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EDITORIAL

Care, collaboration and AI

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The year 2025 seemed to unfold as if someone had pressed a fast-forward button, propelling us forward at an unprecedented pace. Artificial intelligence (AI) swept rapidly into nearly every aspect of daily life and across platforms and sectors, 'AI' became a feature eagerly integrated into various practices. In academia, AI has become deeply entangled with the routines of research and writing, offering efficiency and new possibilities for knowledge production, while also provoking intense and highly warranted debates over academic integrity, authorship, and the evolving norms of scholarly communication. These developments are collectively reshaping the rhythms and directions of academic work. In the editorial for the 2025 issue, inspired by Haraway's "think with trouble" (Haraway, 2016) , we invite readers to think with the change: to linger with their tensions, to follow the questions they unsettle, and to explore how they reshape our practices and understandings toward the future of academia.

Among our editorial team, we are individually enthusiastic experimenters that enjoy exploring and reflecting on AI use. However, as editors we recognized the need to update our own and decide on how NJSTS respond to this new technology, and potentially new forms of output and reviews.

While seemingly simple on the surface, in drafting these guidelines we touch upon several foundational issues related to AI. For example, while we all agreed that the use of AI must be disclosed, it was less clear what such disclosure should entail. Unlike other technical tools with clearly delimited purposes, such as proofreading software or reference managers, AI is so ubiquitous and flexible that it can be employed at every stage of the process. Then, which forms of AI use should be disclosed – or not disclosed? If AI is employed for basic tasks such as voice-to-text transcription, minor language editing or as supplement to a literature search, does that too warrant disclosure?

Amidst uncertainties and undeveloped best practices, we have opted for a careful approach, asking authors to disclose "All use of AI". While we recognize that this implies disclosure of AI that is relatively minor and benign, such as using AI for spellchecking, it is also indirectly encouraging authors to be mindful and deliberate about their use of AI. Given persistent issues with resource consumption (Crawford, 2021), black boxed processes (von Eschenbach, 2021) and errors (aka hallucinations, Xu, Jain & Kankanhalli, 2024), we believe we are obligated to develop our scholarly AI user practices with care.

The great issue with disclosing AI, is that – like many scientific processes – it is entirely based on trust. There are no tools that can reliably detect AI-generated text, nor are there any form of documentation that could be added to definitively prove AI use or non-use. While our guidelines emphasize transparency of use and placing responsibility of any and all text on the authors, we are also painfully aware of how such guidelines are ultimately dependent on trust; trust in the integrity of authors, trust in the judgments from reviewers, and trust in the shared commitment to produce knowledge for our community of the society.

The rise of AI does not replace such a foundation, rather, it makes the work more visible and demanding. To care for the scholarship is to continually negotiate this relationship between boundaries and trust, between uncertainty and responsibility. The trust that underpins the review process, where we trust the anonymous authors to be truthful about their process, data and results, are being placed under further pressure. This trust-based model was already struggling under the weight of "publish or perish"-culture that rewards salami publications, give fertile ground for predatory journals and speculative authors. Junior and precariously employed scholars have to play the game or risk their career prospects and employability. And it is perhaps exactly because this is the current culture in academia, that so many universities were quick to embrace this mythical knowledge-work machine with promises of even more production, despite foundational problems about transparency and accuracy – that are crucial in all disciplines – going unsolved (and is unlikely to ever be solved).

Following ICBO (It Could Have Been Otherwise) (Latour & Woolgar, 1986), we can imagine an academic culture of care where we value doing work slowly and deliberately and choosing quality over quantity. In such an academic culture the promise of a machine that takes of thinking and writing to increase speed and productivity would be entirely unwanted. The appeal of AI should thus not be understood as separate from the capitalist structures that shape scientific institutions toward increased production, nor from the new public management systems that values measurable outcomes from scientific work. In this sense, when or if we challenge the natural place given to AI in science, we should recognize, in classic STS style, that it is not just a question about the technology and its capabilities, it is also about culture and context. And while academia's ability to shape the flows of money and innovation in Silicon Valley is limited, we do have more

(albeit also limited) power to change our own culture and we need to rise to this challenge.

Given the associated pressures with the current AI hype, we are happy and encouraged by how authors and reviewers in NJSTS are resisting the temptation to delegate the important tasks of authoring and reviewing science to AI.

More than ever, we need to think through the lens of care when doing academic work; in collaborations, in our methodology – but also for ourselves. The curiosity that drives more or less structured explorations of literature, the burst of joy that comes from co-authors finally establishing categories that explains the data in desired ways, the pleasure of mastery that comes from honing of one's craft of structuring a solid and convincing argument. The pleasures and joys of science might seem a strange thing to care about, after all science is expected to be objective and serious. We often underestimate pleasure as a motivating force, both in life and in science. The social contract exists because science is useful and good for society, but for us as individual scholars, the pleasure of producing insights, to see patterns and explain them, in seeing your knowledge affect the world, are far from inconsequential. When we delegate this work to a machine, and automate the process of finding, we are denying ourselves the pleasures that comes with figuring things out. As the physicists Richard Feynman said "If you're not having fun, you're not learning. There's a pleasure in finding things out."

If we do not care for our own curiosity, joy and pleasures from science, we risk losing something important; something essential that drives us toward new ideas, methods and perspectives. Towards new horizons and ideas, instead of using a machina that looks back (on its dataset) to produce something that can be published.

If we are to attempt some kind of summary of our thinking around AI in academia, is that it in many ways highlights the subjective and the social dimensions of science. The subjective in that is shapes not only our cognitive but also emotional processes around writing and discovery. And social, in the sense that it relies on, and places pressures, on the social institutions and relationships that underpins science. This means that now, more than ever, do we need to understand knowledge as social endeavor, and the ways in which science is changing together with new social constellations. For STS that means we need to keep investigating the social, technical and cultural dimensions of knowledge and knowledge production, and that ways they are intersecting with new and changing institutions and technologies. This issue includes two articles, both of which engage with the theme of collaboration in academia. In the article by Umantseva, Dupret, and Lazoroska (2025), a literature review was conducted on the care concept in research collaborations. Both external collaboration and internal dimensions of collaboration were identified and reflected upon the care ethics. Meanwhile, an empirical case on co-design approaches was presented by Bråten, Aalto, Liste, and Nilsen (2025), to showcase that how such external collaboration, rural communities with the municipalities, can bring in the care bridge the abstract policy concepts and the everyday rural practices. Both papers echo with the care concept in the academia: at this particular moment, we urgently need to think about the care ethics, what care concept means and how, as an academic community, we might reinterpret it and put into our practices, not only in our everyday work but also bring its values into the society.

The social dimensions of knowing remain highly relevant and important. Both as new technologies are socialized into everyday life and scientific practice, and as scientific institutions and constellations change and open for new forms of collaborations. To highlight this we have chosen a cover image that to us reflect this sense of a collective and messy endeavour. The artist Geralt has aptly named it "people-social-game-team-teamwork", an apt example of a title that is relatively uninspiring to a human audience, but is legible for a machine and thus easily searchable (and thus usable) in our datafied and algorithmically directed life.

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