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CONSORTIUM COUPERIN : POSITION PAPER

on the integration of artificial intelligence in academic resources

Generative artificial intelligence has now spread widely throughout society, transforming user practices and expectations, and raising new questions for the scientific information sector. Key points to note:

- **Profound changes in practices and emerging misuses:**
 - Generative AI is emerging as a technology that enhances traditional search engines and bibliographic databases, supplementing the classic tools used in information and documentation;
 - Users now receive direct answers rather than a list of sources, which changes their relationship to information. However, large language models (LLMs) sometimes obscure sources and may inadvertently facilitate plagiarism;
 - The AI-facilitated production of scientific work affects the entire chain: fraud or biased analyses may ultimately call into question the value of publisher corpora.
- **The need for safeguards in the academic context:**
 - AI tools made available to the academic community must incorporate mechanisms to control the well-known shortcomings of generative AI (bias, random responses);
 - Providers of generative AI services must provide guarantees regarding data collection and tracking. Indeed, AI systems often capture content from external sources as well as user-provided data, particularly through queries and profile tracking, without adequate guarantees concerning the permissions granted or the use made of that data.

In this rapidly evolving context, many scientific and academic publishers have begun implementing generative AI features into their platforms. The goal of providing a trusted academic AI is a shared horizon and common interest for all producers and providers of information. We therefore consider it necessary to clearly state the consortium's position on these developments.

Concerning business models

The emerging business models raise several concerns, even as higher education and research institutions face growing budgetary pressures that limit their capacity for investment.

Some publishers are offering AI modules as paid add-ons to existing subscriptions, with surcharges of up to 30% of the initial subscription amount. This pricing strategy risks generating a considerable financial burden that our institutions will be unable to absorb — all the more so as providers increasingly push advanced research features and AI agents.

Beyond cost concerns, the development of generative AI as a convenient access point to academic resources raises questions insofar as these technologies have not yet demonstrated their real added value for research and learning.

This fee-layering approach contradicts our vision of developing scientific content platforms in an honest and responsible context. While we readily acknowledge publishers' R&D efforts, we refuse to let the academic community bear the full cost of innovation. AI contributions amount to incremental platform improvements



rather than technological breakthroughs. As such, they fall within the scope of continuous platform development and must be included in the normal pricing evolution of negotiated resources, not charged as additional services. Otherwise, researchers and students risk shifting massively towards mainstream AI tools, to the detriment of scientific information quality and security.

Furthermore, in a context of growing environmental concerns within the research community, this would encourage systematic AI use, even though the technology is extremely resource-intensive, particularly in terms of energy. AI use in higher education must instead be measured, targeted at situations where it delivers genuine added value, and not deployed automatically across all features.

Knowledge as a shared resource across the information production chain

The arrival of generative AI is an opportunity for higher education institutions to engage in dialogue about the technical design of tools proposed by solution providers.

The goal is not to replace private actors, but to understand the tools that will be made available to students and researchers. This approach can involve both new generative AI platforms and traditional actors: the aim is to obtain from these providers the means to rapidly reach validated information — for example, the articles underpinning text generation.

The aim is to co-construct, through ongoing dialogue with publishers and providers, a shared understanding of community expectations and needs, and the technical responses required. This is all the more relevant given that some of these new services are heavily dependent on the open science ecosystem, in which Couperin members are active stakeholders: researcher profile enrichment, literature review tools, publication and impact information, etc.

Our vision of trustworthy AI services

AI features integrated into editorial platforms must respect fundamental principles. They must facilitate access to primary documents and enable their enhanced visibility, not replace them with decontextualised summaries. Source traceability and systematic citation are essential to upholding scientific integrity and preventing the proliferation of synthetic content divorced from its documentary foundations. More broadly, any use of generative AI must be clearly disclosed in interfaces and flagged in responses.

Trustworthy academic AI is built on transparency. This can be defined as follows:

- **Full documentation of design choices:** the nature and lawfulness of sources used in LLM training, corpus and data selection (full text, metadata) used to generate RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) responses, bibliometric and/or statistical criteria for source selection, disclosure of any Boolean query generated, explicit citation of sources in generated text, etc ;
- **Retaining the option to use services without generative AI** (e.g. strict keyword search, Boolean queries), to accommodate the full range of use cases. This is particularly critical for workflows requiring reproducibility or exhaustiveness, such as systematic literature reviews.
- **Guaranteeing data confidentiality and prohibiting its use for model training;** embedding privacy-by-design from the outset; and preventing the exposure of personal, confidential, and research data.
- **Grounding AI use in genuine functional utility:** given the environmental footprint of AI technologies — compounded by deep research and agentic AI. A measured approach means reserving AI for tasks where it delivers clear benefit, rather than applying it indiscriminately across all services.

Finally, adequate user support must be provided — help resources, FAQs, worked examples — to foster genuine AI literacy in academic settings. Beyond data and technologies, the real challenge is empowering students and researchers to use these tools critically and with full awareness.

Towards transparent and responsible AI integration in academic resources

Promising alternatives already exist: some publishers have chosen to integrate AI directly into their offerings, passing on these investments through measured and transparent pricing adjustments. This is precisely the approach we commend and support in our negotiations.

Within institutions, opening up corpora to AI-driven use creates significant opportunities for research and research management. It is essential that higher education and research institutions retain the right to reuse and experiment with negotiated corpora, for instance through RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation) systems or MCP (Model Context Protocol) on local servers, in compliance with intellectual property law and under the TDM exception for education and research. We believe business models must fully recognise the value of innovation while ensuring the long-term accessibility of academic resources for research communities. We also consider it important to preserve access to tiered offerings, with or without AI features, as well as granular usage data.

These challenges call for a broader conversation at the international level. Ongoing exchanges with scientific information industry players have deepened our expertise on these tools. **We invite all Couperin partners, private or public, French or international, to join us in shaping these approaches.**