

The Use of Artificial Intelligence

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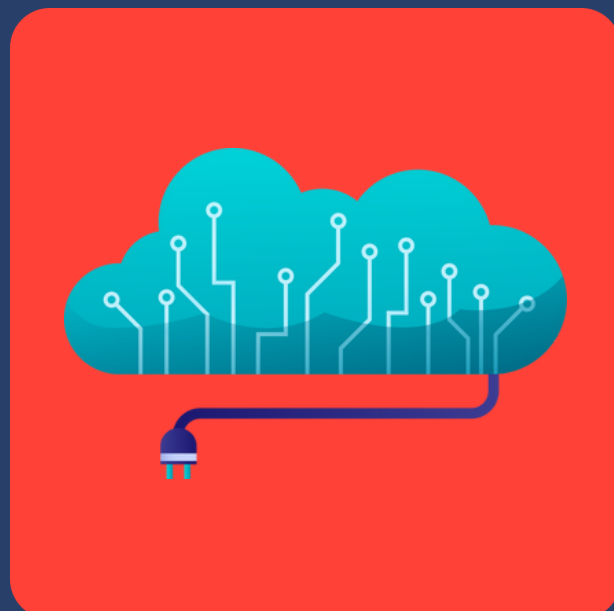


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Introduction

The [Impress Standards Code](#) exists to help journalists create high-quality work in the public interest and to ensure their freedom of expression is protected, balanced with respect for the rights and interests of those who read and engage with their work.

It is important that the [Standards Code](#) and its complementary Guidance and Best Practice Notes remain relevant in our ever-changing digital world. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) plays a bigger role in news content creation, it is important that trust in journalism is maintained, and consumers can differentiate human produced content from AI-generated material.

For the purposes of this best practice note, Artificial intelligence is defined as a machine-based system that can perform tasks commonly associated with human intelligence, including making content, predictions and/or decisions. AI is a technology for solving problems and performing tasks and human review of its use is very important.

Generative AI is a type of AI that is having a growing role in newsrooms. Generative AI tools, prompted by human text inputs, can create new text content, visual art, illustrations and designs, lifelike videos, human-like speech generation and language translation. But Generative AI poses challenges and risks because of its potential for creating misinformation, disinformation and for being biased, and because it has limitations in comprehending complex contextual nuances when being prompted to create content.

This Impress best practice note has been written to highlight the common pitfalls of AI and to help publishers consider whether to adopt AI tools into their workflows. The use of AI by publishers must be consistent with the requirements of the [Standards Code](#) and Guidance. It must be used in a way that is accurate, transparent, respects privacy, and does not discriminate. Its use must also consider the rights of content creators, like journalists and photographers and should not knowingly infringe their copyright. Any use of AI tools in a newsroom requires the balancing of human editorial judgement with machine efficiency to tell the stories that really matter.

This Impress best practice note is intended to provide a framework for how AI tools can be used by publishers and their journalists in a way that reflects the

core principles of good journalistic practice. It is aligned with the clauses of the Standards Code and Guidance, but it is neither a binding part of the Code nor enforceable by Impress. However, when a publisher can demonstrate it has thought carefully about the examples of best journalistic practice featured in it, the publisher may be able to defend an editorial complaint about its use of AI tools more successfully.

Given the pace of change in the world of Artificial Intelligence, the Impress Code Committee will review this best practice note on an annual basis and update it as appropriate.



Clause 1 – Accuracy

- **Publishers should not rely solely on AI tools for research purposes**

- Publishers should not rely solely on AI tools for researching factual information. If an AI tool is used for research purposes, publishers should ensure the fact-checking of information intended for publication. This fact-checking is necessary because generative AI tools, like ChatGPT, can be wrong in multiple ways:
 - giving inaccurate, untruthful or misleading answers
 - producing harmful instructions or biased content
 - omitting relevant and important information by mistake
 - creating facts or “hallucinating” outputs, from fake people and events to legal precedents and sources
 - mixing truth and invention
 - misinterpreting the prompt

See also below in relation to [Clause 7 – Privacy](#) and [Clause 8 – Sources](#).

- Publishers should carefully assess the risks when deciding to publish AI generated content. They should bear in mind the nature and accuracy of the material and judge its potential impact to mislead. Published information that turns out to be wrong or false can have a potentially significant impact on users.
- This best practice note is not intended to prevent the use of AI tools for analysing and summarising documents and sifting through large amounts of data where AI can be very good at recognising patterns, predicting trends, and highlighting anomalies.

- **Publishers should exercise human editorial review to ensure the accuracy of the content produced by an AI tool**

- Publishers should ensure their journalists comply with their own organisation’s terms and conditions and policies governing the use of AI as well as the requirements of the Impress [Standards Code](#) and Guidance.
- The [Impress Standards Code](#) requires human review of all uses of AI that lead to the publication of journalistic content to ensure accuracy (1.1.6 (c)). This applies to AI-generated or AI-assisted text stories and infographics, illustrative AI created images, lifelike videos, and human-like generated speech. Publishers should take particular care in the use of AI tools to directly generate news content, and it must always be the subject of human editorial review prior to publication, and it should be appropriately attributed and/or labelled. See below [Clause 2 – Attribution and Plagiarism](#) and [Clause 10 – Transparency](#). Publishers should ask freelancers who submit content for publication to disclose any use of AI in the production of their story. Publishers should exercise human editorial review of all third-party sources, including blogs, social media posts and YouTube videos. See [Standards Code](#) Accuracy - 1.1.6 (a).

- **Publishers should not use AI tools to generate photorealistic images, videos or speech to depict real-life people or events**
 - Publishers should normally use authentic photographs, video and audio, taken or produced by people, to accurately illustrate real-world events. However, if publishers choose to use generic stock images or AI generated images/videos or audio, they should be clearly and prominently labelled to ensure that readers/viewers are aware of what they are seeing/hearing. Digital content creation must not knowingly be used to give people a false or misleading impression of events. See below Clause 2 – Attribution and Plagiarism and Clause 10 – Transparency.
 - Publishers are at particular risk of misleading readers if they use an AI-generated image to illustrate an online article which then also appears in a social media post but without any prominent labelling.
 - Publishers should carefully review any use of AI to create collages of real people to illustrate articles and double check that the real images the AI has included in the collage do indeed portray the intended living or deceased individual.

Clause 2 – Attribution & Plagiarism

- **Publishers using AI tools to generate content should ensure its use is accurate and does not knowingly mislead users. Publishers should consider how to attribute their use of AI in an appropriate way**
 - Publishers using AI tools in their newsrooms should consider disclosing their use of the technology by posting terms and conditions on the front page of their website or publication, with a link to any specific AI policies that detail practices and procedures about the use of AI in their organisation. AI policies should be posted with other publisher policies, such as privacy and complaints policies. A publisher's level of disclosure should be clear, relevant and proportionate to the impact of AI use on its journalistic content and decision making.
 - Publishers should attribute their use of AI in content generation of all types unless there is good reason not to do so. The attribution could be in the form of an AI logo, AI assisted reporter byline or other appropriate labelling method.
 - Publishers using AI tools to generate text, or images (see above [Clause 1 – Accuracy](#)), should consider whether it is appropriate to attribute the content creators in the same way as a human author, artist or photographer is normally acknowledged for their work.
 - The precise way in which AI use should be indicated is at the editorial discretion of the publisher and links to the issue of transparency. Labelling should be proportionate and relate to the editorial significance of the AI-generated content. For example, publishers are expected to declare the use of AI for generating content, assisting in reporting or influencing editorial decisions but they are not expected to declare the use of AI for spelling or grammar checks. See above on [Clause 1 – Accuracy](#) and below on [Clause 10 – Transparency](#). Both clauses are equally important in ensuring the publication of accurate and trustworthy information.
- **Publishers should be aware of the plagiarism risk when using AI tools to generate content and should take reasonable steps to identify specific examples of plagiarism and attribute it accordingly**
 - AI tools can be valuable for good journalism, but publishers should note that all AI content is based on someone else's work and details about its original sources may not be discoverable. Publishers should take care not to treat any information or content generated by an AI tool as the result of a human text prompt as original material. If possible, publishers should take reasonable steps to attribute the originator of the content where the use of that content might appear to infringe the rights of the original creator. This could be important for example, if a journalist has used a prompt requiring that an article or image is created in the style of an identifiable writer or artist. This occurred in September 2024 when the London Evening Standard included an AI-written review of Van Gogh at the National Gallery by a well-known art critic who died in 2015. See above [Clause 1 – Accuracy](#).

Clause 4 – Discrimination

- Publishers should be aware of potential prejudicial or pejorative biases in AI-generated content
 - Publishers should be aware that bias, discrimination and a lack of breadth and diversity of opinion are three key challenges presented by AI-generated content. This is because generative AI tools are trained on an immense body of data from a variety of sources e.g. Wikipedia, books, news, societal perspectives, and other biases and inaccuracies often based on race or gender. They can also exhibit selection bias, that is where certain groups are overrepresented, and others underrepresented. It is therefore important that AI-generated content does not perpetuate or legitimise prejudice or stereotyping. Human editorial review of AI-generated content pre-publication is essential to ensure that it does not discriminate against any individual or group based on characteristics as detailed in Clause 4 – Discrimination of the Impress Standards Code.

Clause 7 – Privacy

- Publishers should not input confidential, sensitive or commercial/proprietary information into AI tools unless using secure in-house AI models with strict data protection measures
 - Generative AI tools like ChatGPT are developed using training data which is obtained from information that is publicly available on the internet, information that is licensed from third parties and information that users or human trainers provide. It is therefore important that publishers carefully consider the types of information they share with these AI tools. Publishers should avoid sharing with AI tools confidential or sensitive information, any identifying information about individuals (particularly protected sources), unpublished content, copyrighted material, sensitive commercial or financial information and so on.
 - Publishers are reminded that automated cloud transcription services like Otter.ai are not completely private. Any use of such tools should be governed by a publisher's own internal AI policies. Particular care is needed if a cloud-based transcription service is used to transcribe interviews with, for example, an anonymous source, whose life may be endangered if any personal information about them was placed in the public domain.
 - Publishers should not submit questions or prompts to public AI tools that, if they were subsequently made public (e.g. via a data hack) could lead to legal issues such as reputational damage, claims of defamation or unauthorised disclosure of personal data. Publishers are reminded of the requirements of Standards Code Clause 7 – Privacy, that applies both to publishing private information and to journalistic activity that interferes with a person's privacy. When making use of AI tools, publishers should ensure the rights of individuals are protected and that private information is only used in compliance with data protection law.

Clause 8 – Sources

- **Publishers should not rely solely on AI tools for research purposes**
 - It is useful to consider AI tools as unverified anonymous sources. See above in relation to Clause 2 – Attribution and Plagiarism. Publishers should treat content generated by an AI tool with scepticism and ensure it is robustly checked for plagiarism and the accuracy of its “facts”. It is good journalistic practice to keep a written contemporaneous note of any uses of an AI tool to research significant allegations against an individual or organisation or to generate content that is controversial or could reveal sensitive information about an identifiable individual(s) or organisation. The note could include details like the date and time of AI use, the tool used, the prompt used with the tool, and the person who approved the final content for publication. This best practice could help to ensure compliance with sub-clause 8.2 of the Standards Code, which requires publishers to take reasonable steps to ensure journalists do not fabricate sources. It might also help publishers successfully defend any complaint about the published content.

Clause 10 – Transparency

- **Publishers should be publicly transparent about their use of AI tools**
 - Publishers should disclose how they use AI tool(s) in their news reporting, including the purpose and scope of the tool(s) and any limitations and risks which they may carry. This disclosure should be concise and primarily address the impact which AI tool(s) have on the publisher's newsgathering process, editorial decision-making and published content. It should also complement any terms and conditions about the publisher's use of AI and be linked to its AI policy.
 - Publishers should also consider the value of keeping an internal record of AI tools which have been used and any experimentation with such tools by editors and journalists in the newsroom, even though they may not have resulted in publication.
- **Publishers should ensure human editorial review and clear labelling of AI generated content to avoid materially misleading users**
 - Publishers should ensure they clearly label their use of AI to differentiate between their human produced content and their AI produced material. This includes for example where an article or sections of an article have been written autonomously, or an article has been translated into a different language.
 - Labelling should be proportionate and relate to the significance of the AI generated content. For example, when an article is published that has been supported using AI, labelling could be achieved by adding a byline. The byline could display the name of the editor or journalist who had oversight of the AI use (i.e. the 'AI-assisted reporter'), or it could simply indicate, using an AI logo, that the article was automatically generated and the content derived from specific third-party source e.g. financial reports, weather forecasts or sports results.