

Authorship After Automation: Integrity, Creativity, and Narrative Sovereignty in the Age of AI

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1. Introduction: The Author in the Machine

We are entering an era where the boundary between the creator and the tool is no longer self-evident. A poem can be drafted in seconds by a model trained on a billion human voices. A painting can be generated from a single line of text. A research summary, an architectural sketch, a cinematic storyboard—each can be authored without ever being written in the traditional sense.

In this new landscape, the figure of the “author” begins to flicker. Is authorship defined by originality, intention, intervention, or simply by human presence in the process? The rise of artificial intelligence challenges not just the mechanics of creation, but the ethics of attribution. When something is made with the assistance of a system that remembers everything and understands nothing, who owns the meaning—and who holds the responsibility?

This paper explores the shifting terrain of authorship in the age of generative intelligence. It examines where authorship begins and ends, how to define artistic or intellectual integrity when machines are involved, and what it means to maintain narrative control without retreating from technological tools. In a time when content can be endless, we return to an old idea: that what makes an author is not isolation, but discernment.

The question is no longer can AI create?

The question is how do we remain authors when it does?

2. The Boundaries of Authorship

The traditional notion of authorship rests on a few assumptions: originality of thought, a traceable creative process, and a recognizable human voice or vision. But as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly capable of generating form, style, and coherence, these assumptions begin to blur.

An author today might write an entire novel. Or they might compose a prompt that produces one. They might refine AI output line by line—or simply choose between variations offered. In this new spectrum, authorship is no longer binary. It exists on a continuum of agency.

At one end lies full authorship: writing without external input.

At the other, pure automation: unedited, unattributed machine output.

But most creative acts now live somewhere in between—hybrid spaces where the author is not the sole originator, but still the primary interpreter.

This raises several questions:

- Is authorship defined by who starts the process or who finishes it?
- Does the human act of selection, curation, or framing constitute authorship?
- Is intervention more important than invention?

One way to approach this is to shift the emphasis: from ownership to presence. That is, an author is not just the one who creates the work, but the one whose presence is legible in it. Presence can be stylistic, conceptual, ethical, or structural—but it must be detectable. Without it, authorship dissolves into attribution without accountability.

The legal world has begun to wrestle with this. Some courts and copyright bodies now argue that AI-generated works cannot be protected unless a human has meaningfully shaped or directed the output. But the philosophical stakes go deeper. The core issue is not just control—it is responsibility for meaning.

As authors collaborate with systems that do not feel, believe, or intend, they must ask themselves: Where does my voice enter? Where do I impose coherence? Where do I accept or resist what the system gives me?

The answers to these questions will define not just the future of authorship—but the contours of human creativity itself.

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On a practical note, I reached out to the Hungarian Intellectual Property Office (Szellemi Tulajdon Nemzeti Hivatala) to clarify how authorship is treated in the context of AI. Their position was clear: once a work takes form—once it is formalized through human selection, editing, or contextual embedding—it may be considered intellectual property. In other words, it is not the tool that defines authorship, but the act of giving structure and intent to output. Even when AI assists, it is the human who anchors the meaning.

This reinforces a simple truth: authorship is not abolished by collaboration. It is activated through responsibility. When something passes through your hands—and you leave your discernment upon it, it becomes yours.

3. Artistic Integrity and the Role of Added Value

Art has never been about origin alone. Throughout history, creators have borrowed, referenced, sampled, and transformed. What has mattered is not where the material came from, but what was done with it. In the age of AI, this distinction becomes even more crucial.

When machines can generate infinite variations of form—music, prose, image, rhythm—the role of the human artist shifts. The question is no longer whether you “made” the content, but how you added value to it. What intention shaped the output? What judgment filtered the possibilities? What context gave it coherence, emotion, or friction?

Artistic integrity today lies in intervention. It resides in the willingness to decide, revise, deform, discard. The author or artist is not simply the initiator of a process, but the one who gives it consequence. Even the smallest human gesture—choosing which

AI-generated phrase to keep, or where to stop and rephrase—carries authorship when it is intentional.

This is not about purity. It is about responsibility and transformation.

Added value can take many forms:

- A poet using AI to generate variants, then reworking them into a distinct rhythm and tone
- A musician using synthesized melodies, but weaving them into a deeply personal composition
- A researcher curating language models to explore paradoxes no machine could resolve alone

In each case, the machine proposes. The author disposes.

The myth that “real” art must be made in isolation misses the deeper function of authorship in the AI age. Authorship is not about denying influence or hiding tools. It’s about owning the point of contact—where idea meets form, where possibility is shaped by judgment.

If we lose this sensitivity, we risk flattening creativity into mere configuration. But if we preserve it, we unlock a deeper capacity: to work alongside intelligent systems not passively, but with clarity of intention.

In this model, integrity is not defined by who touched the keyboard first. It’s defined by who made the work matter.

4. Narrative Control and the Power of Stories

Authorship is not only about creation—it is about direction. Nowhere is this more visible than in storytelling, where the power lies not just in generating words, but in guiding meaning over time. Stories are how we understand ourselves, how we structure experience, and how we pass coherence across generations. In a world where AI can produce endless, grammatically correct, emotionally plausible content, the real question is not whether a story can be told—but who controls the narrative arc.

AI does not intend. It does not choose what matters. It rearranges what it has seen, optimizing for structure, tone, or probability. But meaning is not a statistical function. Meaning is a choice: what is foregrounded, what is left unsaid, what tension is resolved and what is left open. In storytelling, authorship resides in how reality is cut and shaped into narrative form.

As authors, researchers, and artists collaborate with AI, the danger is not simply that stories will become shallow or repetitive. The deeper risk is that authors will lose awareness of their role in shaping what the story is allowed to mean. When AI suggests the ending, the structure, or the “emotionally satisfying” variation, it may reinforce norms and patterns that dull critical insight. It may suppress ambiguity in favor of resolution, or reinforce dominant worldviews by default.

To retain control of the narrative, the human author must act as editor, philosopher, and antagonist. Not to reject what the machine provides, but to ask why this story—why this frame, why this voice? Stories are never neutral. They are always decisions. And in the AI age, those decisions must be made deliberately, or they will be made by systems optimized for engagement, not meaning.

Narrative sovereignty means choosing what to tell and how to tell it—even when the material is co-generated. It means resisting the gravitational pull of default frames, and asserting authorial intention not just at the start, but throughout the unfolding arc.

This is especially important in fields where stories shape trust, memory, and identity: journalism, history, political communication, education. In these domains, the author’s responsibility is not only stylistic—it is ethical.

AI can help tell stories. But only a human can take responsibility for what a story asks us to believe about the world.

5. Best Practices for Authorial Integrity in AI Collaboration

As artificial intelligence becomes a common collaborator in writing, art, and research, the challenge is no longer how to use these tools—it’s how to use them without dissolving authorship into automation. Integrity in this new space is not about rejecting AI, but about cultivating clarity of role, intention, and presence.

Here are guiding practices for maintaining authorship in the age of intelligent systems—not as fixed rules, but as reflective principles.

Clarify your intervention.

AI can propose; it cannot justify. The moment you decide, reframe, or discard, you re-enter the work as author. Track and understand where your judgment shapes the outcome—and name it if needed. Your role is not diminished by collaboration, but revealed through choice.

Disclose collaboration, but define authorship.

Transparency matters, especially in public-facing works. Let your readers, viewers, or audiences know that AI contributed—but go further: explain how it contributed and where you assumed responsibility. Vagueness invites confusion. Precision builds trust.

Prioritize depth over novelty.

AI can produce the unexpected, but not necessarily the meaningful. Seek outputs that can be refined into resonance. Use the machine to provoke, not to replace. A coherent voice—stylistic or moral—still matters more than scale.

Retain the right to resist.

AI may offer completions, summaries, or variations—but authorship sometimes means saying no. Resistance is not inefficiency; it is discernment. If something feels too easy or too flat, trace it. Ask what it is reinforcing, and whether that serves your intent.

Don't outsource responsibility.

A machine can generate words or images, but it cannot own consequences. If your name is attached, your presence must be traceable. Authorship means standing behind the meaning—even if you didn't generate every pixel or phrase.

Treat AI as a mirror, not a muse.

What the machine gives you often reflects back collective patterns—averaged, amplified, and depersonalized. Don't confuse fluency with wisdom. Don't let prediction dictate purpose. Use the reflection to refine your position, not replace it.

In this new creative terrain, authorship is no longer about isolation or originality in the narrow sense. It is about orientation. Knowing where you stand in the process. Knowing what you bring that the machine cannot. And knowing how to guide systems that do not know what they are saying—but can say almost anything.

6. Conclusion — The Author's Return

In the presence of machines that can simulate fluency, finish your thoughts, and mimic your style, authorship might seem diminished—dissolved into prompts and parameters. But authorship has never been about origin alone. It is about response. And in every response, there is a return.

The author does not vanish in the age of AI. The author is the one who stays behind, after the generation is done. The one who looks, questions, selects, and imposes shape. Not to perfect the work, but to bind it to meaning.

There is no single method to preserve integrity in the presence of intelligent tools. But there is a recurring pattern: the author who refuses to disappear, even as the machine speaks louder. The author who maintains coherence through the noise. The one who does not simply produce—but remains answerable.

And this is what defines authorship now:

Not control. Not originality.

But the willingness to be held accountable for the consequences of creation, even when the machine contributes to the content.

What cannot be outsourced is judgment.

What cannot be automated is responsibility.

And what cannot be scored is the quiet moment of choice—when you say:

This is mine. I will stand behind it.

In this, the author returns. Not before the machine. Not after it.

But through it—visible still.