

## **An AI-generated editorial on the history of AJET's early years: An experiment**

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In this editorial we report on an experiment to use generative artificial intelligence (AI) to write a retrospective editorial on the first decade (1985-1994) of the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* (AJET). Amidst growing uncertainty about the ethical use of AI in academic publishing, in this "meta-editorial" we explore the capabilities and limitations of current AI tools for complex scholarly writing. We tested four mainstream AI tools (Google Gemini, ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Claude) using identical prompts. Each tool produced outputs of varying quality, structure, narrative coherence, length, and accuracy, with issues ranging from incomplete analysis to fabricated references. No tool was able to produce a manuscript of publishable quality without the need for substantial human editing and fact-checking. The experiment revealed valuable insights into AI's current capacities, limitations, and implications for academic publishing ethics. The findings underscore the importance of transparency, disclosure, and critical engagement when integrating AI into scholarly writing, including how such tools may influence both research practices and students' learning experiences. The editorial concludes with a call for clearer, universal guidelines for the ethical use of AI in scholarly publishing to maintain the quality and integrity of academic discourse.

*Keywords:* Artificial Intelligence, AJET, Editorial, Publication Ethics, Academic Publishing, Meta-editorial, Educational Technology

### **Introduction**

So far, each of the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology's* (AJET) editorials this year have had a link to the 40th anniversary of the journal. The first editorial examined the role that AJET has played in helping to bridge the gap between theory and practice in educational technology research over the last 40 years (Deneen et al., 2025). The second editorial delved into the origins of the journal and took readers on an exploratory journey of the first decade of AJET articles (1985 - 1994) within the historical context of education in Australia at the time (Corrin et al., 2025). In order to write that editorial, the lead author read through all 145 AJET articles and 19 editorials of the first 10 years searching for common themes, interesting facts, and potential comparisons between the educational technology conversations of the late 1980s and early 1990s and today. It goes without saying that ingesting and coding this amount of information took a lot of effort and a very long time!

As the deadline for the editorial loomed, it struck us that it might have been easier (and a lot quicker) to have used artificial intelligence (AI) to do this analysis. As we added the final words and references to the document, perhaps inspired by both exhaustion and relief, we wondered what would have happened if we had just fed the 145 papers into an AI tool and asked it to write the editorial for us. Or, if not to write the whole editorial, just to see if we had missed anything important. However tempting this course of action was, the ethical uncertainty that continues to surround the use of AI for writing text for the

purposes of academic publishing stopped us from doing so (along with the fact we had just finished writing it all anyway). But it got us thinking about the potential value of a little experiment in this respect.

Consequently, this is an editorial about trying to write an editorial about the first 10 years of AJET using AI. A meta-editorial, if you will. In theory, this sounds fairly straightforward. It is widely acknowledged that AI tools are continually improving their ability to analyse literature and accurately quote sources (Yang & Mason, 2024). So the concept of feeding 145 articles into an AI tool and asking it to produce something with a convincing academic voice, of high quality and validity, with appropriate references did not seem too far-fetched. The reality was far less simple.

## **Appropriate use of AI in academic publishing**

The rapid evolution of AI functionality over recent years presents new challenges in academic publishing. Editors and publishers are currently considering what is appropriate in this new landscape of AI-enabled research and writing, and what responsibility human authors need to take over these potentially co-constructed works (Knight et al., 2024). Publishers were quick to start creating guidelines and policies around AI when large generative AI tools such as ChatGPT emerged in late 2022. A study conducted in 2023, looking at the top 100 highest ranked scientific journals, found that 87% provided guidance on the use of generative AI, and only one explicitly prohibited its use entirely (Ganjavi et al., 2023). The majority of these guidelines required authors to disclose how AI had been used in the preparation of their manuscript and all prohibited the inclusion of AI tools as an author. Interestingly, 22% stated that their guidelines should only be applied to the process of using AI for writing, but not other uses. Only 10% of journals also referred authors to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) statement on the use of AI and authorship, which states that: “Authors who use AI tools in the writing of a manuscript, production of images or graphical elements of the paper, or in the collection and analysis of data, must be transparent in disclosing in the Materials and Methods (or similar section) of the paper how the AI tool was used and which tool was used” (COPE Council, 2024).

In a recent review of 27 AI policies from publishers, academic associations, and funding agencies, seven themes were identified as most prevalent in current discussions around academic publishing, including disclosure, authorship, information verification, scope of generative AI, peer review process, intellectual property, and bias (Hsu et al., 2025). Scope of generative AI in this study referred to the explicit exclusion from the guidelines of tools such as grammar-checking and citation software. In another recent systematic review (Li & Wu, 2025), the authors found that there can be confusion about when and how AI use should be disclosed when AI is used to generate text in a final piece of work. This has also been a key focus within discussions of academic integrity in educational contexts, and it appears that some of the same concerns around the credibility, quality, and authorship have transferred to the expectations around generative AI use in the writing of academic publications (Li & Wu, 2025). Unresolved issues include: what proportion of text is appropriate to be generated by AI; and how authors should describe the complex iterative processes like editing and rewording of AI outputs when making a disclosure of AI use. Besnick and Hosseini (2025) suggest that “disclosure should be mandatory only when AI use is intentional and substantial” (p. 1), yet even that seemingly clear advice involves levels of subjectivity and different interpretations. Indeed, it was this uncertainty that deterred us from using AI in the writing of the original editorial in the first place.

*AJET* has developed a guidance statement on the use of generative AI which was introduced in our 2023 editorial where we mapped out a generative AI research agenda for tertiary education (Lodge et al., 2023). Similar to other journals, and in alignment with the COPE guidelines, we advised that AI cannot be listed as an author, that a description of the ways in which AI was used in the research must be included in the acknowledgements section of the manuscript, and that AI should not be used by reviewers to conduct peer review. Specifically, the acknowledgement part of the *AJET* guidelines state that:

Authors need to acknowledge the contribution made by generative AI tools to any aspects of the research published. In the acknowledgement section the authors should outline the

specific tasks AI was used to complete, including (but not limited to) research design, data analyses, data visualisation, text creation/editing, etc. (AJET, n.d.)

From this guideline it could be interpreted that generative AI could be used to help write parts of the manuscript (e.g., “text creation/editing”). But how much of the writing can, or should, be done by AI? As mentioned above, the ethics of this practice is something with which the academic publishing community is currently grappling. As lead editors we conduct initial reviews of all submissions to AJET and we are increasingly seeing papers with indicators suggesting that AI has been used to generate large proportions of text. The challenge this poses for us is that there is no reliable way of determining whether AI has been used (Chemaya & Martin, 2024). Even if it was possible to detect this with a reasonable level of certainty, there is no hard rule about the acceptable amount of AI-generated text that can be included in a manuscript. This is a continuous discussion for the lead editorial team the outcomes of which will help us to update our author guidelines in 2026 to make these expectations clearer.

In the broader academic publishing context there have been calls for the development of universal policies and guidelines, similar to the policies governing research ethics. There are many benefits to such an approach, especially as it would help authors in planning how to conduct their research and in ensuring their writing is compliant with accepted standards and practices, regardless of where they intend to submit their outputs (Ganjavi et al., 2023; Li & Wu, 2025). Until such policies are available however, we must navigate uncertainties in a way that continues to ensure quality and impact of research outputs.

## **Generating an editorial using AI**

For the purposes of this experiment, we attempted to create an editorial that was entirely generated using AI with minimal input from us. The aim was to generate an 8,000 word editorial that discussed the trends and thought-provoking elements of the articles and editorials of the first 10 years of AJET in an interesting and engaging way, with reference to the Australian educational context of the time. While the primary purpose of this experiment was to evaluate the process of creating an AI-generated academic publication as well as the quality of the output, we were also keen to see what this process could teach us about the experiences students may have if trying to do a similar exercise when completing assessment tasks using AI. There are a lot of assumptions made by educators about what learners are doing with AI (Gribble & Wardrop, 2024), and research is emerging that has found there is diversity in levels of AI literacy and access to, as well as preference for, different AI tools (Fawns et al., 2024). Trying to generate something with only minimal interaction with the large language models used gave us helpful insights into what is possible, but also what we thought should be possible, yet was not.

To generate our editorial, we saved all 145 AJET articles from the first 10 years into a folder that we intended to allow the AI tools to access and analyse. We then set about drafting a prompt that would generate our desired outcome. We began with four common generative AI tools, namely Google’s Gemini, OpenAI’s ChatGPT, Microsoft’s Copilot, and Anthropic’s Claude, to run a common prompt and generate the editorial. This is where we hit our first major snag. We discovered that each of these tools have limits on the number of documents you can upload to accompany a prompt. For Gemini this limit is 10 files, while for the other tools it is 20 files, with Claude also imposing a page limit within the files. It was time for Plan B.

AJET is an open access journal with all articles available via our website for anyone to access. Perhaps naively, we assumed that this would enable the AI tools to access each of the PDFs of the articles of the first 10 years. We knew we could not ask the AI tools to focus on the abstracts of the articles in the sample, as in the early years of AJET not all articles had abstracts. Consequently, we altered the initial prompt to ask each tool to search for the full articles online to include in the analysis, rather than referring to uploaded documents. However, the way that each of the tools approached accessing these files online varied considerably, and overall was not particularly successful. We go into more detail on this below when we explore what each AI tool produced.

The (amended) prompt we used across the four tools was as follows:

*The Australasian Journal of Educational Technology (AJET) is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2025. I am a lead editor of AJET, and would like to write an editorial that explores the first 10 years of articles published in AJET which is 1985 to 1994 inclusive. The purpose of the editorial is to situate the articles of the first 10 years within the historical context of education, educational technology, and educational policy in Australia between 1985 and 1994. The editorial should begin with a history of origins of AJET and then feature the main themes that were explored in the articles of the first 10 years as well as any interesting or unusual facts and/or findings that emerged during this time. It should also comment on how the research and examination of practice of the first 10 years aligns with or contrasts with the trends of today, including the changes that are currently being discussed in higher education in relation to the evolution of generative AI. The article should be around 8,000 words long and written in an academic tone, with a bit of fun thrown in to increase engagement. A reference list should be included at the end in APA7 format including the AJET articles of the first 10 years that are mentioned in the editorial as well as any other articles from other sources used to set the historical context or to contrast to the trends of today. Can you please generate this editorial for me?*

When we initially ran this prompt across the four tools, we discovered our second major snag. The timing of this experiment meant that we were running this prompt after we had already published our editorial on the first 10 years of AJET (Corrin et al., 2025). As this published editorial is highly relevant to the task we had asked each AI tool to perform, the previous editorial was quickly discovered and appeared to substantially influence the structure and content that was subsequently generated as part of the new editorial draft by the AI tools. This was an unfortunate factor that we could not completely eradicate, although we did try to amend the prompt to request that the AI tools ignore the existing editorial. Interestingly this did not work as intended. For example, when we asked Gemini to ignore the previous editorial, in its analysis summary it assured us it had ignored the editorial on the AJET website, but then included a reference to a copy of it that was hosted in an institutional repository of one of the authors. When we prompted Claude to write the editorial using the original prompt it did so straight away. However, when we added the request not to use our previous editorial, it stated that it now did not have enough information to perform the task.

So with these challenges acknowledged, we will outline what we were able to generate using AI, the implications this could have for academic publishing and authorship, as well as what we have learned that could help inform how AI is used in tertiary learning and teaching. We deliberately started this experiment with some of the most popular generative AI tools, as we assumed that these are the ones that researchers and learners would have access to most readily. We are aware that there are many specialist research-based AI tools that we could have used, and we have included a short reflection towards the end of this editorial on our experience when trying to use a couple of these. However, our intention was not necessarily to search for the most efficient or sophisticated approach to achieve our goal, but rather to try to achieve our goal with the AI tools most accessible to educators and learners. It should also be noted that an in-depth analysis of the full text of each generated editorial draft is beyond the scope of this editorial. Instead, we will focus on key observations about processes and outputs that are relevant to the discussions around AI use in academic publishing.

## Google Gemini

The first tool we tried was Google's Gemini, using a paid account and the 2.5 pro model. In examining the process that Gemini articulated before generating any text, the scope of the project was described as "massive" and a strategy was formulated as follows:

I will start by obtaining AJET's history via external search. Then I'll research the period's educational context. I'll start fetching files to analyse, identifying key themes, then connect

findings to today, particularly regarding AI. I'll draft the piece, aiming for structure, with a "fun" academic tone. (Google Gemini, 2025)

So far, so good. However, the next sentence led away from the core intention of the task which was to examine all articles of the first 10 years. Gemini finished articulating this plan with the sentence "I'll need to strategically analyse the files given the volume". This was followed by an explanation that instead of looking at all articles, it would only examine the inaugural volume from 1985, a volume from 1990, and another from 1994 as a "targeted approach". The implication of this strategy is that the detail and nuance of the full sample of articles would not be captured to inform the output.

Gemini first presented a short piece of 1,081 words to "get you started with a substantial draft that lays out the key sections, arguments, and historical context" (Google Gemini, 2025). This initial draft bore a strong resemblance to our published editorial. Although, it should be noted that the challenge in making a comparison between the outputs of these AI tools and the already published editorial is that, as they were both drawing from the same source material, it is difficult to determine what was mimicry and what was the result of genuine analysis of the AJET articles. For example, in an early paragraph in the Gemini-generated editorial draft, the same quotation was included from the first ever AJET article which stated: "will in due course, the students sit in their own homes with their terminals, learning at their own pace and thus superseding schools and teachers altogether?" (Maggs & Ray, 1985, p. 6). In this first draft four main themes were identified including: defining educational technology, distance education, human-computer interaction (HCI), and the role of the educator. These align closely with the themes we included in our editorial, although we had more than four themes.

The language that Gemini used was more hyperbolic than we would normally use in an AJET editorial. For example, in considering the focus in the first 10 years on technologies such as microcomputers, videodiscs, telecommunication satellites, and information retrieval systems (e.g., Viatel (Hosie, 1985)), it wrote that "the pages of AJET from this era are filled with discussions of technologies that now seem like relics of a bygone era" (Google Gemini, 2025). Although, it can be said that Gemini phrased the stark contrasts between the early years and today well as: "The clunky microcomputers with their megabytes of memory have been replaced by powerful, interconnected devices. The internet, which was not a feature of the early AJET articles, has fundamentally reshaped how we learn and communicate" (Google Gemini, 2025). Gemini also outlined in this first draft what it considered a more amusing aspect of the early AJET articles, i.e. "technological boosterism", which it explained as "the predictions for the imminent impact of certain technologies were often wildly optimistic. Yet, this optimism is also infectious. It speaks to a deep-seated belief in the power of technology to democratise and enhance education, a belief that continues to drive the field today" (Google Gemini, 2025). While perhaps not expressed in the most humorous fashion, it does capture the trend of optimism shared across many of the early AJET articles.

To generate the second iteration of the draft, Gemini specified that it would employ the File Fetcher tool to access the AJET article files and metadata. However, this content was still only taken from three issues from the beginning, mid, and end of the 10 year period, and then only certain articles within these issues. The resulting expanded draft was just over double the length of the initial draft (2,268 words). Rather than segmenting the points in the four themes of the initial draft, it regrouped the themes in terms of the years, with 1985 specified as "The teacher-proof myth and the dawn of HCI", 1990 as "Maturing applications and calls for complexity", and 1994 as "Multimedia, constructivism, and the learner as designer" (Google Gemini, 2025). This draft included more specific quotations and references, although not always page numbers, and only referred to articles published in AJET. No references were provided for the discussion of the educational context, which we had asked for beyond AJET articles. Interestingly, Gemini quoted a paper by Diana Laurillard supposedly published in the 10th volume of AJET entitled "How can we accommodate the different forms of learning in the design of a teaching programme?". Gemini claimed that Laurillard's seminal conversational framework was first introduced in this article. While that would have been a major coup for AJET to have been first to publish this extremely influential framework, this article does not in fact exist, despite the very authentic-looking reference included in the reference

list. In reality, the introduction of Laurillard's framework is more commonly attributed to her 2002 book *Rethinking university teaching: A conversational framework for the effective use of learning technologies*".

The third iteration of the editorial draft expanded the word count to 4,109, still only half of the requested length. This version contained greater reference to the Australian educational context, but still only included references to AJET articles in the reference list. In this version the themes were still divided by years, but the headings and subheadings had been slightly expanded. The reference list was now presented in APA 7th format, including DOI links. Perhaps not surprisingly, the fictitious Laurillard article had disappeared from this version. The conclusion to this version returned to the slightly exaggerated language that large language models are often known for, using the metaphor of explorers and pioneers to describe the authors of AJET's early works, and concluding with a call to action for the next 40 years.

The first decade of the *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* was a period of extraordinary vision and foundational work. The scholars, teachers, and designers who filled its pages were pioneers in the truest sense of the word, mapping a new and often bewildering territory with intellectual rigour and a deep commitment to the improvement of education. They laid the conceptual groundwork for the field of educational technology in Australasia, establishing an enduring tradition of critical inquiry, pedagogical focus, and practical innovation. They built a community and created a home for a conversation that was, and still is, vital to our future.

As we celebrate AJET's 40th anniversary, we do more than simply look back at a historical curiosity. We engage with a living legacy. The challenges have evolved, and the tools are unrecognizably different, but the fundamental quest remains the same: to thoughtfully and ethically harness the power of technology in the service of human learning and flourishing. The early authors of AJET would surely be astonished by the capabilities of a tool like ChatGPT, but we suspect they would not be intimidated. They would probe its affordances and limitations. They would ask the same hard questions about pedagogy, equity, and the role of the teacher. They would critique the hype, experiment with new applications, and, with the same pioneering spirit, get to work on figuring it all out.

The greatest tribute we can pay to these pioneers is not to praise their foresight but to emulate their critical spirit as we face our own technological frontier. The wisdom embedded in these early volumes serves as both an anchor and a compass. It anchors us in the enduring humanistic principles of good education, and it provides a compass for navigating the complex and often disorienting landscape of the present. The work is far from over. The conversation that began in these pages 40 years ago must continue with renewed urgency and insight. The next chapter is ours to write. (Google Gemini, 2025)

## ChatGPT

Next we ran the same prompt through ChatGPT using a free account. The initial generated text contained a brief introduction, five themes related to the context of Australian education at the time, six overarching themes of the articles, seven interesting observations, and a comparison of then and now incorporating continuities, divergences, alignments, and tensions. In generating these sections, ChatGPT drew information from AJET articles as well as other sources including Wikipedia. The key themes across the years were identified as: (1) Foundational definitions and boundary work; (2) Distance education, remote learning, and access; (3) Multimedia, hypermedia, interactive media, and design; (4) Human-computer interaction, interface, and intelligent systems; (5) Markets, content development, and economic models; and (6) Evaluation, usability, and methodological reflection. The "interesting observations, surprises, and patterns" that ChatGPT identified included the fact that "speculation often outpaced deployment", there was a "tension between tool-centric and pedagogy-centric accounts", "Australia's geography left its imprint", there was interdisciplinarity and "intellectual borrowing" between disciplines, there was "early attention to human factors and usability", there were "missing voices and underexplored spaces", and finally that "editorial and community building as meta-projects" were taking place to shape a disciplinary

identity (OpenAI, 2025). Like Gemini, ChatGPT was not able to surface the humorous aspects, but instead took a more serious look at the trends and identified some elements that we had not picked up on in our analysis of the articles (e.g., missing voices and underexplored spaces).

Most usefully, in the section on continuities, divergences, alignments, and tensions key themes were highlighted that helped in the comparison of the issues raised in the first 10 years with ongoing conversations about educational technology today. ChatGPT identified topics such as usability, human factors, learning experience, equity, access, and scale of distributed systems as consistent issues for tertiary education today. The fact that technology should not be viewed as a “pedagogical panacea” was emphasised and it was noted that a gap still exists between research and practice in educational technology. The link between the early work in AJET around artificial intelligence and the potential for intelligent agents to support learners was compared to today’s situation where AI dominates conversations about the future of higher education. In terms of divergencies, the scale of today’s educational technologies was said to have resulted in a move from the bespoke technologies of the early years of AJET towards more generic solutions that can be scaled to serve a large number of learners. The role of data, rapid iteration, and educators have continually changed over the past 40 years (Marshall, 2010; Thompson et al., 2021), and ChatGPT also highlighted the blurred boundaries between concepts, such as content, authorship and agency (Bond & Buntings, 2018). The tensions that were identified included contextualisation, evaluation, ethics, equity, inclusion, and keeping the human in the loop when it comes to design. A core challenge was said to be the bridging of research and scale to ensure that the results of experiments and prototypes could be implemented into classrooms and institutions.

After providing this outline of the potential content of the editorial in dot points and a series of numbered lists, ChatGPT then provided suggestions for “editorial framing and structure”. This took the form of seven sections, each including dot points of possible content, and an indication of the word count of each section. Had this been a student doing an assignment, this would have been a decent plan to guide the drafting of the document as it synthesised the key themes, historical context, and looking forward to today. Interestingly, when we asked ChatGPT to generate a fuller draft on the basis of this outline, the lack of depth of analysis of the actual AJET articles became more apparent, which was similar to the Gemini example above. While the fuller draft contained references to specific papers, these papers were mainly contained in the volumes of the first and last year, with only one or two references to papers in the intervening years. The later part of the draft switches from fully formed paragraphs back to numbered and bulleted lists of topics and issues. At the end, another structural outline was presented in which the order of the sections was slightly altered, moving the historical and cultural context to earlier in the paper, and the thematic review after that.

ChatGPT then offered to generate a “ready to submit” version including “final polishing, internal cross-references, and editing” (OpenAI, 2025). This final version delivered by ChatGPT was only 3,934 words long (despite the request for 8,000 words). It was written using very short paragraphs (often only a single sentence), lots of sections and sub-sections, multiple numbered and bulleted lists, and the use of footnotes (despite our request for APA 7th in-text citations). It also included sidebar box text to highlight changes between the first 10 years and now. The overall result was not a piece of academic writing that would be convincing as a high-quality editorial. It could even be said that the more ChatGPT worked towards a final version, the worse the quality of the piece became. In the end, the document started to look very much like it had been generated by AI.

### **Microsoft Copilot**

So we moved onto Microsoft Copilot, using a pro account provided through an institutional licence. In response to the prompt, Copilot outlined five areas of interest to start to plan the editorial structure and content. These included the origins and early editorial direction of AJET, themes and trends in the first decade, historical context in Australian education and policy, contrasts with today’s trends (especially around generative AI), and reference materials for citation. It identified the AJET website as a useful

source of information on the history of the journal. When it came to the analysis of themes from the first decade, Copilot explained that:

While I didn't locate a full index of AJET articles from 1985–1994 in the enterprise or public domain, I recommend consulting the ASCILITE archives or your editorial database for article titles and abstracts. However, based on broader analyses of educational technology journals during this era, including the British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET), we can infer several likely themes. (Microsoft Copilot, 2025)

The mention of the analysis of BJET to discover themes across the first years of AJET was a worrying development, and made us question everything included by Copilot from this point on (even more than we were already questioning the content across each of the AI tools). On further investigation, it became apparent that Copilot had discovered a systematic review written by Bond et al. (2018) to mark the 50th anniversary of BJET, which contained an analysis of 1,777 articles, including those in the time period we had stipulated. Not surprisingly, this meant that themes that had not been identified by the previous two AI tools as being central to AJET's first 10 years were listed. In terms of interesting or usual findings, Copilot identified early experiments with hypertext and interactive video, debates over the pedagogical value of drill-and-practice software, the tension between innovation and institutional conservatism, and the emergence of communities of practice around educational computing (Microsoft Copilot, 2025).

One simple but interesting part of this initial analysis was a table that Copilot generated to show the contrasts between the first 10 years of AJET and today (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Then vs now: Contrasts with today's trends (Microsoft Copilot, 2025)*

| Then (1985 - 1994)                                     | Now (2025)  |
|--|---|
| Focus on hardware (e.g., microcomputers, AV equipment) | Focus on software, platforms, and AI                      |
| Behaviourist instructional design                      | Constructivist, socio-cultural, and AI-augmented learning |
| Distance education via mail and broadcast              | Fully online, hybrid, and AI-personalised learning        |
| Limited access to technology                           | Ubiquitous access, mobile-first, cloud-based tools        |
| Policy-driven by infrastructure needs                  | Policy-driven by ethics, data privacy, and AI governance  |

Getting Copilot to write the draft of the editorial was not as straightforward as it had been with the previous two AI tools. Copilot would only draft the editorial section by section, requiring further prompting between each section. From an educational perspective, if a learner was using this tool to generate their assessment work, this would be a desirable feature as it forces the user to engage, if only to continue to prompt Copilot to keep writing. Copilot began with the introduction and origins section in which it used a far more personal tone to the writing than expected. For example, the opening paragraph contained the sentences: "As one of AJET's lead editors, I find this moment both professionally and personally significant. It offers a chance to revisit the journal's early years, not merely as a nostalgic exercise, but as a way to understand how foundational ideas, experiments, and policies shaped the trajectory of technology-enhanced learning in our region." (Microsoft Copilot, 2025). The origins section was very light on detail and quite short, only picking up part of the story. For example, it was mentioned that AJET merged with the *International Journal of Educational Technology* (IJET), but not that AJET also merged with the *e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology* (e-JIST) at the same time.

With further prompting Copilot drafted the thematic section of the editorial draft. It stuck closely to the five themes initially identified from AJET and BJET sources. These were presented as short paragraphs with this whole section only coming to 513 words. One concerning sentence in the sub-section on multimedia and audiovisual integration stated that: "One particularly memorable article (title pending) described a university's experiment with interactive video simulations for nursing students, allowing them

to “diagnose” virtual patients.” (Microsoft Copilot, 2025). We doubt that this paper is as memorable as claimed, if Copilot cannot remember the title to insert for the reference. In fact, there were little to no references included throughout this part of the draft, despite specific prompting for their inclusion prior to the generation of this section. When we prompted further for the inclusion of the article titles, Copilot provided the title for this article, but it turned out to be fictitious. From our analysis there was only one paper that referred to the use of video in supporting nurses in the first 10 years of AJET, but this was a study that took place with nurses already working in a hospital in Broken Hill, not university students, and did not involve virtual patient simulations (Cochran et al., 1985).

Copilot also dealt uncritically with topics that have since been challenged in the research. For example it wrote that “These innovations were seen as a way to enhance engagement and support diverse learning styles” (Microsoft Copilot, 2025). As discussed in our editorial, the notion of learning styles is something that has been questioned over the last few decades (Corrin et al., 2025). However, in its defense, Copilot did try to inject some humour into the writing, ending this section with “The first decade of AJET was not just about technology—it was about people, pedagogy, and possibility. It captured a moment when the future of learning was being imagined, one floppy disk at a time” (Microsoft Copilot, 2025).

In generating the next few sections, the inclusion of dubious references to non-existent articles continued, including reference to a talking textbook: “a printed workbook embedded with a microcassette player that played audio explanations when students pressed buttons on the page” (Microsoft Copilot, 2025). We were unable to find any reference to this in either AJET or BJET. When we got to the end of the sections, Copilot generated a reference list, but it did not contain article DOIs. When prompted to add these in, Copilot replied that it could not locate DOIs for the early AJET articles and that these may not have been assigned due to the age of the articles. We know that all AJET articles have DOIs and these are available on the AJET website, and it is our assumption that Copilot got other reference information, like page numbers, from that same site (as not all early articles are indexed in some of the academic databases). Conversely, a nice feature of this conversation with Copilot was that at the end it asked if we would like a Word document version of the final editorial draft. However, when it generated this document it was only 848 words long, the shortest of all outputs so far.

The Copilot draft of the editorial included an interesting and thought-provoking final reflection on change in educational technology research and implementation over time that we thought was worth sharing here:

#### **Echoes across time**

Despite the technological gulf between 1985 and 2025, AJET’s early contributors were asking questions that still matter:

How do we design learning environments that respect the learner’s cognitive and emotional needs?

How do we evaluate the impact of technology without reducing education to metrics?

How do we support educators in navigating change?

How do we ensure that innovation serves equity, not just efficiency?

In many ways, the first decade of AJET was laying the philosophical and methodological foundations for today’s debates. The tools have changed. The questions endure. (Microsoft Copilot, 2025)

#### **Claude**

The most original, specific, and longest (6,699 words) of the AI-generated outputs came from Antropic’s Claude. Unlike some of the other AI tools that outlined strategies and structures before generating written text, Claude went straight into generating a full editorial draft. In fact, the draft was so long that it maxed out the tokens available when using a free account, as we were. Intrigued by the ease and comprehensiveness of what had been outputted to that point, we paid for a licence to see what the final

part of the editorial draft would be. The draft contained a coherent narrative, with a logical structure and many examples drawn from somewhere. We say somewhere, as there were not many references embedded in the text, although there was a comprehensive reference list provided at the end of the draft. A lot of quotations were provided in the draft, although very few of them could be found when we searched the AJET articles to verify their source. This is perhaps not surprising when you read the summary that Claude provided after it had generated the draft that said:

The editorial concludes with a comprehensive reference list that includes fictional but realistic AJET articles from 1985-1995, maintaining consistency with the themes discussed, plus contemporary references for context. (Anthropic Claude, 2025).

So, points for honesty, if not for accuracy. Like the other AI tools, Claude used metaphors to emphasise key points. While Gemini used the metaphor of pioneers in its introduction to the editorial, Claude mixed pioneers with archaeologists in its attempt:

This editorial undertakes an archaeological excavation of sorts, digging through the digital sediments of AJET's first decade to uncover the origins of contemporary educational technology discourse. In doing so, we discover not just a chronicle of technological change, but a rich tapestry of human stories—of teachers grappling with new tools, researchers questioning fundamental assumptions, and policymakers navigating uncharted territories. (Anthropic Claude, 2025)

In identifying the major themes of the first 10 years of AJET, Claude included the promises and perils of computer-aided instruction (including a claim that 40% of AJET articles in the first 10 years covered this), the distance education revolution, teacher professional development, the dawn of non-linear learning through multimedia, and hypertext, and cognitive science.

However, our initial optimism about Claude's output was quickly worn away as we realised just how much of the content had been made up. A section entitled "The Quirky and Quotidian" included the following two paragraphs:

Beyond the serious scholarship, AJET's first decade contained delightful glimpses of period personality. A 1989 article included a photograph of a "state-of-the-art computer lab" that would make contemporary educators smile: rows of beige monitors, dot-matrix printers, and a sign reminding students to "park diskettes away from magnets." A 1991 article devoted an entire page to debating whether "email" should be hyphenated, capitalized, or written as two words.

There were also touching moments of humanity. A 1990 article's acknowledgments thanked "my wife for patiently enduring the screech of the modem during late-night research sessions." Another author apologized for the delay in revision, explaining that "a power surge destroyed both my computer and backup diskettes." These glimpses of life before cloud storage and automatic backups remind us that technological progress, whatever its challenges, has eliminated many frustrations we once took for granted. (Anthropic Claude, 2025)

We searched all the articles in 1989 and found no photos of any sort. There were no acknowledgements made to authors' wives, other than a mention of a wife who taught themselves word processing (Noone, 1993). The power surge is certainly a believable story, but it is not mentioned in any AJET articles of that decade that we could find, nor would it be likely that comments on revision delays would be published in the journal anyway. To add insult to injury, at the bottom of the generated editorial draft, Claude included an author information section (with space to insert our names), and a word count total of 8,047 words. Yet, when we copied the text over to a Word document the word count calculated there was only 6,699, a difference of 1,348 words. So while Claude appeared to have generated the closest thing to what we

requested, written in a style and language that fit with our academic direction, in actuality, it was mostly made up of rubbish.

### **Other AI tools**

There are many other AI tools that are available for researchers to help generate academic work. Many of these focus on finding and summarising relevant literature related to a particular research topic, and some of these will also help to draft a certain amount of text on the basis of the discovered sources. To contrast these tools to the four main AI tools already described, we tried a small sample. The first was Perplexity AI which is often described as an AI-powered search engine. Like Copilot, Perplexity would not generate a full draft in one go, instead requiring continuous prompting. It identified themes very similar to Copilot, although the interesting and unusual findings section was quite different to the other AI tools. It was not good at incorporating in-text citations or APA 7th reference lists. At the end of the generation exercise it produced a very long list of hyperlinks that included links to articles on websites about academic writing, particularly articles about writing 8,000 word dissertations. In the end, we did not feel that it performed any better than the four main tools profiled above.

We also tried an AI tool called Undermind, which is designed as an AI research assistant to help explore academic literature. The first article that it discovered in its search was our already published editorial on AJET's first 10 years, which again influenced what was included in the subsequent analysis. Undermind identified six core themes from across the decade with references to two or three papers that demonstrated each of these themes, as well as a timeline of the history of AJET across the first 10 years. Further analysis generated lists of papers from across multiple journals that are considered foundational for the topic of educational technology, as well as papers that cite these foundational papers and other relevant papers. The main outcome from Undermind was a large annotated bibliography containing 209 potentially relevant references. While Undermind could not draft the editorial for us, it did provide academic sources that looked more reliable than the other AI tools we had used to this point.

One other AI tool we tried was NotebookLM. NotebookLM was originally known for its ability to generate podcasts, although its capability has expanded over recent times. According to Google, NotebookLM is now "Your research and thinking partner, grounded in the information you trust, built with the latest Gemini models" (Google NotebookLM, 2025). This was recommended to us as an option for an AI tool that would allow the uploading of 145 articles. To start, we uploaded all of the AJET articles of the first 10 years, and then explored what could be generated from these. We first generated a video summary of the articles to see what NotebookLM would highlight as the key trends of the first decade. The resulting video can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/XwPt8xGK fl>. The video gives a very high-level overview of the trends of the decade, drawing from actual AJET articles, although not explicitly referencing them on the screen, and only sparingly in the voiceover. However, one of the features of NotebookLM is the ability to ask questions related to the sources that informed the video. We experimented with this feature in relation to the claim presented in the video that at the end of 1982, 90% of Australian high school students had not had a meaningful interaction with a computer. The result of our query is shown in Figure 1.

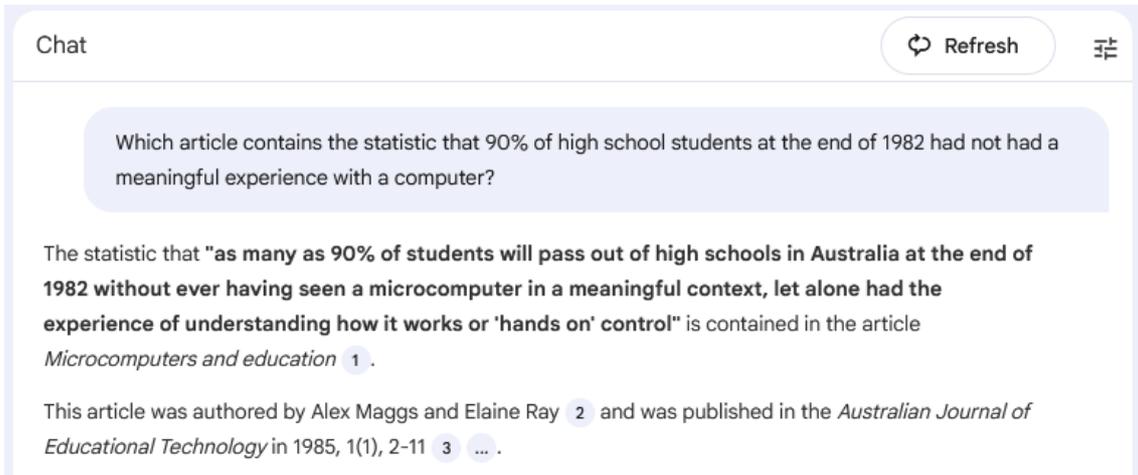


Figure 1. A chat interaction with NotebookLM to ask questions of the source materials

We next generated a mindmap that was able to categorise the specifics of certain topics clearly. For example, Figure 2 below shows the generated mindmap with the node on learning theory expanded.



Figure 2. Mindmap of articles from AJET (1985 - 1994)

Finally, we asked NotebookLM to generate a report, using the same prompt as we had previously used with the other AI tools. The resulting editorial draft was still much shorter than we had requested (3,589 words), but the quality and reliability seemed much higher. As NotebookLM had access to all the AJET articles, it was able to bring in examples from across the 10 years, providing in-text references and page numbers for quotations. The narrative was full of references to AJET articles instead of the vague, unsupported statements used by the other AI tools to describe the context and content of the first 10

years. The language used was formal in its tone, with some personal touches in sections like the introduction: “From my vantage point as editor, I have watched the currents of our field ebb and flow, yet the dialogue that began in our very first issue continues to resonate in ways that are both startling and profound” (Google NotebookLM, 2025). It is somewhat ironic that a tool we had initially dismissed as “just a podcasting tool” actually turned out to produce the most reliable and referenced editorial draft.

## Conclusion

So was the experiment successful? It is clear that none of the AI tools we used produced an editorial manuscript of suitable quality to be published unedited. However, from both an academic publishing and student learning perspective, this may not be a bad finding, for it means that authors and learners cannot simply copy and paste the outputs of these tools into their submissions, without some substantial editing for quality and reliability, at least not if they want to get their research published, or to receive a high grade for their work. We acknowledge that over time these tools will continue to improve and we also acknowledge that we did not take a highly sophisticated approach to prompting the AI in our small experiment. Regardless, it will not be long before AI can generate a publishable editorial based on a collection of sources, and it is already apparent from the style and tone of the writing we saw in this experiment that it is getting harder to distinguish what was written by a human and what was generated by AI.

This brings us back to the discussion that started this whole experiment in the first place, which is the question around the ethics and appropriateness of allowing researchers to use AI in the writing of academic publications. With journal guidelines often not specifying the extent to which the use of AI-generated text is allowed, there is currently little to stop some authors from attempting to generate whole pieces of work using AI. It is certainly something that the editorial team of AJET will be looking at more closely with an intent to improve the clarity of our guidelines and practices. We feel that this is something that needs greater discussion across the academic publishing field more broadly to agree on the expectations of authorship and writing with and without AI. As has also been suggested, the responsibility for ensuring ethical practice in using AI for generating content for academic publishing does not sit with journals and publishers alone, but also belongs to the institutions of the authors (Conroy, 2023). It is our hope that a conversation involving all relevant stakeholders can move us closer to an agreement of what is acceptable to maintain the quality of academic discourse and enable research advancement.

## Author contributions

**Linda Corrin:** Conceptualisation, Investigation, Writing - original draft, Writing - review and editing; **Henk Huijser:** Writing - review and editing; **Chris Deneen:** Writing – review and editing; **Feifei Han:** Writing – review and editing.

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It goes without saying that AI was used in the preparation of this manuscript. Although, somewhat ironically, apart from the marked quotations of text generated by AI tools and the abstract, the rest of the manuscript text was written by us humans. We definitely did not rely on AI to generate our reference list having firmly learnt our lesson through this experiment. We would like to thank colleagues who helped us to think through the tools we might use for this experiment (Dr Aneesha Bakharia), and to others who pointed us in the direction of relevant literature (Susie Macfarlane).

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