Beyond Regulation: How AI Reshapes What We Write, How We Review, and Why It Matters for Business Administration

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THE INFLECTION POINT

The relationship between technology and scholarly inquiry has always been one of creative tension. Each major technological disruption — from the advent of word processors in the 1980s to the proliferation of statistical software in the 2000s — has forced the academic community to renegotiate the boundaries of what constitutes legitimate research practice (Aguinis, 2026). We now stand at what may be the most consequential of these inflection points: the integration of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into every stage of the research lifecycle, from literature discovery and hypothesis generation to manuscript drafting, peer review, and editorial decision-making.

The pace of transformation is remarkable. As of early 2026, over 83% of high-impact academic journals have adopted formal AI policies, up from 77% just six months earlier (Wang & Gong, 2026). Major publishers — Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, and Sage — have issued and revised guidelines multiple times, often struggling to keep pace with the technology they seek to govern. The Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) convened a dedicated forum on "Emerging AI Dilemmas in Scholarly Publishing" in July 2025, acknowledging that the ethical landscape is shifting faster than institutional responses can adapt (COPE, 2025).

This editorial argues that the current discourse — dominated by questions of prohibition and detection — is necessary but insufficient. Business administration research, with its distinctive blend of theoretical pluralism, methodological diversity, and practical orientation, demands a more nuanced approach. We need frameworks that move 'beyond regulation' toward responsible integration, particularly from the perspective of journals rooted in the Global South, where AI simultaneously promises to equalize and to deepen existing asymmetries.

THE GLOBAL REGULATORY LANDSCAPE: FROM PRINCIPLES TO POLICIES

Understanding the editorial challenge requires situating it within the broader governance architecture that shapes how AI intersects with academic research. Three regulatory frameworks deserve particular attention for their influence on scholarly publishing norms.

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1

International governance frameworks

The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, adopted in November 2021 by all 194 member states, established the first global normative standard for AI governance. Built upon four foundational values — human rights and dignity, peaceful and just societies, diversity and inclusiveness, and environmental flourishing — the recommendation calls for ethical impact assessments and urges governments to create institutional and legal frameworks to ensure that AI contributes to the public good (UNESCO, 2021). Its policy action areas explicitly address education and research, providing a normative anchor for academic institutions navigating AI integration.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) AI principles, initially adopted in 2019 and substantively updated in May 2024, offer a complementary governance layer. Now endorsed by 47 jurisdictions, including the European Union, the updated principles emphasize safety, risk management, information integrity, and interoperable governance. The 2024 revision specifically addresses challenges posed by general-purpose and generative AI systems (OECD, 2024), signaling that the international community recognizes the distinctive risks these technologies introduce.

The European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689, 2024), which entered into force in August 2024, represents the most comprehensive legal framework for AI worldwide. Its risk-based approach categorizes AI systems according to their potential impact on fundamental rights and safety. Notably for the academic community, the act includes research exemptions that place certain AI systems under development or used solely for scientific research outside its scope. However, as Meszaros et al. (2026) argue in *npj Digital Medicine,* these exemptions rely on distinctions between research and commercial activities that may not capture the realities of contemporary AI research, where boundaries between academic and commercial interests are increasingly blurred.

Brazil's emerging framework

Brazil's own regulatory trajectory merits attention. Bill No. 2.338/2023 (Projeto de Lei no. 2.338, 2023), approved by the Senate in December 2024 and forwarded to the Chamber of Deputies in March 2025, establishes principles of transparency, accountability, safety, human oversight, and non-discrimination. The bill introduces risk-based classifications for AI systems and distinguishes between general-purpose and generative AI. Complementing this legislative effort, the *Plano Brasileiro de Inteligência Artificial* (PBIA) 2024–2028, titled *IA para o Bem de Todos*, allocates approximately R$ 23 billion toward developing national computing infrastructure and Portuguese-language foundation models (Mendonça et al., 2024). This positions Brazil as a pioneer in Latin America's AI governance landscape, with potential implications for how Brazilian journals — including the *BAR* — approach AI-related editorial policies.

WHAT PUBLISHERS ARE DOING: CONSENSUS, DISSONANCE, AND EVOLVING NORMS

Against this regulatory backdrop, academic publishers have developed their own AI governance structures, generating both remarkable consensus and persistent disagreement.

The authorship consensus

On one point, the academic publishing community has achieved near-unanimity: AI cannot be listed as an author. This position, articulated by COPE and adopted by virtually all major publishers, rests on an ontological argument — AI systems cannot assume moral or legal responsibility for the content they generate (COPE, 2023; Hosseini et al., 2023). Authors remain fully accountable for all manuscript content, regardless of the tools used in its production. This consensus reflects a fundamental commitment that scholarly authorship entails not merely contribution, but responsibility.

The transparency spectrum

Beyond authorship, however, consensus quickly dissolves into a spectrum of approaches. Sage has pioneered a tripartite distinction between 'assistive' AI use (no longer requiring disclosure), 'generative' use (requiring disclosure), and 'prohibitive' applications (Sage Publishing, 2025). In its September 2025 update, Elsevier prohibits the direct use of output from 'AI agents' or 'deep research' tools as manuscript text, requiring that AI output serve only as 'inspiration' (Elsevier, 2025). At the other end, 'Science' (AAAS) maintains the strictest stance, treating undisclosed AI-generated text as scientific misconduct.

This lack of uniformity creates practical challenges for researchers who submit to multiple journals, each with different disclosure requirements. It also raises a deeper question: can a binary distinction between 'assisted' and 'generated' content capture the complexity of how researchers actually interact with AI tools? In practice, the line between asking an AI to 'improve the clarity of this paragraph' and 'write a paragraph about X' is not always sharp.

The peer review dilemma

The integration of AI into peer review presents perhaps the most acute ethical tension. Elsevier and Springer Nature explicitly prohibit reviewers from uploading submitted manuscripts to generative AI platforms, grounding this prohibition in the foundational principle of peer review confidentiality (Elsevier, 2025; Springer Nature, 2025). The concern is both principled and practical: submitting an author's unpublished work to an external AI platform breaches intellectual property protections and confidentiality norms. As the *SciELO in Perspective* analysis documented in December 2025, the Latin American scholarly community has raised similar concerns about the dangers of AI-mediated peer review (SciELO in Perspective, 2025).

Yet enforcement remains elusive. Current AI-detection technologies suffer from significant limitations, including false positives that disproportionately affect non-native English speakers and an inability to distinguish between 'assisted' and 'authored' content (Lund et al., 2023; Stokel-Walker & Van Noorden, 2023). This creates a troubling asymmetry: the policies exist, but the capacity to enforce them is limited, risking selective and inequitable application.

THE GLOBAL SOUTH PERSPECTIVE: AI AS EQUALIZER AND AMPLIFIER

The dominant discourse on AI in scholarly publishing has been shaped almost entirely by institutions in the Global North — major publishers headquartered in Europe and North America, research-intensive universities in anglophone countries, and standards-setting bodies reflecting Western scholarly traditions. This is not merely a geographical observation; it is an epistemological one. The frameworks, assumptions, and anxieties that drive current AI policies reflect specific institutional contexts that do not translate seamlessly to the realities of academic life in Latin America, Africa, or Southeast Asia.

The equity paradox

For researchers in the Global South, AI presents a genuine paradox. On one hand, generative AI tools offer unprecedented opportunities to level a playing field that has been structurally tilted. Non-native English speakers can use language models to refine their prose, closing a gap that has historically disadvantaged researchers whose ideas are strong but whose English expression may not meet the stylistic expectations of international journals. AI can accelerate literature reviews across vast bodies of work, assist with sophisticated analytical methods that might otherwise require expensive training or software, and reduce time to publication, which drains researchers' productivity in under-resourced environments.

On the other hand, AI risks deepening existing inequalities. Access to state-of-the-art AI tools requires financial resources, technological infrastructure, and digital literacy, all of which are unevenly distributed. Models trained predominantly on data from Western research environments may encode biases that marginalize non-Western scholarly traditions (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Perhaps most troublingly, research by Liang et al. at Stanford found that peer reviewers exhibit biases against submissions from non-native English speakers, even when those authors have used AI tools to improve their language, suggesting that the tool alone cannot overcome systemic prejudice.

Toward contextual AI governance

This paradox demands that journals rooted in the Global South — including the *BAR* — develop AI governance approaches that are neither uncritical adoptions of Northern frameworks nor parochial rejections of global norms. Brazil's position is instructive: a country investing R$ 23 billion in AI infrastructure while simultaneously developing risk-based regulatory frameworks demonstrates that engagement with AI can be both ambitious and cautious. The *BAR's* editorial policy must similarly navigate between facilitating responsible AI use and maintaining the integrity standards that sustain scholarly credibility.

AI AS METHODOLOGICAL ASSISTANT: OPPORTUNITIES AND BOUNDARIES

Aguinis (2026), in his JIBS editorial, offers the most comprehensive framework to date for understanding how generative AI can serve as a 'research methods assistant.' His eight-step model details how AI can contribute at each stage of the research process — from research question formulation and literature synthesis to data analysis and results interpretation — while specifying the boundaries of what AI can and cannot do. Four principles anchor his approach: (1) trust but verify, (2) know your methods, (3) implement guardrails, and (4) explicitly consider situations in which AI fails.

This framework is valuable precisely because it moves the conversation from prohibition to structured integration. As Aguinis (2026) argues, the question is no longer whether researchers will use AI — this is becoming unavoidable — but how they will use it appropriately. Delios et al. (2025), also writing in JIBS, reinforce this orientation by proposing initial guardrails for the use of generative AI in international business research, comparing the technology to a sophisticated power tool that produces excellent results in experienced hands but can cause significant damage without expertise.

For business administration research specifically, AI's methodological potential is substantial. It can assist with systematic literature reviews across thousands of papers, identify patterns in qualitative data that might escape human attention, generate and test alternative model specifications, and even help craft clearer research narratives. However, three boundaries deserve emphasis for our community:

First, AI cannot replace the theoretical imagination that drives original contributions. The capacity to see a familiar phenomenon through a new theoretical lens, to generate genuinely novel hypotheses from contextual immersion, or to develop constructs that capture previously unarticulated dimensions of organizational reality — these remain irreducibly human capacities. Second, AI's reliance on pattern recognition in existing literature creates a risk of innovation suppression: models trained on published work may systematically favor conventional approaches and penalize genuinely disruptive ideas.

Third, the differential impact on early-career researchers is concerning. As Budhwar et al. (2024) observe, less-experienced researchers who rely heavily on AI without sufficient methodological training risk producing technically polished yet intellectually shallow work.

## DOES AI CHANGE THE NATURE OF THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION?

This question may be the most provocative — and consequential — that the business administration community must confront. If generative AI can produce competent literature reviews, identify research gaps, synthesize theoretical perspectives, and even suggest testable propositions, what remains as the distinctively human contribution to scholarly knowledge?

The answer, we argue, lies in what AI fundamentally cannot do: interpret the meaning of social phenomena within their lived contexts. Theoretical contribution in business administration — whether grounded in institutional theory, behavioral economics, organizational ecology, or critical management studies — depends on the researcher's capacity to move between abstract concepts and concrete realities, to exercise judgment about which aspects of a complex situation matter most, and to generate insights that reframe rather than merely confirm existing understanding. These are acts of 'interpretation,' not 'computation,' and they require precisely the kind of contextual sensitivity, moral reasoning, and creative imagination that current AI systems lack.

This does not mean AI is irrelevant to theory development. AI can accelerate the preparatory stages of theoretical work — mapping existing literature, identifying contradictions across studies, and simulating alternative explanations. But the moment of genuine theoretical insight — the recognition that, for example, what appears to be organizational inertia is actually strategic patience, or that what looks like market failure is actually institutional entrepreneurship — remains a fundamentally human achievement. Journals, including the *BAR*, must therefore evaluate contributions based on the quality of their theoretical reasoning, not the sophistication of the tools used to arrive at it.

THE CRAFT-AI FRAMEWORK: A PROPOSAL FOR RESPONSIBLE INTEGRATION

Drawing on the analysis presented in the preceding sections, we propose the CRAFT-AI framework (Comprehensive Responsible AI Framework for Transparent Academic Integration) as a set of principles to guide AI integration in management research and scholarly publishing. The framework is built around five interconnected pillars, each addressing a distinct dimension of the challenge, along with a cross-cutting competency that underpins them all.
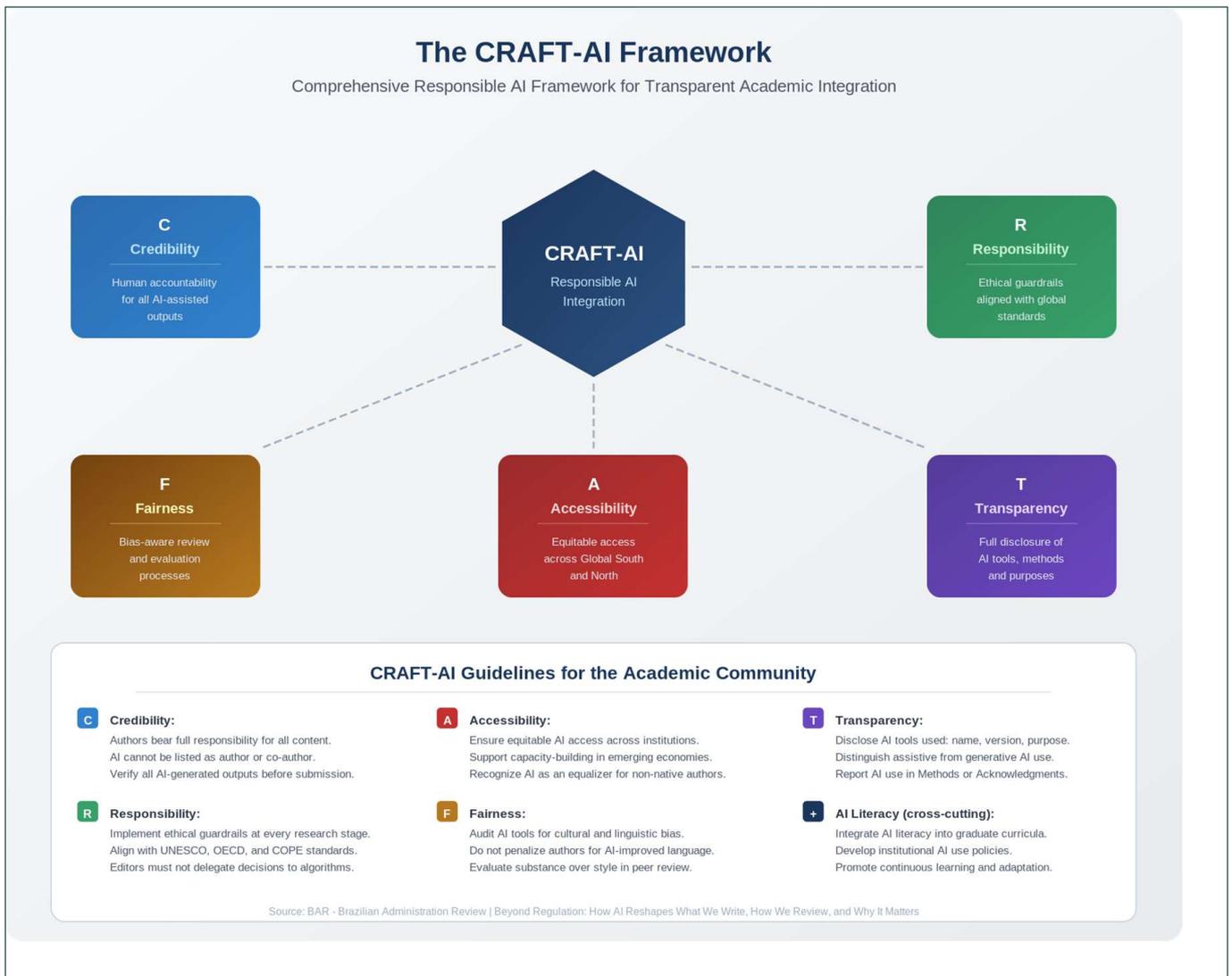
Source: Developed by the author.

Figure 1. The CRAFT-AI framework: Comprehensive responsible AI framework for transparent academic integration.

Credibility

Human accountability for all AI-assisted outputs is non-negotiable. Authors bear full and sole responsibility for every element of their submissions, regardless of which tools contributed to their production. AI cannot be listed as an author or co-author, consistent with the COPE position and the ontological argument that authorship requires the capacity for moral and legal responsibility (COPE, 2023). All AI-generated outputs must be independently verified by human researchers before incorporation into any scholarly work.

Responsibility

Ethical guardrails must operate at every stage of the research process, not merely at the point of submission. This principle extends Aguinis's (2026) framework by emphasizing that responsibility is not just individual but also institutional. Journals, universities, and funding agencies share the obligation to create environments that facilitate responsible AI use. Editorial decisions must remain unambiguously human — no algorithm should determine the acceptance or rejection of a manuscript, consistent with the positions of all major publishers.

Accessibility

AI integration policies must account for the structural inequalities that characterize global academia. This means explicitly recognizing AI's potential as an equalizer for researchers in the Global South, supporting capacity-building initiatives in emerging economies, and ensuring that editorial standards do not inadvertently penalize researchers who lack access to premium AI tools. The *BAR*, as a journal committed to international reach from a Latin American base, has a particular responsibility to champion equitable access.

Fairness

Peer review and editorial processes must be actively audited for AI-related biases. This includes ensuring that AI-detection tools are not used in ways that disproportionately affect non-native English speakers, that manuscripts are evaluated on the substance of their intellectual contribution rather than the stylistic polish that AI can provide, and that review criteria do not systematically favor approaches that align with AI-trained patterns over genuinely innovative work.

Transparency

Full and structured disclosure of AI use is required. Authors must specify the tools used (name, version), the purpose (assistive or generative), and the stage of research at which AI was employed. This information should be reported in the Methods section for substantive research contributions and in the Acknowledgments section for editorial assistance. The *BAR* adopts the Sage distinction between assistive and generative use as a practical classification, while acknowledging that this boundary is not always clear-cut and calling for good-faith reporting.

AI literacy as cross-cutting competency

Underpinning all five pillars is the recognition that AI literacy is now as fundamental to scholarly competence as statistical literacy or academic writing proficiency. Graduate programs in business administration must integrate AI literacy into their curricula, covering not only technical capabilities but also ethical reasoning, critical evaluation of AI outputs, and the epistemological implications of AI-assisted research. The *BAR* has already signaled its commitment to this agenda through the publication of research on AI literacy as a frontier for high-impact scholarship, and we call on the academic community to deepen this engagement.

CRAFT-AI GUIDELINES FOR THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

To operationalize the framework, we offer the following guidelines directed at the three primary constituencies of scholarly publishing:

For authors

Disclose all AI use transparently, specifying tools, versions, and purposes. Verify every AI-generated output independently. Treat AI as an assistant, never as a substitute for your own critical judgment. Develop and maintain AI literacy as a core professional competence. Remember that your signature on a manuscript is your guarantee of its intellectual integrity.

For reviewers

Do not upload any portion of a submitted manuscript to external AI platforms. Evaluate submissions on the quality of their theoretical reasoning, methodological rigor, and empirical contribution — not on stylistic sophistication that may reflect AI polish. Be mindful of your potential biases regarding AI use. Report suspected misconduct to editors, but exercise caution about drawing conclusions from AI-detection tools alone.

For editors and institutions

Develop clear, iterative AI policies that are reviewed at least annually. Create AI ethics advisory mechanisms that include diverse perspectives — scholars, ethicists, technologists, and representatives from the Global South. Invest in training editorial teams to navigate AI-related challenges. Resist the temptation to delegate editorial judgment to algorithms, regardless of efficiency gains. Champion equitable access to AI resources across the global academic community.

LOOKING FORWARD: A CALL TO THE COMMUNITY

The integration of AI into business administration research is not a future scenario — it is a present reality that demands thoughtful, evidence-based responses from every actor in the scholarly ecosystem. This editorial has sought to map the terrain: the regulatory landscape, publisher responses, equity dimensions, methodological opportunities, theoretical implications, and the principles that should guide our path forward.

The CRAFT-AI framework proposed here is offered not as a definitive solution but as a starting point for structured dialogue. We invite the business administration community to engage critically with these principles, to test

them against the diverse realities of research practice across contexts, and to contribute to their refinement through empirical investigation and theoretical reflection.

The *BAR* is committed to serving as a platform for this dialogue. We welcome submissions that investigate the impact of AI on research practices, theoretical development, and organizational phenomena in business admin-istration. We are particularly interested in contributions that bring perspectives from the Global South, that bridge methodological innovation with ethical reflection, and that advance our collective understanding of how to harness AI's potential while safeguarding the human judgment that remains the foundation of scholarly knowledge.

Technology will continue to evolve. Our principles must evolve with it — but they must not be abandoned in the process. The challenge before us is not whether to use AI, but how to integrate it in ways that make our research more rigorous, our processes more equitable, and our contributions more meaningful. The *BAR* believes we can, and invites the community to help demonstrate how.

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7