

Using AI in Research: Disclosure Is Only Part of the Responsibility

New publisher guidance points researchers toward a more useful question: what did AI influence, and what scholarly judgment remained yours?

In September 2026, Oxford University Press and Springer Nature highlighted updated guidance for researchers using AI. Their policies differ in details, but they point in a similar direction: responsible AI use depends on **what the tool is doing**, **how much it affects scholarly judgment**, **whether the output is verified**, and **whether a person remains accountable**.

A Useful Way to Think About AI Use

Level	Examples	Researcher responsibility
Assistive	Examples: language clarity, formatting, organization, routine efficiency.	Lower risk when AI does not introduce or determine scholarly judgment. Publisher disclosure rules still vary.
Interpretive / evaluative	Examples: suggesting methods, analyzing or visualizing data, identifying patterns, comparing results, helping interpret findings.	Needs stronger verification, transparency, and demonstrable human oversight.
Delegated judgment	Examples: allowing AI to determine conclusions, fabricate evidence, substitute for peer review, or present AI-generated research as human-created.	Crosses important scholarly-integrity boundaries and may be prohibited.

Five Questions Before You Use or Disclose AI

- **What did the AI actually do?** Be specific: search, summarize, rewrite, analyze, recommend, interpret, or decide.
- **Did it influence a scholarly decision?** If AI affected evidence selection, method choice, interpretation, or conclusions, the need for oversight rises.
- **Can I verify the output?** Check sources, citations, calculations, code, interpretations, and claims rather than assuming fluency equals accuracy.
- **Did I expose sensitive or unpublished material?** Consider confidentiality, intellectual property, privacy, and the tool's data practices.
- **What does my target journal or publisher require?** Requirements differ and may change; check the current policy before submission.

THE CENTRAL IDEA

Using AI does not transfer scholarly responsibility to the AI. The researcher remains responsible for the evidence, reasoning, accuracy, disclosure, and final work.

What the Publishers Are Signaling

OUP allows some routine uses without disclosure but expects disclosure for many substantive uses and asks authors to explain how AI was used and how they reviewed the output. Springer Nature explicitly distinguishes assistive, interpretive/evaluative, and prohibited uses, with increasing expectations for human oversight and transparency as AI moves closer to scholarly judgment.

These are publisher policies, not universal rules for every discipline or journal. Always consult the current requirements for the venue where you plan to submit.

Primary Sources

1. Oxford University Press, "Supporting researchers to disclose AI use with confidence," Sept. 10, 2026.
<https://corp.oup.com/news/supporting-researchers-to-disclose-ai-use-with-confidence/>
2. Oxford University Press, "Policy on AI Use & Disclosure for Oxford Journals Authors."
<https://academic.oup.com/pages/for-authors/journals/preparing-and-submitting-your-manuscript/ai-principles-for-oxford-journals/policy-on-ai-use-and-disclosure-for-oxford-journals-authors>
3. Springer Nature, "AI guidance for researchers, editors and reviewers on the use of AI in publishing," updated Sept. 10, 2026.
<https://group.springernature.com/gp/group/ai/ai-guidance-for-our-researchers-and-communities>
4. Springer Nature, "Springer Nature launches updated AI policies and guidance to support responsible AI use," Sept. 10, 2026.
<https://group.springernature.com/de/group/media/press-releases/sn-policy-responsible-ai-use/53209516>

About this brief

Polk Research Intelligence monitors changes in AI-assisted scholarly research that matter for information literacy and research support at UW Oshkosh. This brief interprets publisher guidance; it does not establish a university policy.