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## Book review of *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*

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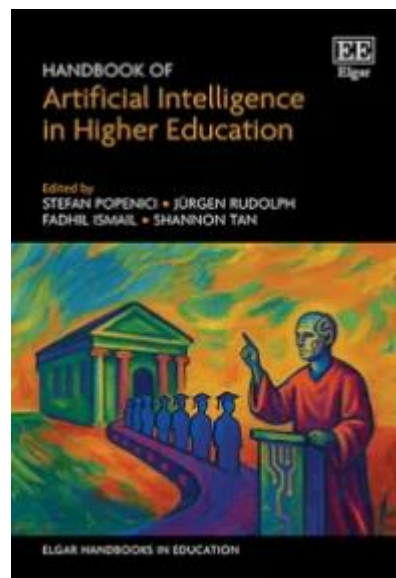
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### Abstract

This is a review of *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*, edited by Stefan Popenici, Jürgen Rudolph, Fadhil Ismail and Shannon Tan (Edward Elgar Publishing).

### Keywords

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Generative AI (GenAI), Higher Education, Research, Ethics, Critical AI Literacy.



Popenici, S. A., Rudolph, J., Ismail, F., & Tan, S. (Eds.). (2025). *Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education*. Edward Elgar Publishing.  
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**Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education**, published by Edward Elgar Publishing and edited by S. A. Popenici, J. Rudolph, F. Ismail, and S. Tan (2025), is a contemporary scholarly volume that critically engages with the tension between technological innovation and the normative mission of the university. The work positions itself neither within unqualified technological enthusiasm nor within narratives of oligarchic control (Popenici et al., 2025, p. 2). Instead, it foregrounds the practical challenges and ethical considerations inherent in integrating artificial intelligence (AI) into higher education. By combining empirical research with concrete implementation case

studies, the volume provides a comprehensive examination of AI's role across teaching, learning, assessment, research, and administrative functions. As AI technologies continue to reshape higher education, they offer unprecedented opportunities to enhance core academic functions while simultaneously generating uncertainty regarding traditional values and presenting substantial institutional and pedagogical challenges.

With 39 chapters and 76 contributors from diverse global contexts, the Handbook explores the implications of AI from multiple perspectives—from theoretical frameworks and pedagogical dilemmas to ethical challenges and institutional strategies (Popenici et al., 2025, p. 12). This breadth demonstrates a systemic approach to the impact of artificial intelligence on universities, treating it not merely as a pedagogical shift but as a structural transformation. A significant portion of the chapters focuses on teaching, assessment, and academic integrity, reflecting the fact that universities initially experienced AI as a didactic crisis—through automated plagiarism, essays generated by language models, and virtual tutors. Another section addresses institutional governance, university strategies, and relationships with the technology industry, presenting AI as an economic and political infrastructure that reshapes institutional autonomy and operation. The volume also engages with ethical and global dimensions, emphasizing that the implementation of AI varies across regional and disciplinary contexts. It therefore calls for the development of critical AI literacy within higher education.

This clearly structured set of perspectives turns the Handbook into an ecosystem of debate in which AI is not treated solely as a didactic tool, but as an epistemological and institutional phenomenon that affects university culture, policies, data governance, power relations, and the ways knowledge is produced and evaluated. The volume brings together critical perspectives from around the world and situates GenAI not only in lecture halls and governance structures, but also in research projects—highlighting its central role in shaping how knowledge itself is created and managed.

Building on this, the focus of this review is specifically on scientific research and the production of knowledge. This emphasis does not diminish the importance of other themes; rather, it reflects the limits of a single analysis. Universities derive their legitimacy from research, and if AI transforms the ways knowledge is formulated, analyzed, and communicated, it inevitably reshapes the university's core function. It is within scientific research that the epistemological, ethical, and institutional implications of AI become most profound—and most decisive for the university's future.

As rightly emphasized in the book's Introduction (Popenici et al., 2025), it is essential to avoid slipping into the two extremes of the dichotomy: celebrating AI as a quick "solution" for scientific research or portraying it as a total threat.

In this volume, scientific research is addressed in several chapters (Crawford et al., 2025; Bond et al., 2025; Sullivan, 2025), while Perkins and Roe (2025) devote an entire chapter specifically to the use of AI tools in research. They argue that the development of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) has introduced significant transformations in academic research, reshaping established methodologies while raising substantive questions and concerns (Perkins and Roe, 2025). Although the integration of AI supports researchers across all stages of the research process, it also brings considerable challenges. Importantly, the chapter avoids both enthusiasm and alarmism. Instead, it concentrates on the tension between productivity and integrity, warning against the "uncritical adoption of technologies that are not yet fully understood" (p. 76).

At this point, the Handbook's call for critical literacy becomes central. Understanding AI requires acknowledging its epistemic limitations (such as errors and "hallucinations"), its methodological constraints (including issues of reproducibility), and its ethical boundaries (particularly regarding authorship and responsibility). These risks may also contribute to data fabrication and falsification (Sullivan, 2025), especially within qualitative research methodologies (Popenici, 2025).

Without such awareness, a new imbalance may emerge: universities with broad access to AI tools could expand the body of knowledge quantitatively while gradually shifting the emphasis from quality to quantity.

The issue becomes even more complex when viewed through the lens of the core standards of scientific knowledge—verifiability, reproducibility, and transparency. AI models can generate “incorrect outputs” (Zhang et al., 2025a), posing serious risks when such outputs are accepted as true without proper verification. This concern aligns with the warning articulated in the book—particularly in the Perkins and Roe chapter—that these technologies are not yet fully understood. In everyday academic practice, a tension surfaces between productivity and integrity. That tension may lead to what Nguyen et al. (2026) describe as self-detrimental consumption: while GenAI offers short-term convenience to educational institutions, it may simultaneously “erode long-term research integrity and capability” (p. 1). The fundamental question follows: if AI accelerates research, does it also weaken long-term research capacity?

Another core issue concerns the culture of trust. In qualitative research, quotes may be fabricated (Zhang et al., 2025b). This risk is existential: fabricated citations undermine the very foundation of evidence. Even Clarivate (Web of Science), which ranks leading academic journals, has raised concerns that fake citations generated by AI are strictly unacceptable (Clarivate, 2024a). Within qualitative methodologies, citations function as evidence—not as decorative elements that can be artificially produced.

These concerns resonate closely with the Handbook’s critical axis: the need to scrutinize “data governance, algorithmic bias”, and the “erosion of deeper learning” (Popenici et al., 2025, p. 12). When GenAI delivers rapid responses, it may weaken processes of “deep work”—thorough source investigation, verification, and methodological reflection. Evidence from major research organizations shows that AI is already being used for “primary and creative tasks” (Chugunova et al., 2026). Indeed, it is now involved in five stages of the scientific research process—ideation, design, data collection, analysis, and writing—leading many researchers to describe GenAI as a workhorse (Andersen et al., 2025). In other words, AI is moving from an auxiliary instrument to a core research infrastructure. Here, the Handbook’s warning that AI may simultaneously “enhance and disrupt” becomes particularly salient.

At the institutional level, publishers have begun to formalize regulatory frameworks. Elsevier permits the use of AI for language enhancement, drafting text, and generating ideas for literature reviews, provided that human oversight is ensured and transparent disclosure is included in the manuscript. AI cannot be listed as an author or co-author and must not replace human critical judgment (Elsevier, n.d.-a; b). Responsibility remains unequivocally with human authors.

A critical node in this discussion is peer review—the human evaluation of human work. Clarivate and Elsevier—within which the two main journal ranking platforms in the world operate, Web of Science and Scopus—expressly prohibit uploading manuscripts to GenAI tools for evaluation purposes due to confidentiality and intellectual property concerns (Clarivate, 2024b; Elsevier, n.d.-a). These policies underscore the indispensable role of human expertise. The restrictions are not merely procedural; they safeguard the foundations of scholarly communication: trust, accountability, and professional judgment. In the era of GenAI, ethics is no longer an external normative add-on—it becomes integral to the methodology of publication itself.

Yet despite the publishers’ articulated principles—which oscillate between permitting responsible use on the one hand and offering commercial, limited, and regulated applications of AI on the other—it has become increasingly difficult to delineate clearly each component of scientific contribution: where the human contribution ends and where the AI’s begins.

Thus, the methodological contribution of Perkins and Roe’s chapter lies precisely in situating GenAI within research protocols while recognizing that technological development often outpaces policy frameworks. For this reason, critical literacy at the intersection of AI and research cannot be reduced to a single training module; it must evolve into an institutional culture grounded in disciplinary guidelines, transparency protocols, education in verification practices, and standardized disclosure requirements.

The Handbook of Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education is not merely an inventory of AI-related themes; it represents a normative project aimed at safeguarding the university's mission as an institution of knowledge and public good. The assertion that the future "shall not be written by the masters of algorithms alone" (Popenici et al., 2025, p. 2) gains additional force when considered alongside empirical evidence on the real-world use of AI in research and the documented risks to scientific integrity (Andersen et al., 2025; Chugunova et al., 2026; Nguyen et al., 2026; Zhang et al., 2025b). At the same time, the policies of major publishers and platforms demonstrate that governance has already become embedded within scientific methodology: disclosure requirements, the prohibition of AI authorship, confidentiality in peer review, and a firm insistence on human responsibility.

Ultimately, the question of whether universities will shape AI "on their own terms" is not rhetorical but programmatic. It calls for preserving trust in science and sustaining the pluralism of knowledge within a new algorithmic infrastructure, while engaging technology critically, reflexively, and responsibly. In this way, the volume offers multidimensional perspectives on AI's complex impact on higher education. As the editors rightly emphasize, "the future of higher education shall not be written by the masters of algorithms alone, and it should not be left to be determined by superficial techn-enthusiasm or oligarchic control but by the values, creativity and collective wisdom of those who are passionate about the mission of higher education..." (Popenici et al., 2025, p. 2).

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