



Book review of Bron Eager (2025). *AI-powered scholar: A beginner's guide to Artificial Intelligence for academic writing & research*. Routledge, New York.

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Introduction

Artificial intelligence (AI) and generative artificial intelligence (GAI) have become integral elements of higher education (Cotton et al., 2024; Ismail et al., 2023; Rudolph et al., 2025), widely utilized by graduate students, doctoral candidates, and lecturers. Despite this ubiquity, academics continue to engage in vigorous debates regarding AI's merits and limitations, primarily due to concerns about its potential to compromise the integrity of academic research and writing (Butson & Spronken-Smith, 2024; Wise et al., 2024). Even proponents who embrace AI as a support tool for academic research maintain a critical stance to avoid breaching scholarly ethics.

This critical yet balanced perspective forms the central thesis of Bron Eager's 2025 publication, "AI-Powered Scholar: A Beginner's Guide to Artificial Intelligence for Academic Writing & Research" (Figure 1). Eager, a senior lecturer at RMIT University in Australia, has established herself as a scholar who demystifies AI while inspiring others to explore its potential responsibly.

The book presents four key themes as part of a practical and comprehensive framework for academics seeking to enhance their scholarly performance (Figure 2). First, it establishes a fundamental understanding and contextual background of AI (Chapters 1-2 and 5). Second, it evaluates the essential skills required for effective communication and interaction with AI systems (Chapters 3 and 6). Third, it examines specific applications of AI in supporting research processes and scientific writing (Chapters 4 and 9-10). Finally, the book addresses critical considerations of ethics and creativity in AI implementation (Chapters 7-8 and 11).

Overview

In Chapter 1, Bron Eager begins with an engaging personal narrative about her journey exploring AI, framing her work as a valuable resource for academics in higher education,

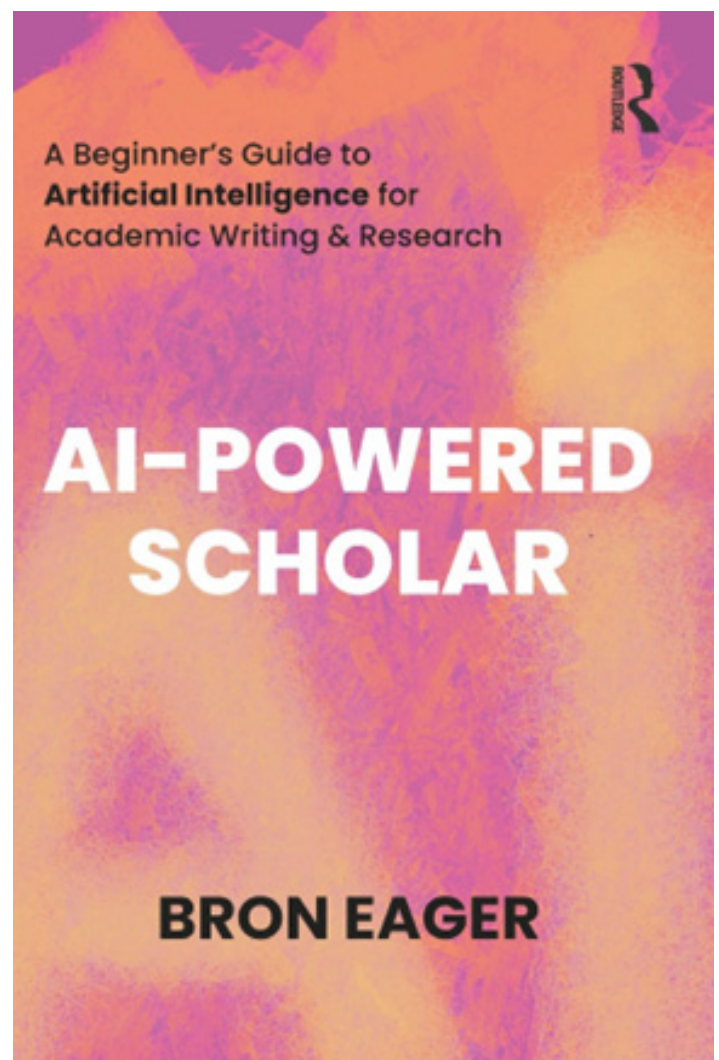


Figure 1: Book cover.

particularly PhD students and lecturers, seeking to enhance their research performance and scientific writing responsibly. The discussion then transitions to examining the AI revolution with a specific focus on large language

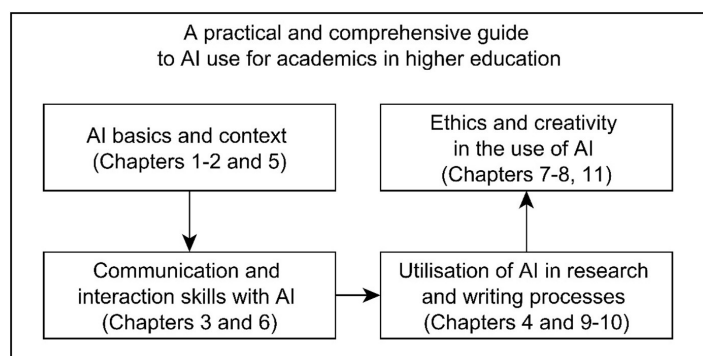


Figure 2: Four main aspects of the book.

model (LLM) tools capable of generating sophisticated, human-like texts (Chapter 2). By harnessing the capabilities of generative AI technologies such as ChatGPT, Claude, and similar platforms, the higher education sector stands at the threshold of a paradigm shift as these tools are increasingly integrated into various stages of academic work. Chapter 5 complements this contemporary perspective by providing a concise historical overview of conversational AI (chatbots) development from the 1960s through 2020.

Effective communication and interaction with AI systems are addressed in Chapter 3, where Eager explores strategies that render the experience both stimulating and occasionally challenging. This chapter introduces the concept of “loss in translation” as a framework for overcoming communicative barriers when engaging with AI. Since AI lacks the capacity to interpret non-verbal cues and integrate experiential knowledge that humans process intuitively, communication must be deliberately structured, breaking complex concepts into sequential, logical, precise, and unambiguous micro-instructions, while incorporating contextual explanations and illustrative examples. Chapter 6 extends this discussion by examining prompt engineering as an essential skill for effective AI interaction, detailing the components of well-crafted prompts, strategic writing approaches, and practical exercises for skill development.

The core contribution of the book is presented in the section addressing AI applications as an assistant in academic research and writing. Chapter 4 establishes the foundation for this implementation by exploring how to design and customize an ideal AI research assistant tailored to specific scholarly needs. Within the research workflow, literature searches represent a critical initial phase for topic identification and development. While traditional approaches typically rely on keyword-matching methodologies, Eager demonstrates how AI can optimize this process through semantic search capabilities that transcend the limitations of conventional search techniques (Chapter 9). Chapter 10 addresses the downstream components of the research cycle—manuscript writing and editing—introducing Eager’s innovative “blah” writing technique, which transforms disorganized ideation into preliminary drafts characterized by structural coherence and logical narrative progression across paragraphs.

Ethics and creativity in AI utilization are examined in Chapter 7, which addresses the phenomenon of “hallucination”—instances where AI models generate plausible-sounding yet factually incorrect or nonsensical text. This issue presents

particular challenges in academic contexts where factual accuracy is paramount. The chapter provides strategies for mitigating hallucination risks and algorithmic bias while maintaining data privacy standards. Chapter 8 explores methodologies for generating original research ideas through the “Five Whys” approach, demonstrating how AI can support rather than supplant creative scholarly inquiry. Chapter 11 supplements these discussions with curated online learning resources that extend beyond the book’s contents.

Eager employs an accessible narrative style, which makes complex concepts comprehensible through engaging storytelling. She effectively illustrates ethical considerations by presenting scenarios involving a PhD candidate, a lecturer, and a professor, each navigating moral dilemmas regarding AI integration in academic work. A notable strength of the text lies in its interactive design, featuring reflection prompts, discussion columns, and experiential learning activities, including assignments, case studies, and role-play exercises that foster critical engagement with the material. However, the book has some limitations in its treatment of specific topics. The discussion of AI-assisted literature reviews (pp. 121-130) remains predominantly theoretical and could be strengthened by the inclusion of concrete, step-by-step examples. Furthermore, the absence of a practical compendium of sample prompt templates for generative AI applications creates uncertainty regarding implementation in authentic scholarly contexts. A minor yet noteworthy limitation is the omission of an index, which would have enhanced the reference value of the text by enabling the efficient location of specific information.

Discussion and reflection

The integration of AI in educational contexts presents novel opportunities, possibilities, and challenges (Ouyang & Jiao, 2021). Following the pandemic, AI utilization has become increasingly normalized within learning environments, with a growing number of students incorporating these technologies into their academic practices (Crawford et al., 2024). Postgraduate students, particularly doctoral candidates, and faculty members engaged in research and scholarly writing have embraced AI as a component of their academic workflow. The implementation of AI technologies offers diverse educational benefits, including enhanced student engagement, collaborative opportunities, and improved accessibility (Cotton et al., 2024).

While ChatGPT remains the predominant generative AI platform, alternatives such as Claude have emerged as viable options. Based on a comparative assessment evaluating effectiveness, accuracy, pedagogical alignment, and cultural appropriateness in foreign language composition, Claude’s performance approximates human capability based on evaluations conducted by human instructors (Obaidoon & Wei, 2024). These findings may motivate academics to explore various generative AI systems for scholarly applications, recognizing each platform’s distinctive advantages and constraints.

In practical application, researchers can employ AI to conduct narrative or traditional literature searches to identify contemporary research topics addressing current knowledge gaps. Our experiences with specialized AI research assistants such as Elicit have demonstrated promising results, enabling efficient summarization of findings in synthesized matrices. Nevertheless, when outputs appear incomplete or inconsistent with disciplinary expertise, rigorous verification during the process remains essential, with confirmation of accuracy through consultation of primary source materials.

Researchers have successfully integrated AI into systematic review methodologies by strategically combining ChatGPT capabilities with traditional human expertise throughout each phase of the review process (Alshami et al., 2023). In scientific writing contexts, AI can enhance scholarly productivity by fostering independent skill development, simplifying complex writing tasks (Karimi & Qadir, 2025), and providing more structured assistance than conventional word processing applications (Gayed et al., 2022). Additionally, the strategic integration of AI with human expertise can optimize the peer review process, maintaining efficiency while preserving contextual awareness and ethical judgment. Within this collaborative framework, identical manuscripts and evaluative criteria are presented to both AI systems and human reviewers. The AI-generated feedback, characterized by rapid processing and consistent application of criteria, is synthesized with human evaluators' nuanced contextual understanding and ethical discernment, yielding more comprehensive manuscript assessments (Farber, 2025).

As Eager emphasizes throughout her text, research ethics constitutes a fundamental pillar of the research trinity, inextricably linked with research integrity and governance. Research integrity represents a social virtue grounded in commitment to epistemological and moral principles. This pillar centers on the character and consequent responsibilities of the researcher (Kolstoe & Pugh, 2023), including ethical implementation of AI as an assistive tool in research and scholarly writing (Khalifa & Albadawy, 2024).

The critical challenge confronting academics, therefore, is to employ AI judiciously, moving beyond the AI-directed paradigm where scholars function merely as passive recipients. Instead, AI implementation should progress toward AI-supported and AI-empowered paradigms, positioning academics as active collaborators and learning agents in the technological interface (Ouyang & Jiao, 2021). However, scholars must resist attributing inherent autonomy, intelligence, or objectivity to AI systems. These technologies remain products of human innovation; their operational parameters necessarily reflect the human intelligence that designs and controls them. Indeed, these technologies frequently exacerbate existing social inequalities, environmental degradation, and workforce precarity (Rudolph et al., 2025). Educational institutions can address these challenges through proactive policy development and implementation (Cotton et al., 2024).

Conclusion

The integration of AI within academic environments represents a significant advancement that can enhance scholarly productivity through efficient and consistent task completion. Nevertheless, judicious implementation remains essential to avoid compromising scientific ethics or developing excessive technological dependence. Academics must therefore adopt an active rather than passive stance toward AI integration, leveraging these tools to augment their scholarly capabilities while maintaining critical disciplinary expertise. Rather than functioning as mere consumers of AI-generated content, scholars should develop collaborative workflows wherein AI enhances human capabilities while preserving the centrality of human judgment, creativity, and domain knowledge in academic inquiry. This book merits attention from diverse stakeholders, including students, faculty, institutional administrators, and educational policymakers, seeking to deepen their understanding of AI's role in educational contexts. With such informed engagement, AI can be utilized with the critical perspective necessary for responsible implementation.

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