

Nov. 2025 PALDG Notes

Topic: Literature Reviews with AI and Large Language models, contending with model collapse and evaluating outcomes and Research Writing and AI

Discussion Leaders: Kim MacVaugh, Georgetown Univ. and Ann Cullen, Tufts Univ.

Number of Attendees: 16

List of some of the institutions of Attendees:

Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
Univ of Virginia
George Washington University in Washington DC
Curry College in Milton MA
Princeton
UNC Charlotte in Charlotte, NC.
Carleton College
Syracuse University in New York.
University of Minnesota.
UC Berkeley

Notes:

Ann discussed concept of “Model Collapse” as it pertains to LLMs. (For details see - <https://tufts.box.com/s/68glf117a3x3x1j4efgo4xnprcj9tow3>)

Kim reviewed the AI tools in her APSA presentation - <https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/article-details/66defefacec5d6c14299555c>

- For example that Consensus AI seems to work best with Yes/No questions.
- Elicit is a for-fee tool that Georgetown has a trial with.
- Discussion of pros and cons of Research Rabbit – How does it compare to just doing advanced Google Searches in Google Scholar?
- Kim found using Research Rabbit she was challenged trying to limit her search to just political science literature.

Discussion around that there are problems with the text summaries of articles LLMs create and typically miss key points of the articles or make things up.

It was mentioned that Consensus and Semantic Scholar is missing a lot of Social Science and Humanities literature.

The group shared that they are concerned that students very often just don’t seem interested in doing the “heavy lifting” for research.

However, it was mentioned one productive way to use Research Rabbit is once you have found some good articles using this tool to find more material.

Kim worked with a class where the faculty also assigned using Elicit, but the student lit reviews weren't any better.

The group had a general discussion that they have found many students don't really understand what a literature review is, so if they don't have that basic concept, using an LLM to assist with their Literature Review is irrelevant.

They have found instead of the AI tool stepping students through how to write a literature review, it just writes it for them. Also, the synthesizing skills gained by doing a literature review are missed.

Ann was reminded of "[Principle of Least Effort](#)" (PLE), that [George Zipf](#) came up with in 1949! It proposes that people will typically gravitate to the easiest way to search for something even if it might be wrong. This seems to apply to what we're dealing with the popularity of ChatGPT. (Reference: <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1950-00412-000>)

Mention of various AI Op-ed writing tools out there, (i.e. <https://www.yeschat.ai/gpts-9t563fLs4n8-Op-ed-Writer>, <https://paraphrasetool.com/compose-modes/op-ed-writer>, <https://texta.ai/instant-ai-op-ed-generator-tool>.)

Ann mentioned another tool she had heard of called Essay Genius (Lindebaum, D., & Ramirez, M. F. (2024). "Negative" resource review: On the essay-writing algorithm Essay Genius at <https://essaygenius.ai>. - <https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2022.0474>.)

Comment from discussion "One way to defeat something like Essay Genius is to have students keep a research diary. Note down the databases used, terms used (thesaurus), how they are put together (connectors, etc.), is it too broad or too narrow, etc. This is also good for evaluating info lit sessions and for giving part of a research grade."

Discussed concern that because of AI, literature reviews might be devalued. Also pointed to recent article pointing out the "cheating is becoming normal (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/cheating-has-become-normal>).

It was discussed that one way for students to track and subsequently have a clear understanding of the steps in the research process is to keep a research journal that they submit with the projects they hand in. A comment in the chat on this was: "My suggestion for the research journal can include AI as well. That's one of the "tools" that students can explain that they used. But our graduates are increasingly being asked to do this kind of work in their careers. Part of what we (and faculty) need to do is to help them understand this. It is one of the top skills that employers want from college graduates."

JStor have launched their beta AI tool called "JStor Interactive Research Tool"

Participants shared information on AI related projects they are developing (also in [Google Doc](#)):

- [GWU pilot project](#) to create a catalog of retrieval-augmented generative-AI aids for course-level learning support. The pilot is supported by the George Washington University [Trustworthy AI Initiative](#), and will develop and deploy the AI mentors over a range of courses, and organize a faculty community of practice to build AI background knowledge and skills. In parallel, a team of social science and education researchers will evaluate the effectiveness of the AI mentors in helping achieve learning objectives, and whether students get better at using AI assistance over time.

- Elizabeth and Phil's presentation: Find and Analyze Research with AI Tools:
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1a5I2NhE3EoCjaUTm-MF_cuWUrWh9KLms1aGmlMmhWNI/edit?usp=sharing

Some notable quotes from the Zoom Chat:

The purpose and mechanics on writing a lit review should be something faculty are teaching. Sadly, they often aren't. So, I regularly have these conversations with students about their purpose and how to approach them.

I'm afraid you are right. Many faculty members think this is something only the English department should teach. But it really needs to be within all disciplines.

Often students even need support searching our in house catalog robustly. Maybe more advanced students can harness AI well :-)

I show Research Rabbit as a way of extending one's research once they have found a bulk of their references. Some students have found Research Rabbit useful esp when they are having issues finding references on very niche RQs.

I've heard of faculty requiring students to use Google Docs so they can see the edit history as a way of knowing it didn't suddenly appear from AI.

Some faculty require the students to submit copies of the articles. This is very misplaced, in my opinion.

Synthesizing information, recognizing what belongs and what doesn't, help develop thinking for students. Even if AI can help the productivity for advanced researchers, students need the struggle of developing those skills.

I asked chatGPT how to write a lit review and this was its response:
<https://chatgpt.com/share/6737a63f-b42c-800f-80d1-625a285bbc06>

That's almost verbatim the answer it gave me too.

I think there's going to be a huge increase in more terminal, or professionally-oriented degrees which do more reports, maybe a bibliography, but minus full on extensive research.

I'm using [Keenious](#), but it's a subscription tool. I'm working on a presentation on this tool for graduate students next week. Keenious is based on OpenAlex.