# Self-publishing rocked by AI scandals as calls grow for transparency and safeguards



The self-publishing landscape is undergoing a tumultuous transformation as another scandal involving generative AI has shaken the community. The controversy erupted when author Lena McDonald included AI-generated content in her novel, "Darkhollow Academy: Year 2." Readers were dismayed to come across lines that unmistakably bore the hallmarks of AI usage, prompting widespread outcry across platforms like Reddit and Goodreads. This situation is emblematic of a broader concern among authors and readers alike regarding the implications of AI in creative writing—a debate that has intensified in the wake of technologies like ChatGPT.

One striking aspect of this incident is McDonald's admission on her Amazon author page. In it, she explained that while she had used AI to assist with editing—an increasingly common practice among writers pressed for time—she inadvertently allowed an editing prompt to slip into the final draft. McDonald expressed her remorse, stating, “I want to apologize deeply to my readers and to the writing community.” However, her statement has not alleviated concerns about using AI tools to mimic the style of other successful authors. Such practices not only challenge ethical norms but also blur the lines of authorship, raising questions about originality and integrity in writing.

This is not an isolated incident; McDonald follows a worrying trend. Earlier this year, another self-published author, K C Crowne, faced similar backlash for including AI prompts in her novel, "Dark Obsession." On her Facebook page, Crowne claimed that all her books were fundamentally her work, asserting that she only utilised AI for “minor edits.” Yet, the issue persists, with a growing number of authors publicly acknowledging their reliance on AI tools, often through platforms like Reddit and Threads. The proliferation of AI-generated content is especially concerning in self-publishing, where oversight is limited, and authors may rapidly release a plethora of titles.

Adding to the growing unease, a recent survey by BookBub revealed that approximately 45% of surveyed authors are using generative AI in some capacity for their books, primarily for research rather than actual writing. Although the practice aims to streamline the creative process, it raises significant ethical concerns within the industry. Buyers often do not realise that they may be purchasing books that incorporate AI-generated text, casting a shadow over the integrity of literature available on platforms like Amazon.

In response to the mounting concerns, Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) recently implemented new guidelines requiring authors to disclose if their content is AI-generated. This policy defines 'AI-generated' content broadly, encompassing text, images, and translations created by AI, regardless of whether they have been subsequently edited. While this move aims to enhance transparency for consumers, it has been noted that there is currently no system in place to publicly label books with AI content. The reliance on an honour system for disclosure has caused scepticism among many within the industry.

The unregulated flow of AI-generated content presents specific challenges for marginalized authors, who have increasingly turned to self-publishing amid what many perceive as systemic biases in traditional publishing. The proliferation of AI can dilute their voices and obscure the stories that diverse authors bring to the table. In a landscape where visibility is paramount, the risk of AI flooding the market will likely disadvantage those who represent underrepresented communities, many of whom have previously found a nurturing environment in self-publishing.

Moreover, the controversies surrounding AI in publishing echo larger issues of intellectual property and authorship. A high-profile lawsuit filed by notable authors, including John Grisham and Jodi Picoult, accuses OpenAI of copyright infringement—claiming that tools like ChatGPT have misappropriated their copyrighted works. This legal push underscores the urgent need for clearer regulations and ethical standards to protect authors' rights as AI technologies evolve.

As generative AI technologies continue to proliferate, the publishing industry finds itself at a crossroads. The tension between innovation and ethical responsibility is palpable, as authors, publishers, and technology creators navigate the multifaceted implications of AI. Self-publishing, in particular, stands to face the most significant consequences, especially for those advocating for diversity and inclusion. Resolve is critical now, lest the meaningful narratives of a multitude of voices—so often stifled in traditional publishing—be overshadowed by the automation that can neither replicate human experience nor artistry.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/11/self-publishers-must-declare-if-content-sold-on-amazons-site-is-ai-generated)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[3]](https://www.apnews.com/article/345bb1a2d80b0a6ddb26978b25c9fb4b)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/44d530bc-a710-4705-be3a-9d11bc23b131), [[5]](https://www.apnews.com/article/37f9073ab67ab25b7e6b2975b2a63bfe)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/11/self-publishers-must-declare-if-content-sold-on-amazons-site-is-ai-generated), [[3]](https://www.apnews.com/article/345bb1a2d80b0a6ddb26978b25c9fb4b)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[3]](https://www.apnews.com/article/345bb1a2d80b0a6ddb26978b25c9fb4b), [[6]](https://www.axios.com/2023/08/16/ai-book-publishing-fake-amazon)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[5]](https://www.apnews.com/article/37f9073ab67ab25b7e6b2975b2a63bfe)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/), [[4]](https://www.ft.com/content/44d530bc-a710-4705-be3a-9d11bc23b131)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://screenrant.com/romance-book-ai-use-growing-trend-explained/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/11/self-publishers-must-declare-if-content-sold-on-amazons-site-is-ai-generated> - In September 2023, Amazon's Kindle Direct Publishing (KDP) introduced new guidelines requiring authors to disclose if their content is AI-generated. The policy defines 'AI-generated' content as text, images, or translations created by AI tools, even if subsequently edited. Authors are not mandated to disclose AI-assisted content, where AI tools are used for editing or refining. This move aims to address concerns over the proliferation of AI-generated books on the platform, ensuring transparency for consumers. The policy followed the removal of books that imitated established authors using AI. ([theguardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2023/sep/11/self-publishers-must-declare-if-content-sold-on-amazons-site-is-ai-generated?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.apnews.com/article/345bb1a2d80b0a6ddb26978b25c9fb4b> - In 2023, Amazon mandated that authors selling books via its e-book program disclose if their work includes artificial intelligence (AI) material. This decision followed months of complaints from the Authors Guild and other groups, aiming to curb the surge of computer-generated books on Amazon’s platform. The Authors Guild considered this a positive step toward transparency and accountability for AI-generated content. However, Amazon did not publicly label books with AI content at that time, though this policy may change in the future. ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/345bb1a2d80b0a6ddb26978b25c9fb4b?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.ft.com/content/44d530bc-a710-4705-be3a-9d11bc23b131> - The publishing industry is grappling with the implications of generative AI technologies, facing both opportunities and significant challenges. Authors and industry professionals express deep concerns over AI-generated content replacing human authorship, especially when AI models are trained on copyrighted materials without consent. The Authors Guild and literary agents are pushing for new contractual clauses to protect authors' intellectual property, while publishers explore AI's capacity to support innovation. Despite experimentation, the industry emphasizes oversight and ethical standards. ([ft.com](https://www.ft.com/content/44d530bc-a710-4705-be3a-9d11bc23b131?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.apnews.com/article/37f9073ab67ab25b7e6b2975b2a63bfe> - A group of 17 authors, including John Grisham, Jodi Picoult, and George R.R. Martin, filed a lawsuit against OpenAI, accusing the company of copyright infringement. The authors, organized by the Authors Guild, assert that OpenAI's ChatGPT program has been using their copyrighted works without permission, amounting to 'systematic theft on a mass scale.' The lawsuit highlights instances where ChatGPT purportedly generated unauthorized content based on the authors' works, such as creating a detailed outline for a prequel to Martin's 'A Game of Thrones.' ([apnews.com](https://apnews.com/article/37f9073ab67ab25b7e6b2975b2a63bfe?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.axios.com/2023/08/16/ai-book-publishing-fake-amazon> - AI-generated books are increasingly flooding online bookstores, including Amazon, which controls a significant portion of U.S. and e-book sales. These pseudo-books often use names of real authors, like Jane Friedman, to mislead consumers with mediocre content. Authors are pushing back against the unauthorized use of their work to train AI models. Amazon claims to investigate any listed books when concerns are raised. This situation highlights the broader fears of AI's impact on jobs and industries, posing a threat to both book lovers and the credibility of AI technology. ([axios.com](https://www.axios.com/2023/08/16/ai-book-publishing-fake-amazon?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.time.com/7002393/colin-kaepernick-ai-artificial-intelligence-lumi/> - Colin Kaepernick, known for his NFL career and activism, has launched an AI company called Lumi. The platform offers tools for storytellers to create, illustrate, publish, and monetize their ideas. Lumi aims to democratize the storytelling process, overcoming barriers like lack of access to publishers or gaps in skill sets. It uses AI tools to generate characters, narratives, and illustrations, allowing users to publish and sell their work directly on the platform. The company has raised $4 million in funding and aims to provide creators full ownership of their content. Kaepernick sees this venture as an extension of his activism, hoping to open new avenues for diverse stories and perspectives. ([time.com](https://time.com/7002393/colin-kaepernick-ai-artificial-intelligence-lumi/?utm_source=openai))