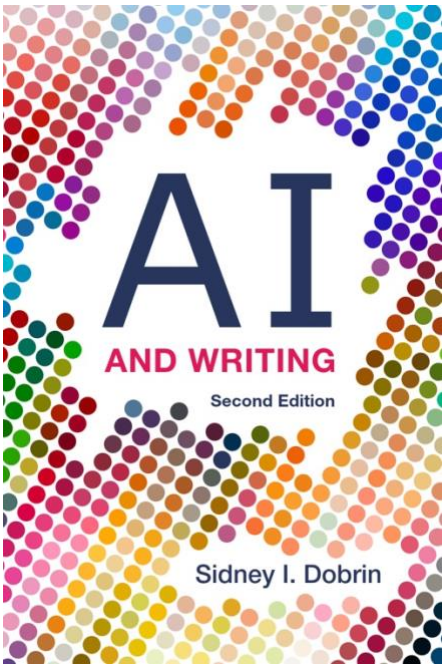

AI and Writing

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In *AI and Writing*, Sidney I. Dobrin offers students, instructors, and program administrators a broad overview of what generative AI (GenAI) technology is, how it works, and how it changes writing in professional, academic, civic, and personal contexts. While it was written as a textbook for writing-intensive courses focused on GenAI, Dobrin's book doubles as a starting point for thinking about how large language models (LLMs) can be incorporated into writing assignments, curricula, and program outcomes.

Part 1, titled "Understanding generative AI," is a general overview of AI literacy and writing. Chapter 1 offers a short history of writing technologies and the cultural panic many of them initially caused and suggests human-machine collaboration as a paradigm for thinking about writing with GenAI. For Dobrin, writing is like any other process: Parts of it can be automated. Chapter 2 examines the history of GenAI in more detail and offers a general

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introduction to how GenAI works, while Chapter 3 addresses academic integrity. This last chapter describes different kinds of plagiarism and includes instructions for citing GenAI in APA, MLA, and IEEE formats. This section could function as a stand-alone crash course for administrators and program coordinators looking for an accessible, practical introduction to GenAI.

Part 2, "Opportunities and applications," is the largest section of the book. Dobrin shifts away from basic AI literacy to examine how GenAI is changing academic and professional writing. Chapters 4–6 focus on hands-on use. Dobrin explains how GenAI can be used for prewriting, research, drafting, revising, and editing. He also describes the characteristics of good prompt writing and the conversation around multimodal composition, visual rhetoric, and the ethics of GenAI images. Chapters 7 and 8 discuss how GenAI is reshaping writing across academic, professional, civic, and personal contexts, the impact this will have on the workforce, and the skills employers will expect their employees to have in the post-AI workplace.

Part 3, "Challenges," describes potential problems with GenAI. It has two chapters, "Bias" and "Materiality." The former distinguishes "algorithmic bias," which occurs when algorithms "privilege specific kinds of information within a dataset," from "exclusionary bias," which involve the language and material excluded from GenAI's training data (p. 76). "Materiality" briefly delves into the ethics of AI supply chains, mineral extraction, and e-waste. These chapters are a welcome inclusion; the material costs of GenAI, in particular, are often overlooked in conversations about the role this technology should play in higher education.

For technical and professional communication programs, the main strength of *AI and Writing* is that it is clear, readable, and written with students in mind. Chapters are short and broken into brief sections and short paragraphs. There are discussion materials at the end of each chapter, which are divided into three types of questions. The "So What?" questions invite students to think about the stakes of the subjects discussed in each chapter. The "Conceptual AI" questions prompt students to think through theoretical issues with GenAI, while the "Applied AI" questions ask students to experiment with GenAI and document or reflect on the results. The former are good for small group discussions and free writes, while the latter offer useful scaffolding for in-class activities and homework assignments. All of this, combined with the clarity of the explanations and examples in each chapter, makes *AI and Writing* a useful on-ramp for instructors and program coordinators who are curious about AI.

For the field of composition more generally, the book offers a soft pitch for incorporating GenAI into the writing process, along with several good places to start. While other recent collections on GenAI and the classroom, such as *TextGenEd* (edited by Annette Vee, Tim Laquintano, and Carly Schnitzler) and *Composing with AI* (edited by Nupoor Ranade and Douglas Eyman), offer instructors detailed assignment descriptions or step-by-step instructions, the activities in *AI and Writing* are open-ended, student-facing, and focused on encouraging students to experiment with GenAI.

For example, one of the activities in Chapter 4, "Writing with GenAI," asks students to use a search engine and GenAI tool to research a topic, then compare the accuracy, relevance, and timeliness of the sources each tool provides. Another invites students to write a traditional academic essay about how to use GenAI in college writing assignments by using GenAI for every stage of the writing process, from invention to editing. These assignments can be adapted to many contexts and serve as inspiration for instructors and program administrators who want to help students to test GenAI's capabilities and limits.

As a general introduction to AI literacy in the classroom, *AI and Writing* could be described as a work of translation. Dobrin is especially effective at introducing and explaining technical terms like "machine learning" and "General Adversarial Network" (GAN) in ways non-specialists can understand. Like any good general introduction, the book seems committed to exploring the breadth of the topic, but there are moments when the text moves too quickly past questions or issues that would be worth examining in more detail. It feels significant, for example, that a work that spends so much time discussing how GenAI will impact the workforce, alter supply chains, and disrupt the economy does not explain how companies like OpenAI monetize their users or what they do with user data. Instructors adopting this text for their course may want to supplement this reading with texts that cover these sorts of ethical concerns.

Many of these questions fall outside the book's scope. Dobrin does address several major issues raised by GenAI, including its relationship to plagiarism, its environmental footprint, and questions of bias. However, other controversies, like data privacy, surveillance, language homogenization, and deepfakes receive more limited attention, or are not taken up directly. As a result, the final section on the challenges associated with GenAI feels more like a point of departure for further reading and discussion than a broad survey of GenAI's risks, limits, and potential consequences.

Ultimately, this does not detract from the quality or value of *AI and Writing*, which is a good primer for composition instructors and program coordinators searching for a place to start thinking about what the widespread adoption of GenAI will mean for college writing

programs. The book is concise, so a graduate seminar or faculty reading group could finish it in a week or two. They could also use it as a reliable foundation for tackling more technical specialist texts. *AI and Writing* would also be a valuable resource for undergraduate students, since a single chapter is short enough for them to read and respond to during a 50-minute class in an inverted classroom model.

While *AI and Writing* will undoubtedly strike some readers as overly optimistic about the creative and economic potential of GenAI, Dobrin is not writing as an AI evangelist. Instead, he is offering a practical approach to GenAI that emphasizes student experimentation, discovery, and dialogue. In that spirit, *AI and Writing* has value as an administrative and pedagogical tool: a clear, usable set of resources that gives composition instructors and program coordinators a shared vocabulary, concrete entry points for curriculum and assessment design, and a practical framework for helping instructors and students test what GenAI can and cannot do.

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Author Statement on AI

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