually, like, part of my identity and who I am. So, it just makes me feel like, well, who am I now?'



# 3. GENERATIVE AI, COPYRIGHT, AND RESPONSIBLE DESIGN

## Key Findings:

**Novelists prioritise control of their work, meaning asking permission would likely result in more access to data than a rights reservation model.**

93% of novelists said they would 'probably' or 'definitely' opt out of their work being used to train AI models in contrast to 75% of novelists who said they would 'probably not' or 'definitely not' opt in. This shows that novelists prioritise control of their work and that asking creatives for permission to use their work would likely lead to more access to data for AI companies.

**Most novelists (59%) report that their work has been used to train GenAI models without permission or remuneration.**

Almost two thirds of novelists (59%) reported that they know their work has been used to train AI models. Of these, 99% reported they did not give permission for this use and 100% reported they were not remunerated.

**There is widespread backlash against a 'rights reservation' (opt-out) model.**

83% of all literary creatives said that a data mining exception which allows rights holders to reserve their rights (an opt-out model) would be negative for the industry. This was mostly put down to underestimated negative impacts, technical infeasibility, and overblown expectations of growth.

**Literary creatives consistently called for a licensing market which would enable them to give permission, have control, and be remunerated.**

86% of literary creatives indicated that a model based on an 'opt-in' principle would be their preferred option. Almost half of novelists (48%) said they would want licensing to be negotiated collectively through a writers' union or society. This was the most popular option in terms of how a licence would be negotiated.

Generative AI has thrown up questions about copyright and intellectual property (IP) which are currently the subject of intense debate.

Crucially, this is largely because GenAI companies have scraped pirated versions of works to train their models. In March 2025, *The Atlantic* published part of a database of almost 8 million books and 81 million research papers which have been stored on LibGen,

a shadow library containing pirated work, and which have reportedly been used to train Meta's GenAI system Llama.<sup>66</sup> We are presently at the beginning of a string of lawsuits on the use of copyright protected data to train AI models. In the first class action settlement centred on AI and copyright in the US, for example, Anthropic has recently agreed to pay authors at least \$1.5bn for sourcing books through piracy websites.<sup>67</sup>

66. Reisner, 'The Unbelievable Scale of AI's Pirated-Books Problem'.

67. Knibbs, 'Anthropic Agrees to Pay Authors at Least \$1.5 Billion'.

In December 2024, the UK Government launched its 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence' consultation. Peter Kyle, the then Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, said in his foreword that this consultation was due to 'legal uncertainty' around copyright law in the UK, which was 'undermining investment in and adoption of AI technology'.

In the consultation, the Government laid out four possible options for the path forwards concerning copyrighted data and AI training: do nothing; strengthen copyright requiring licensing of data in all cases; a broad data mining exception; or a data mining exception which allows rights holders to reserve their rights (see Box 1).

The UK Government expressed preference for a 'data mining exception which allows rights holders to reserve their rights', otherwise commonly known as an 'opt-out model'. In other words, AI companies would be allowed to use creators copyrighted work to train their models, unless those creators have reserved their rights, or 'opted out'.

The Government argued that this approach would not only align the UK with the EU's opt-out model, but it would also be 'supporting the development of world-leading AI models in the UK by ensuring wide and lawful access to high-quality data'.<sup>68</sup>

**Box 1: A shortened version of the policy options given in the 'Copyright and AI' consultation:**

**Option 0: Do nothing — copyright and related laws remain as they are.**

This option would mean the current lack of clarity remains for both rights holders and AI developers.

**Option 1: Strengthen copyright requiring licensing in all cases.**

This option would mean AI models could only be trained on copyright works in the UK if they have an express licence to do so.

**Option 2: A broad data mining exception [*otherwise known as a text and data mining (TDM) exception*].**

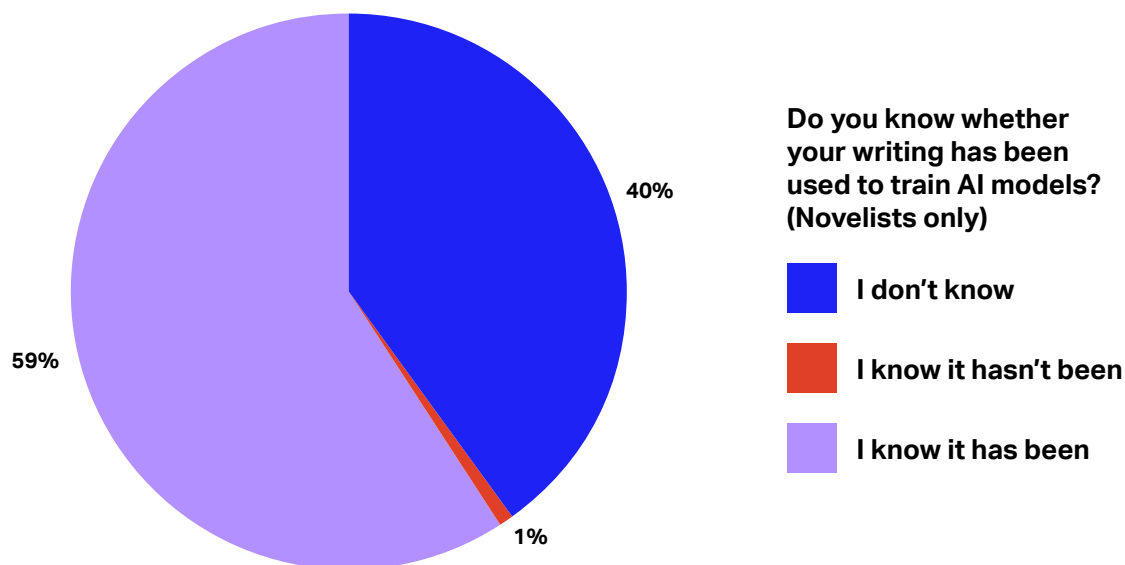
Under this option, we would introduce a broad data mining exception, allowing data mining on copyright works — including for AI training — without rights holders' permission.

**Option 3: A data mining exception which allows right holders to reserve their rights, underpinned by supporting measures on transparency [*otherwise known as the opt-out model*].**

AI developers would be able to train on material to which they have lawful access, but only to the extent that right holders had not expressly reserved their rights.<sup>69</sup>

68. DSIT, 'Closed Consultation. Copyright and Artificial Intelligence'.

69. Elements of this are taken directly from: DSIT, 'Closed Consultation. Copyright and Artificial Intelligence'. Italics have been added by the author as helpful context.



**Graph 3: Knowledge about work being used to train AI models**

This research found that most novelists (59%) reported that they know their work has been used to train GenAI models (see Graph 3).<sup>70</sup> Out of the novelists who reported they knew their work had been used to train AI models, 99% said they did not give permission and 100% said they were not remunerated. Almost all novelists (98%) said they would expect to be remunerated if their work were used to train AI models.

Literary creatives were strongly against an opt-out model. Instead, there was an overwhelming preference for a system of licensing works that enables creatives to give their informed permission about use in AI training models and be fairly remunerated for this use.

Participants saw this to be consistent with existing copyright law in the UK and therefore called for the Government to focus on enforcement mechanisms for existing UK copyright law rather than implementing new exceptions to the law.

However, given the recent High Court ruling on the Getty Images vs. Stability AI,<sup>71</sup> it is important that the Government continue to review whether copyright law is fit for purpose in the age of AI. Potentially, legislative reform might be needed to clarify the law and further protect creatives.

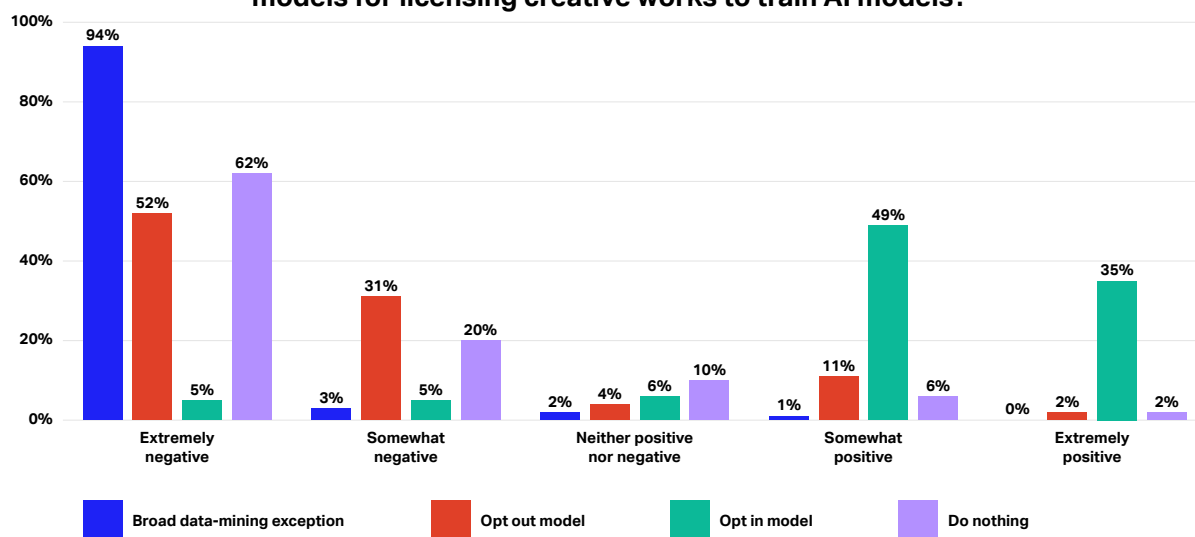
The survey found the following from all participants:

- 94% of literary creatives said that a **broad TDM** would be extremely negative.
- 85% of respondents said an **opt-in model** would be (somewhat or extremely) positive.
- 83% of literary creatives said that an **opt-out model** would be (somewhat or extremely) negative.

70. Many of these responses were given before the release of the LibGen database. It is likely that this number would have been higher after the database was released.

71. *Getty Images (US) Inc v Stability AI Ltd* [2025] EWHC 2863 (Ch), at <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Getty-Images-v-Stability-AI.pdf>

**Considering each in turn, how do you feel about these models for licensing creative works to train AI models?**



*Graph 4: Perception of licensing models*

## REJECTING THE OPT-OUT MODEL

The following section discusses why most participants rejected the UK Government’s proposal of an opt-out model.

Throughout this research, literary creatives argued against the opt-out model proposed by the Government in the ‘Copyright and Artificial Intelligence’ consultation. They perceived the opt-out model to be a prioritisation of technological growth over the protection of the creative industries and as an erosion of longstanding rights. This view was shared by many interviewees, too — including legal experts and publishing industry representatives.

This negative perception of the opt-out model echoes the broad response of the creative industries to the ‘Copyright and Artificial Intelligence’ consultation. The consultation received around 11,500 responses,<sup>72</sup> many of which were from the creative industries and which rejected the opt-out model.

For example, campaign groups such as the Creative Rights in AI Coalition (which includes UK Music, the Society of Authors, the Publishers Association, and many more) criticised the proposal to introduce a rights reservation model, arguing that AI developers should only be able to use copyright protected material with the permission of rights holders.<sup>73</sup>

72. DSIT, DCMS, IPO, Peter Kyle, and Lisa Nandy, ‘Press Release: Creative and AI Sectors Kick-off Next Steps in Finding Solutions to AI and Copyright’, *gov.uk* (16 July 2025), at <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/creative-and-ai-sectors-kick-off-next-steps-in-finding-solutions-to-ai-and-copyright#:~:text=A%20consultation%20on%20the%20UK’s,to%20the%20Modern%20Industrial%20Strategy> [accessed 23 October 2025].

73. John Woodhouse, ‘Research Briefing: Impact of AI on Intellectual Property’, *UK Parliament. House of Commons Library* (22 April 2025), at <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cdp-2025-0081/#:~:text=Comment,models%20without%20consent%20or%20compensation> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Some of the specific reasons that literary creatives, along with publishing industry representatives and legal experts, rejected the opt-out model are explored below.

## **Underestimated impacts on the creative industries**

Participants often felt that the potential impacts of the opt-out model on the creative industries had been underestimated and that the Government's consultation did not consider the downstream effects of a copyright exception.

During focus groups, there was discussion about how the rise of GenAI was being treated by the Government as another technological disruption. However, literary creatives expressed the perspective that the rise of GenAI felt different to earlier rounds of technological change. In the view of participants, this was existential, rather than an adjustment. They felt there was an assumption within the Government that writers will continue to write, regardless of AI innovation.

However, some literary creatives commented that writers continuing to write was not a certainty. As demonstrated in the previous section, many novelists are already experiencing detrimental impacts due to GenAI and felt deeply disincentivised by the spread of its use.

Participants also raised concerns that implementing an opt-out model would be likely to negatively impact the UK economy. Literary creatives often referenced the fact that while the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the AI sector in the UK is currently about £5.8 billion,<sup>74</sup> the creative industries stand at around £126 billion.<sup>75</sup>

They felt that the opt-out model prioritised growth in the technology sector and access to data, but could ultimately damage an industry worth more to the UK, both economically and culturally.

It was also noted by many that an opt-out model would likely create significant difficulties for small, independent publishers. In an interview for this research, Abigail McDougall from Publishing Scotland pointed out that: 'Option 3 [the opt-out model] is not workable. And it's particularly not workable for smaller publishers and under-resourced people that are already struggling to stay afloat'.

Abigail spoke about how well-resourced publishers with access to lawyers and in-house rights departments will find it easier to navigate the opt-out model, but small publishers who do not have these resources will find this much harder.

Marc Newall from the Publishers Association echoed this point in an interview for this research, saying the opt-out model would be felt much more by independent publishers than the 'Big Five' publishers (Penguin Random House, Hachette Book Group, HarperCollins, Macmillan Publishers, and Simon & Schuster). It would be a difficult transition for independent publishers, he said, especially without the money and capacity.

Overall, this could make it still harder for independent publishers to compete with bigger publishers, which could jeopardise their existence. This would be hugely detrimental to literature as a whole, as independent publishers are often the ones to publish exciting, cutting-edge fiction, and to platform new voices in writing.

74. DSIT, 'Research and Analysis: Artificial intelligence Sector Study 2023', *gov.uk* (23 October 2024), at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/artificial-intelligence-sector-study-2023> [accessed 22 October 2025].

75. DCMS, 'Official Statistics. Using Annual Estimates from Summed Monthly Data'.

## Growth uncertainty of an opt-out model

In an interview for this research, Sam, an anonymised policy expert, explained that in an EU context, the opt-out model had been intended to balance the interests of rights holders and AI developers. Sam discussed how, if the UK followed a more restrictive AI and copyright regime, this could limit the UK's access to, and influence over, models built outside the UK. This, he said, was due to the opt-out emerging as a global industry standard and the difficulties and costs for AI companies that would come with building bespoke models for the UK market.

It was suggested by Sam that this potential lack of access could incur economic and strategic costs without meaningfully helping creators, as leading models would likely still be developed overseas. Moreover, Sam discussed how a more restrictive regime could also limit innovation taking place within the UK.

This explanation from the interviewee assumes that models cannot be deployed in jurisdictions where they do not comply with copyright law. While companies can, or do, deploy models in the UK without having trained them here, the legality of this is currently being disputed in the courts.

Therefore, one suggestion Sam offered was that less stringent copyright law might help to unlock technological and economic growth, both through access to models built in foreign territories and by encouraging innovation within the UK.

The consistent focus on tech-driven growth was discussed by participants. They referenced this in relation to recent Government moves, such as the 'AI Opportunities Action Plan', in which the Government claimed that if the rate of AI capabilities continues to develop at pace, then it could be the Government's biggest lever for delivering its goal of kickstarting broad-based economic growth.<sup>76</sup>

The rejection of Baroness Kidron's amendments to the 'Data (Use and Access) Bill' was also cited by participants. These amendments would have required developers of AI models to comply with UK copyright law wherever they are based and would have allowed copyright holders to see by whom, why, when, and what part of their work had been taken for use. We have also seen an example of this in the UK's major new tech deal with the US, which sees firms such as Microsoft and Google pledge to spend billions in the UK.<sup>77</sup> However, this tech deal was not referenced by participants, as it was only announced after the research had taken place.

Nonetheless, many literary creatives spoke about how they feel that the Government, along with many others, perceive the economic growth from AI to be exponential in comparison with the creative industries. However, they feel that ultimately these plans for growth are overblown, particularly in relation to the opt-out model.

76. DSIT, 'Independent Report. AI Opportunities Action Plan'.

77. Edwards and Race, 'US Firms Pledge £150bn Investment in UK'.

Literary creatives saw there to be no guarantee that the opt-out model would bring the economic gains that the Government hoped for. Rather, they discussed how they felt it would act as a free pass to companies that already monopolise the market. They discussed how, largely, these models are built in the US, where the companies which own them are resident and pay most of their tax, and so did not feel this would benefit the UK in terms of unlocking innovation.

This view was reinforced during interviews with legal experts and publishing industry representatives. For example, Dan Guthrie from the Alliance for IP pointed out that this change to copyright law was not likely to bring in significant AI-driven growth to the UK:

'The idea that somehow, we'll make this tweak to copyright policy and AI firms are going to, US AI firms are going to flood to the UK [...] it's just for the fairies.'

**Dan Guthrie, Interview**

Therefore, it was seen to be unlikely that the opt-out model would provide the desired growth, particularly considering the UK's infrastructure, data protection and privacy laws, and electricity costs, which were not seen as competitive with those of the US, for example, when it came to considering where to base an AI startup.

While the 'AI Opportunities Action Plan' might seek to improve the UK's standing in these areas, it was seen to be unrealistic that the UK would ever compete to the same extent in these areas. Multiple participants felt the UK should aim to play to its strengths, one of those being its outstanding creative industries, which it should aim to protect rather than jeopardise.

In addition, literary creatives saw many AI systems built in foreign territories as unethical, inaccurate, and bad for the environment, so did not perceive access to these systems as a priority. Instead, they called for the development of responsibly designed and trained systems, which is explored more below.

Moreover, many participants discussed how they felt our world leading creative industries and the rich creative material and IP in the UK are strong bargaining chips for the UK to use in negotiating access to data. At the forum, Dr Chris Mammen pointed out that AI needs human content as an input, because when it's re-trained on synthetic data, it tends to lead to model collapse.<sup>78</sup> Therefore, original content is needed for the development of these models, and participants discussed that, without this data, currently these systems cannot be developed.

### **Technical infeasibility of an opt-out model**

Many literary creatives did not think it would be technically feasible to implement an opt-out model, referencing the lack of specificity in the consultation about how the opt-out regime would work in practice. Terry, an anonymous policy expert, explained how there is currently no technically robust mechanism to ensure that rights reservations must be respected by AI developers. In the cases where rights have been reserved, he told me, ideally an author's preferences would be respected, but this requires industry cooperation.

This was mentioned in multiple interviews with experts within the publishing industry and legal experts, too. It was noted that there is 'no current technical solution that enables rights reservation' Dan Guthrie, Interview

78. Christian Mammen, Michael Collyer, Ron A. Dolin, Dev Saif Gangjee, Tom Melham, Maggie Mustaklem, Pireeni Sundaralingam, and Vincent Wang, 'Creativity, Artificial Intelligence, and the Requirement of Human Authors and Inventors in Copyright and Patent Law', *SSRN Electronic Journal* (5 July 2024), at doi: 10.2139/ssrn.4892973.

The work of Ed Newton-Rex, composer, campaigner, and founder of Fairly Trained, outlines how difficult it is to opt out downstream copies of creative works which appear on different domains or platforms. For example, as a composer, one might have their song in a video on YouTube, but also as sheet music on their website.

Newton-Rex argues that there are two approaches to opting your content out of AI training, and neither of them are effective at controlling downstream copies of work:

- A location-based opt-out system such as robots.txt. A robots.txt file gives instructions to web crawlers about which pages they should or should not crawl. However, in order to implement a robots.txt file one must be in control of the domain, and the work of creatives appears on many different domains that they do not control. Even for domains that creatives do control, it is voluntary for these crawlers to obey this instruction, and this then relies on industry cooperation.
- A unit-based opt-out scheme adds metadata to content that indicates the content's opt-out status. However, metadata can be easily removed and there is currently no way to add metadata to text. Overall, then, '[t]here are no effective opt-out schemes that reliably opt out content itself from training'.<sup>79</sup>

Not only is there no way to effectively opt out text from this proposed copyright exception, but opting out would likely impact the discoverability of creatives.

In an interview with Florian Koempel, a legal consultant on international copyright, the discoverability argument was discussed: if opt outs are applied to creatives' work, it might impact discoverability on search engines and this in turn might impact the creative's market reach and subsequently, their platform and income.

## The burden of opt-out on creatives

The Berne Convention, established in 1886 and signed by more than 180 countries including the UK, makes clear that copyright protection exists automatically on a piece of work when it is created by a person. In other words, copyright does not have to be asserted. This right comes with the assumption of control for creatives so that they can decide on what terms their works are used, and by whom.<sup>80</sup>

This was noted by novelists, publishers, and agents alike in focus groups and the survey:

'The law is quite clear. If I write a poem on a, you know, a piece of toilet paper now, then it's my copyright [...] you don't need to register copyright, you know, it just exists as soon as you create something.'  
**Reggie, Manchester Focus Group**

Many participants noted that the opt-out model puts the onus and the burden onto creatives to assert control over their work, which does not tally with the fact that copyright can be automatically assumed.

79. Ed Newton-Rex, *The Insurmountable Problems with Generative AI Opt-outs* (November 2024), 8 pp. [pdf] at <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cc5785816b6406e50258c5c/t/67368c12cc35b5469feb0bfd/1731628050768/The+insurmountable+problems+with+generative+AI+opt-outs.pdf> [accessed 23 October 2025].

80. This is echoed in the opinion of Nicholas Caddick K.C., that 'in creating such an exception the UK Government would be acting in breach of an international treaty to which the UK is a party — namely the Berne Copyright Convention'. Nicholas Caddick, 'Proposed UK Exception for Text and Data Mining: Opinion', *Publishers Association* (21 February 2025), 6 pp. [pdf], at <https://www.publishers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Legal-Opinion-of-Nicholas-Caddick-KC-Berne-Convention.pdf> [accessed 22 October 2025].

Moreover, due to this longstanding assumption, creatives might not know they need to opt out or might not fully understand why it's important to do so.

Participants argued that it is the technology companies who are financially gaining from the use of this material, or will be eventually, and so the burden should be on them:

'It should be the responsibility of companies that want to use our work to approach us, and ask us, 'can we use the work in this way, and these are the terms and conditions', and for us to have the authorial choice to say I want to do this or not [...] we own our creative work, and it's up for people to approach us.'

**Fia, London Focus Group 1**

The idea that it is not unreasonable for the burden to be placed on the GenAI companies who seek financial gain from the material was reiterated by Nicola Solomon, former CEO of the Society of Authors and a Deputy District Judge, who said, 'If you're making chocolate, you would need sugar, but then you can buy it. There are perfectly good licensing opportunities out there right across the creative industries'.

## A CALL FOR LICENSING, CONTROL, REMUNERATION, AND TRANSPARENCY

In the survey:

- **85% of literary creatives** viewed an 'opt-in' model positively (as seen above).
- **86% of literary creatives** said that an 'opt-in' model would be their preferred option.

Literary creatives often argued that copyright law in the UK is world leading. While the Government consultation outlined that 'rights holders are finding it difficult to control the use of their works in training AI models' and noted that 'this status quo cannot continue',<sup>81</sup> many literary creatives felt the problem lies with the fact that copyright has not been respected or enforced, rather than with the copyright law itself.

They therefore urged that the focus going forwards be on enforcement mechanisms, transparency from AI companies, and licensing structures.<sup>82</sup> Given recent case law, there should also be continual review of whether copyright law is fit for purpose in the age of AI, and that it protects the right of creatives to give permission for the use of their work in training AI models.

'The current state is rather clear from a legal perspective: in the absence of an exception, and none of the relevant exceptions would apply, you require the express permission before you start ingesting material into the LLM programme. [...] None of the current exceptions apply, neither 29a on text and data mining, nor 28a on temporary copyright, so that's pretty clear.'

**Florian Koempel, Interview**

81. DSIT, 'Closed Consultation. Copyright and Artificial Intelligence'.

82. Society of Authors, letter regarding 'Generative AI Copyright Infringement', *Society of Authors* (21 August 2024), 2 pp. [pdf], at <https://societyofauthors.org/download/soa-letter-to-generative-ai-developers/?wpdmdl=155357&refresh=68f9bb10e4e191761196816> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Literary creatives called for the licensing of material and for fair remuneration from AI companies for the use of their work. They also called for granular transparency from AI companies on the data used to train their models, so that they could enforce their rights if needed.

Crucially, there could be more access to data for AI companies if permission is sought from creatives. It is the control of their own data that literary creatives prioritise. This research shows that while 93% of novelists say they would 'probably' or 'definitely' opt out of their work being used to train AI models, 75% of novelists say they would 'probably not' or 'definitely not' opt in their work to be used to train AI models.

In focus groups, too, authors discussed how, under an opt-in principle, they would not necessarily be opposed to their work being used for the training or fine tuning of GenAI models:

'If they turned around and said you're all going to get paid, every time it uses your book there's going to be a little tally somewhere and you'll get like 2p or whatever, I'd be like, alright, I'm happy with that, as long as I can opt in.'

**Reggie, Manchester Focus Group**

'I prefer an opt-in model, where authors have to agree. I'm not a complete luddite [...] but I do think there has to be a way of authors having control over their work and also preferably some recompense.'

**Ivy, London Focus Group 3**

## Licensing and remuneration

During an interview for this research, Terry, an anonymised policy expert, explained how asking creatives for permission to copy their work is challenging in practice. He told me that this is particularly because AI companies are using large amounts of data, and therefore it is difficult for creatives to take enforcement action because the damage is so small individually.

However, literary creatives strongly called for the ability to give permission for the use of their work and to be remunerated for this use. Moreover, many creatives did not feel that the damage on them would be inconsiderable, both individually and collectively, given the impacts they reported to have felt on their work and career already.

Many literary creatives also felt that licensing material through existing legal structures would be straightforward. In focus groups, there was discussion about how the publishing industry is already well-versed in licensing textual works for different purposes. Strong licensing infrastructures already enable authors to be paid for their work to be photocopied, borrowed, translated, adapted into film, and so on:

'I don't understand, if the ALCS can give me a photocopying fee from the Netherlands or something like that, why can't Meta at least make some small payment?'

**Chris, London Focus Group 2**

Participants suggested that AI training rights could be assigned to the publisher during the contract stage, or alternatively, could be licensed through a writers' union or society, or through a collecting society, such as the ALCS.

While a consensus is yet to be formed, it became clear in the survey that the most popular option for licensing was for it to go through a writers' union or society, which 48% of novelists selected. In comparison, 16% of novelists said their preference would be for licensing to go through their publisher. Centralised in these ways, technology companies could make licensing deals with publishers or collecting societies who would have secure content registries.

Importantly, participants discussed how licensing should be a straightforward and accessible process, which enables them to give informed permission and to receive fair remuneration for the use of their work.

They talked about how the designers of these licences should consider including what is being licensed, what the end use will be, how long the licence will last, and what the protocol will be from the licence end date onwards. Moreover, in the survey, 69% of novelists said they would expect to be named or credited if their work had been used to train or fine-tune GenAI systems. This expectation should also be considered in licensing. This might work akin to regular citations, where an author's work is credited when used as a source in the system's output.

Significantly, if licensing is to go through the publisher, this requires industry unity on how AI training rights should be dealt with to ensure the consistent upholding of creative's rights.

During this research, participants flagged that some publishers have assumed they own AI training rights from legacy contracts, arguing the general granting of rights includes AI training rights, and have thus already been selling them to AI companies.

Informa, the parent company of Taylor & Francis, was reported to have sold access to book data to Microsoft for an initial fee of \$10 million (USD), and was reported to be due to make \$75 million overall from 'AI partnerships' in 2024.

In addition, other publishers such as Wiley, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press have reportedly entered or are considering entering similar deals that would give AI systems access to their catalogue, with Wiley reported to have made deals worth \$44 million with various AI companies. In these cases, the authors of the individual works involved had reportedly not been informed, consulted, offered the opportunity to opt out, or been paid.<sup>83</sup>

Eli Keren, a literary agent, pointed out that this kind of assumption is not the case with other creative rights: 'You wouldn't say that about film and television rights. If it's not in a contract, you don't have it'.

83. Matilda Battersby, 'Taylor & Francis Set to Make £58m from AI in 2024 as it Reveals Second Partnership', *The Bookseller* (25 July 2024), at <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/taylor-francis-set-to-make-58m-from-ai-in-2024-as-it-reveals-second-partnership> [accessed 22 October 2025]; and 'Wiley Set to Earn \$44m from AI rights Deals, Confirms "No Opt Out" for Authors', *The Bookseller* (30 August 2024), at <https://www.thebookseller.com/news/wiley-set-to-earn-44m-from-ai-rights-deals-confirms-no-opt-out-for-authors> [accessed 22 October 2025]; 'The SoA Responds to Taylor & Francis Group's Sale of Data to Develop AI', *Society of Authors* (22 July 2024), at <https://societyofauthors.org/2024/07/22/the-soa-responds-to-taylor-francis-groups-sale-of-data-to-develop-ai/> [accessed 23 October 2025].

Eli points out that with most contracts there is a clause stating that any rights not granted are reserved to the author. Therefore, if the publishers want to license those rights, they need to come to the author or agent directly: '

'At the AAA (the Association of Authors' Agents) [...] we argue that the right to train a large language model from a piece of creative work is a right and in order to do that, that right must be granted and that right automatically rests with the author.'

**Eli, London Focus Group 2**

Overall, there is currently little consistency in terms of how these rights are being treated. Participants in focus groups discussed how, in publishing contracts now, publishers treat AI training rights in a variety of ways. Some publishers might put in a clause saying they have the AI training rights, others will say they have them, but they'll run it past the author before granting them to AI companies. Some say that neither the author nor the publisher has the right, and others say that the author cannot license to an AI company without their permission, or that the author cannot license these rights at all.

While under UK competition law it is difficult to standardise contracts around the wording of granting AI training rights, it is important that publishers respect that AI training rights lie with the author and that they license accordingly with a fair financial split. At the forum, Anna Ganley, the Chief Executive of the Society of Authors, spoke about how subsidiary rights are often split 50:50.

However, in the case of AI training rights, where it is access to the authors' words that is desired, something akin to an agent's fee feels more appropriate, where the publisher is simply providing access to a dataset. In the worst case, the author would not be consulted and/or the split not specified at all.

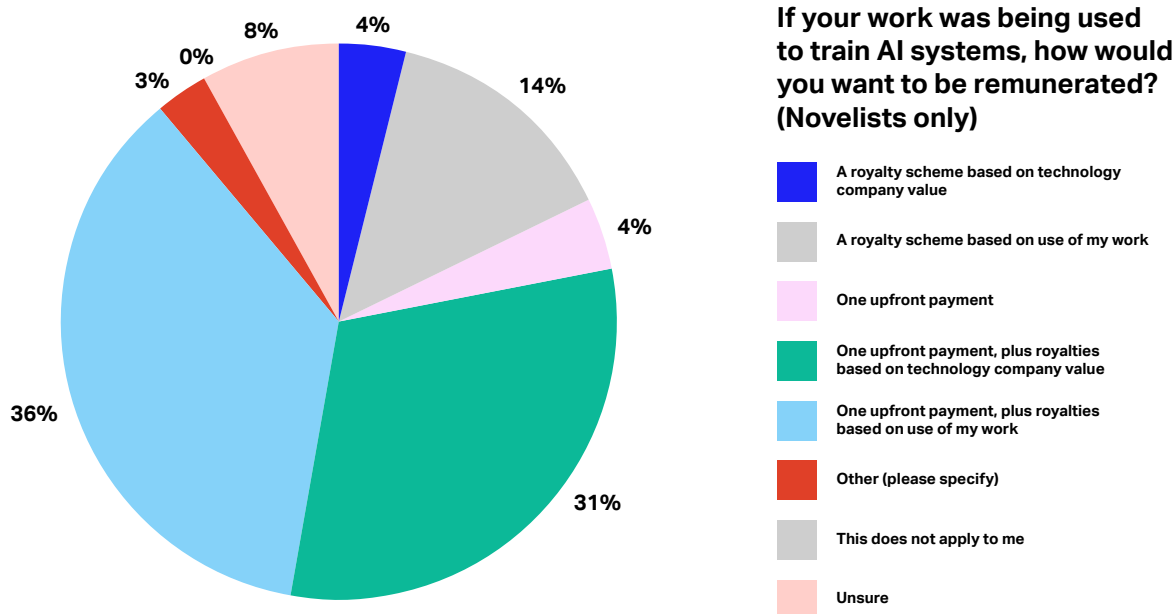
Therefore, there was a call, particularly from agents and novelists, to ensure that there is recognition that AI training rights lie with the author and that there must be consent and remuneration for licensing their work to AI companies.

In terms of remuneration, 98% of novelists said they would expect to be remunerated if their work was used to train an AI system. Moreover, in a recent ALCS survey, 92% of writers said they would want to receive compensation for any historic use of their work to train AI.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, many novelists in focus groups for this research expressed that they would expect to be remunerated for any historic use of their work.

In the survey for this research, just over a third of novelists (36%) said they would want to receive upfront payment plus royalties based on the use of their work (see Graph 5). This was the most popular answer for how novelists would wish to be remunerated for the use of their work. Details around remunerative standards need to be further discussed, and technology companies should further consult creatives about fair remunerative standards and models.

84. Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society, 'Artificial Intelligence', ALCS [website], at <https://www.alcs.co.uk/ai/> [accessed 22 October 2025].



**Graph 5: Preferred remuneration method (novelists only)**

## Transparency

In the 'Copyright and Artificial Intelligence' consultation, the Government did discuss the importance of transparency and that 'increased transparency by AI developers will be crucial to ensuring copyright law is complied with and can be enforced'.<sup>85</sup> However, the extent to which transparency would be required was unspecified.

Terry, an anonymised policy expert, discussed how asking for transparency from AI companies would be placing obligations on the AI sector with little balancing help for them to access the data they need. But literary creatives called for granular transparency from GenAI companies that detailed which work has been used in the training or fine tuning of AI models.

Some of them discussed how they saw this to be a feasible and justified request. In focus groups, participants discussed this, calling for technology companies to publish which data they've trained their models on:

'They need to publish the datasets. They need to make it transparent so we know exactly what's been used [...] cos if we don't know whether our stuff's been used and they won't tell us; then how can we ever trust them with any system that they come up with.'

**Reggie, Manchester Focus Group**

85. DSIT, 'Closed Consultation. Copyright and Artificial Intelligence'.

Many literary creatives supported the aims of Baroness Kidron in calling for transparency in the 'Data (Use and Access) Bill',<sup>86</sup> so that creatives might know when, where, and what part of their work has been used in AI training. In a speech in the House of Lords on 12 May 2025, Baroness Kidron said, 'We do not need to change copyright law. We need transparency so that we can enforce copyright law, because what you cannot see you cannot enforce'.<sup>87</sup>

This resonated with the call from literary creatives in this research; they saw transparency as a vital mechanism to ensuring that copyright law could be enforced.

This view was also supported by Dan Guthrie, the Director General of the Alliance for IP, who said in an interview that transparency is 'a mechanism that enables the assertion and protection of rights'.

Literary creatives called for transparency requirements on the training of AI systems, which include the mandatory disclosure of data provenance.<sup>88</sup> Many discussed how this should be granular down to which works have been used. Some of them suggested how this could be held through a public registry or company records which can be requested, akin to a freedom of information request.

## DESIGNING RESPONSIBLE GENERATIVE AI

In one focus group, Kate Pullinger, a novelist, told participants that she had become very interested in small language models (SLMs) as opposed to large language models (LLMs). Kate said that 'there is some interesting research on that and there's some interesting tools beginning to emerge that you can contain on your own desktop'.

As defined in the introduction, SLMs are a type of GenAI that has, unlike LLMs, been trained on smaller sets of curated data, that require less computing power, and therefore reduce resource demands,<sup>89</sup> and that are often fine-tuned for specific tasks and domains to optimise for efficiency and quality of output.

Indeed, more data isn't necessarily the only way to produce higher quality models.<sup>90</sup> During an interview for this research, Dan Guthrie, Director General of the Alliance for IP, spoke about how big tech has sold the argument that the only way you get high quality AI models is by ingesting vast amounts of data, 'because it creates a moat for them'.

Small language models came up repeatedly during the focus groups, interviews, and at the forum. Often, participants spoke about the potential of SLMs to use licensed data to carry out more specific tasks.

86. Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 [HL Bill], 2024–26 (c. 18), at <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3825> [accessed 23 October 2025].

87. HL Deb 12 May 2025, vol. 854 col. 1924, at [https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-05-12/debates/45252051-8C6C-4193-A53D-AC083E777D08/Data\(UseAndAccess\)Bill\(HL\)](https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2025-05-12/debates/45252051-8C6C-4193-A53D-AC083E777D08/Data(UseAndAccess)Bill(HL)) [accessed 23 October 2025].

88. Ann Kristin Glenster, Lucy Hampton, Gina Neff, and Thomas Lacy, *Policy Brief: AI, Copyright, and Productivity in the Creative Industries*. Minderoo Centre for Technology & Democracy Reports (20 February 2025), at doi: 10.17863/CAM.115766.

89. Francisco Durán, Matias Martinez, Patricia Lago, and Silverio Martínez-Fernández, 'Insights into Resource Utilization of Code Small Language Models Serving with Runtime Engines and Execution Providers', *arXiv:2412.15441v2 [cs.SE]* (30 July 2025), 1–25, at doi: 10.48550/arXiv.2412.15441.

90. Bender et al., 'On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots'.

Many of them noted how they would be more likely to use these AI models if they knew they had been ethically trained and designed.

Amongst literary creatives, there was not an anti-AI sentiment, but rather a pro-responsible-AI sentiment. 80% of literary creatives agreed that AI offers enormous benefits in some areas of society but not others. We know that literary creatives use AI tools in aspects of their work; this can be seen in Part 1 of this report.<sup>91</sup> Due to this, participants were keen for there to be increased exploration of ways that the UK Government could invest in and encourage the development of responsibly trained and designed SLMs.

As noted above, industry experts often discussed how the UK is unlikely to be able to compete in the development of LLMs. The UK was not seen to have sufficient infrastructure, or to have the data protection/privacy laws and electricity costs that would attract these companies. While these are all areas the UK is looking to improve through the 'AI Opportunities Action Plan', participants urged the Government to be realistic about the capacity of the UK and considerate of the ethical and economic consequences of jeopardising one of the country's most successful industries.

At the forum, Amy Tarr from Creative UK spoke about this:

'There is an opportunity to be globally competitive in terms of responsible AI and SLMs and I think that's the thing we should be pivoting towards.'

**Amy Tarr, Forum**

This was echoed by Dan Guthrie, Director General of the Alliance for IP, during an interview:

'Those narrow language models rely on high quality data sets and legal access to them, and that's where we'll succeed. And yes, we need computing power to do that. Yes, we need really clever engineers, but that's where we'll really succeed.'

**Dan Guthrie, Interview**

Therefore, there was a broad call across the industry for increased investment in UK-based, responsibly-trained and designed SLMs that aid and reward the work of our creatives. The development of SLMs should begin with what we want AI models to do, rather than retrofitting regulation and legislation to AI systems which are ethically and environmentally problematic.

These SLMs should be built on high-quality, responsible, licensed data, and designed to be effective and sophisticated at performing narrow tasks. Additionally, they should be focused on ensuring no discriminatory or stereotyped output.

91. O'Toole et al., 'Extending Human Creativity with AI'.



# CONCLUSION

Novels are a core part of the creative industries and contribute substantially to our culture, education, identity, wellbeing, and entertainment. However, with the rise of GenAI, writers, publishers, and the novel itself are experiencing unprecedented uncertainty, change, and challenge.

This report centred the voices of hundreds of literary creatives across the UK, including novelists, publishers, and literary agents. It considers the way these literary creatives are using GenAI, how GenAI is impacting them and the novel itself, and the preferences of creatives around copyright and licensing structures.

Overall, this report adds to the evidence base that demonstrates how GenAI is already impacting creatives, finding that over a third (39 %) of novelists reported that their income has been negatively impacted due to the spread of GenAI.

Literary creatives also spoke of the negative consequences of an increasing use of GenAI on social wellbeing, skill, humanity, connection, and literary originality. While GenAI was seen to potentially provide opportunities for those with accessibility needs, it was also found to perpetuate problematic stereotypes and discrimination in its outputs.

Rooted in this evidence, this report puts forward a comprehensive set of recommendations. These recommendations, outlined at the top of the report, cover copyright and responsible GenAI design; education, research, and funding; and publishing industry practice. They urge the protection and diversification of our precious literary scene, which contributes more than we can imagine to our country.

If implemented, these recommendations would help the UK to continue to be a global superpower in the creative industries and a world leader in the design and implementation of responsible AI.

The novel is more than an art form. It has been the basis for a thriving British creative sector. It contributes more than we can imagine to our society, culture, and to the lives of individuals. It is a form of creativity which is precious and one which is worth fighting for.

# APPENDIX: RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

## FOCUS GROUPS:

### Manchester Focus Group

- David Beckler – Novelist
- Stephen May – Novelist
- Amanda Nicholson – Novelist
- Kevin Duffy – Publisher, Bluemoose Books
- George Forster – Publicity and Marketing Officer, Comma Press
- Shirley May – Founder of Young Identity writing collective; Publisher, No Disclaimers
- Marigold (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Violet (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Reggie (Anonymised) – Publisher

### Edinburgh Focus Group

- Helen Grant – Novelist
- Ian Spring – Novelist and Publisher, Rymour Books
- Edward Crossan – Editor, Polygon Press (Birlinn)
- Andrea Joyce – Literary Rights Agent, Joyce Literary
- Isla (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Sienna (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Amber (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Daisy (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Fern (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Zara (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Gareth (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Rowan (Anonymised) – Literary Agent
- Gavin Leuzzi (Focus Group Observer)

### London Focus Group 1

- Stephen Cox – Novelist
- Gill Thompson – Novelist
- Kate Pullinger – Novelist
- Kapu Lewis – Novelist
- Tamsyn Murray – Novelist

- Giulia Caparelli – Senior Production Controller, Bonnier Books UK
- Alicia Quiñones – Head of The Americas Region, PEN International
- Fia (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Willow (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Maya (Anonymised) – Publisher

### London Focus Group 2

- Chris Manby – Novelist
- Matt Kilkeen – Novelist
- Becky Alexander – Novelist
- Eli Keren – Literary Agent
- Meg Davis – Literary Agent
- Cordelia (Anonymised) – Novelist

### London Focus Group 3

- Ruth Dudgall – Novelist
- Sarah Hulbert – Managing Editor and Freelance Editor
- Fleur (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Ivy (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Coral (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Gaia (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Jay (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Gina Neff (Focus Group Observer)

### London Focus Group 4

- Philippa Malicka – Novelist
- Kester Brewin – Novelist
- River (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Geraldine (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Aurora (Anonymised) – Publisher
- Florence (Anonymised) – Literary Agent
- Ada (Anonymised) – Literary Agent
- Scarlett (Anonymised) – Literary Agent

**INTERVIEWS:**

- Dan Guthrie – Director General, Alliance for Intellectual Property
- Marc Newall – Former Director of Policy & Public Affairs, Publishers Association
- Abigail McDougall – Policy Development and Training Manager, Publishing Scotland
- Florian Koempel – Legal Consultant on International Copyright
- Nicola Solomon – Former Chief Executive of Society of Authors; Chair of The Creators’ Rights Alliance; Deputy District Judge.
- Dawn (Anonymised) – Head of a Literary Arts Centre
- Mateo (Anonymised) – Head of Policy at a Writers Society/Collective

- Sam (Anonymised) – Policy expert with knowledge on AI and IP
- Terry (Anonymised) – Policy expert with knowledge on AI and IP

**CASE STUDIES:**

- Amanda Nicholson – Novelist
- Lizbeth Crawford – Novelist
- Jason Hamilton – Novelist
- Chris Manby – Novelist and Ghostwriter
- Jackie (Anonymised) – Novelist
- Avery (Anonymised) – Audiobook Narrator
- Ingrid (Anonymised) – Literary Translator
- Antonella (Anonymised) – Literary Translator
- Mila (Anonymised) – Literary Translator

**FORUM:**

<b>Dr Clementine Collett</b>	Novelist and BRAID UK Fellow at the University of Cambridge researching the Impact of Generative AI on the Novel and Publishing
<b>Professor Gina Neff</b>	Executive Director, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy
<b>Professor Tom Crick</b>	Chief Scientific Adviser, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
<b>DSIT Representative (Anonymised)</b>	Representative from Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)
<b>Luke Alcott</b>	Public Affairs and Policy Manager, Authors’ Licensing and Collecting Society (ALCS)
<b>Marc Newall</b>	Former Director of Policy and Public Affairs, The Publishers Association
<b>Anna Ganley</b>	Chief Executive, Society of Authors
<b>Lesley Gannon</b>	Deputy General Secretary, Writers’ Guild of Great Britain (WGGB)
<b>Mekella Broomberg</b>	Head of Programme and Deputy Director, Royal Society of Literature
<b>Professor Kate Devlin</b>	Professor of AI & Society, King’s College London / RAI UK
<b>Professor Caroline Bassett</b>	Professor of Digital Humanities, Director Cambridge Digital Humanities
<b>Gavin Leuzzi</b>	Fellowships Lead, Bridging Responsible AI Divides
<b>Kester Brewin</b>	Novelist and Associate Director at the Institute for the Future of Work
<b>Tamsyn Murray</b>	Novelist

<b>Niamh Hargan</b>	Novelist and Entertainment Lawyer
<b>Dr Stephen May</b>	Novelist and Arts Council England Relation Manager for Literature
<b>Jasmine Richards</b>	Founder and CEO, Storymix – Inclusive Fiction Incubator
<b>Kevin Duffy</b>	Publisher, Bluemoose Books
<b>Sarah Hulbert</b>	Managing Editor and Editorial Consultant, most recently at Cornerstone (Penguin Random House) and Headline (Hachette)
<b>Lucy North</b>	Literary Translator (Japanese to English)
<b>Kate Barker</b>	Literary Agent
<b>Eli Keren</b>	Literary Agent, The Curious Minds Agency
<b>Dr Ann Kristin Glenster</b>	Deputy Director, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy; Executive Director, Glenlead Centre; Technology and Human Rights Fellow, Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy, Harvard Kennedy School of Government; Affiliate, Centre for Intellectual Property and Information Law (CIPIL), University of Cambridge
<b>Shobana Iyer</b>	Barrister and arbitrator specialising in intellectual property, technology and AI law. Co-Vice Chair of the Legal Services Committee of the Bar Council of England and Wales. Lead of the Bar Council's AI Discussion Forum.
<b>Dr Christian Mammen</b>	San Francisco Office Managing Partner, Womble Bond Dickinson (US) LLP
<b>Florian Koempel</b>	Legal Consultant, British Copyright Council
<b>Nik Gunn</b>	Policy Adviser, Creative PEC/Newcastle University
<b>Abigail McDougall</b>	Policy Development and Training Manager, Publishing Scotland
<b>Amy Tarr</b>	Head of Policy & Public Affairs, Creative UK
<b>Christian Neubacher</b>	Policy Engagement and Planning Coordinator, CSaP
<b>Alexis Harrell</b>	Former Research Assistant at the University of Cambridge to Dr Clementine Collett
<b>Bai Song</b>	PA to Professor Gina Neff and Project Administrator, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy
<b>Christine Adams</b>	Project Administrator, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy
<b>Navneet Gidda</b>	Head of Strategic Communications, Minderoo Centre for Technology and Democracy

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