

The European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) Charter on Artificial Intelligence

Introduction

Concerning Artificial Intelligence (AI), the book sector and society as a whole, find themselves at a watershed moment: **AI has huge potential to bring vast added value to all parts of the book ecosystem, but at the same time, there is growing evidence of abuse, challenges and threats to copyright and Intellectual Property (IP), which is the foundation on which the whole sector stands.**

Booksellers are eager to move with the digital times, embracing new technologies and adapting to the digital transition. While book-selling is distinguishably different from publishing, writing and translating – which represent the creative process – the sector as a whole is an intricate ecosystem of interdependent parts. For this reason, each actor in the chain needs the right tools and legislative framework to ensure the sustainability and resilience of the whole.

When approaching AI, the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) recognises that it is important to distinguish

between Generative AI and Assistive AI. Generative AI, (e.g. text, images or audio models) generate new content based on patterns learned from large datasets. As an example, AI writing assistants are commonly trained with Large Language Models (LLMs), which, in turn, draw on vast catalogues of human-made texts. Assistive or supportive AI tools generally help with organisation and the expediency of tasks. When writing, Assistive AI can help refine the text by making suggestions, corrections, and improvements, flagging spelling or grammatical errors, for instance. In practice, many tools combine both generative and assistive features.

Booksellers are currently navigating what AI means for their profession. We are still discovering how various AI tools can be applied in the physical and online bookshop to help lighten the workload. Yet, it is paramount at this stage to clearly recognise the risks and challenges that GenAI tools present.

Guiding Principles



Within this context, the European and International Booksellers Federation (EIBF) firmly believes that:

3 Governance and accountability are needed to level the playing field: The EU AI Act provides a solid basis for trustworthy and transparent AI, but its success depends on consistent and effective enforcement. Policymakers must closely monitor developments and continuously engage our industry to ensure fair and proper enforcement, protect creators' rights, and uphold human-centric and ethical principles. EIBF calls for robust implementation and oversight to make the Act's commitments a reality.

6 Environmental sustainability is key: booksellers and the book sector in general are deeply concerned about the effects of climate change and all actors, SMEs especially, are making considerable investments in order to follow ambitious green legislation. Developers and suppliers of assistive and GenAI must abide by the same rules and ambitions, recognising the environmental challenge and mitigating the impact caused by the excessive resource consumption of their services and data centres.

9 Generative AI should be based on consent: an author's consent should be required before their work is used by an AI system, in line with existing copyright law. EIBF supports the "opt-in" rather than the "opt-out" model, which is central to copyright, to ensure that creators are asked before their work is used. AI developers and operators should acquire licenses for the use of copyright-protected works. The market for such licenses is developing quickly, providing both individual and collective licenses based on author and rightsholder consent.

1 Copyright is the bedrock of our industry: Without proper protection of Intellectual Property (IP) and copyright, the entire book ecosystem would cease to exist. In this sense, booksellers rely on a robust framework underpinning the exclusive rights of creators and rightsholders.

4 A human-centric and ethical GenAI is the way forward for our industry: Developers of Generative AI tools should be obliged to publish the data sources they have used to train their AI systems. Lawmakers must ensure the protection of the copyright-protected works of writers, artists and other creative professionals whose creativity makes these systems possible. Only humans can create works which benefit from copyright protection.

7 Competitiveness means that SMEs and micro-companies are not left behind: the vast majority of businesses in the European book sector are medium, small or even micro-sized enterprises. European competitiveness and public investment in innovative AI solutions should be approached bearing this in mind. In the same spirit, regulatory initiatives must aspire to provide a fair and level playing field.

10 AI has the potential to support and help booksellers in their daily work, streamlining operations and easing workloads in an increasingly challenging environment. EIBF recognises that Generative AI offers valuable opportunities for innovation and efficiency, however, we emphasise that it is critical that its development and use are ethical and grounded in enforceable legislation that safeguards copyright and creators' rights.

2 Copyright enables innovation: Works protected by the intellectual property regime, and the authors and creators who rely on it for their livelihood, are what make technical innovations like AI possible in the first place

5 Consumers have the right to know: Readers deserve transparency when purchasing a book — any content produced by an AI system should be clearly identified as such. EIBF believes this transparency should be driven by an industry-led labelling initiative, ensuring flexibility and innovation. A standardised, machine-readable labelling system embedded in metadata would enable consistent information across catalogues, e-commerce platforms, and points of sale.

8 Bookshops require compliant solutions: Data protection and data sovereignty in retail must be guaranteed. This means, for example, that Assistive AI solutions for bookshops must handle customer data, reading histories, and trade secrets in a GDPR- and IP-compliant, purpose-specific manner.

11 We need research and assessments of the risks and impact of GenAI: the development of AI systems is opaque and its impact on all parts of society, from economy to psychology and literacy is little known. There are early studies that warn against the potential link between increased GenAI use and a decrease in the capacity to think critically. Good reading skills and a sound capacity for analytical and critical thinking¹ are crucial to preserving our democracies. Without them, citizens become vulnerable to disinformation. Therefore, EIBF calls for increased research into the impacts of further AI use.

¹ Cf. e.g., Hao-Ping (Hank) Lee, et al. 2025. The Impact of Generative AI on Critical Thinking: Self-Reported Reductions in Cognitive Effort and Confidence Effects From a Survey of Knowledge Workers. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713778>