

Summary Report on MiPA General Meeting—April 11, 2023

30 Participating on Zoom

Artificial Intelligence in Publishing



Derek Murphy is an artist with insight on how book cover designers and other artists can use AI tools in an effective way.

Michael Evans and Emilia Rose are from [Ream](#), a platform that helps authors make money with subscriptions using AI.



Minnesota editor and publicist, Dan Janal, uses AI in developmental editing.



Pre-program Chat:

- Kris Bigalk introduced herself and described her non-profit moving from Florida to Minnesota. She was encouraged to join the [MN Council of Nonprofits](#).
- [David Espindola](#) introduced himself and showed his new book, *Soulful, You in the Future of Artificial Intelligence*.
- A luminary from the Independent Book Publishers Association ([IBPA](#)), Lee Wind, joined the meeting. He mentioned that there is an Authors Guild survey on AI, available to IBPA members.
- Speaker Derek signed on to Zoom from Taiwan.
- Jennifer mentioned something called [Marlowe Pro](#), which is an AI text-editing/proof-reader available to IBPA members. You can do one free edit using this. Dan uses [Grammarly](#) for his edits.
- Then we talked about using AI to create audio books using famous voices.
- Transparency is important in most AI cases. Ghost writers have this question, should their name be on the title? These issues will explode with all the AI tools.
- Nancy Chakrin invited us to join the [MN Council of Nonprofits](#), which is having a celebration yacht voyage in September.

Program Intro:

Jennifer, MiPA Executive Director, mentioned our May meeting about Sensitivity Reading, and our Gala in June. Each of our speakers tonight are offering valuable [books or articles on how they use AI](#).

MiPA VP Paul Nylander was the moderator for this meeting. He explained that AI was too big and couldn't be fully covered in this meeting. We have all been using it already (for example on Netflix), but with [ChatGPT](#) the use has exploded. Paul then introduced the panel members.

Paul's Question 1: What does AI mean to you?

Dan says he uses AI for prompts to fix writer's block and to improve his clients' writing. It's wonderful.

Derek his last book with AI and has done book covers also. He combined the AI images with Photoshop to make an even better result.

Michael said an analogy was the move from bicycles to the car—it will affect everything. Generative AI is powerful for ad copy, audio editing, etc.

Emilia has used AI to bring her characters to life(images, translations, etc.). She does a lot of work on [Discord](#) where her book characters interact with other people.

Of course [ChatGPT](#) is the most used now, with [GPT-4](#) and [Midjourney](#) for images. This will all probably change drastically soon. For example, Chat-5 is almost ready for release.

Paul's Question 2: What can you do now that was impossible six months ago?

Dan said that everything is faster now. Especially marketing copy can be much stronger using AI. You can prompt the AI to make the copy more compelling. He works with financial planners using chat and it comes up with lots of things to add. It is great, except when it is wrong.

Emilia agreed that speed is the best benefit. She used [DeepL](#) for translation and then checked with conventional editors, but they had a much cleaner copy to work with. The net effect was speed.

Michael said AI has allowed him to do things he couldn't do previously. He mentioned that all these systems are based on prompts. There will be six-figure jobs as prompt engineers. For example, text-to-video AI can make movies, e.g., you can type "girl on bicycle eating ice cream" and get a video. Using just words you can create speech and then change that to audio. You can get all these apps for under

\$100 per month. Here are some links he uses: text to video (<https://runwayml.com>), text to speech (<https://www.descript.com>), or speech to text (<https://podcastle.com>). He uses AI to edit his podcasts.

Derek emphasized how fast AI has improved. He feels behind already. Midjourney 4 was out but has been already passed by Midjourney 5. The AI art doesn't need much editing anymore. It is especially powerful for social media images. The writing from AI is now equal to his best. He imagines it will be able to write in his voice soon. He can put out audio books faster and it saves him from mundane tasks.

During these answers, a furious debate was raging in the chat line between those who believed that human input would be lost and that the work would no longer be genuine. "Do we thank AI in the acknowledgements?" Lee Wind said the key is transparency. Others saw great benefit in letting AI do all the work they hate.

Paul's Question 3: Does how the AI is used have ethical implications? Are there things that go too far?

Michael responded that it shouldn't be just personal ethics. He is nervous about others, like large corporations, setting up the rules. He would like to see artists be empowered and not impeded too much.

Dan sees it as mostly a check or edit on his creative work. He uses [Ghostthewriter](#), but it only handles 2,000 words. But you can also paste material into ChatGPT-4 and say, "Pretend you're a professional editor and proofreader, fix all grammar and punctuation mistakes, without changing the content."

Another option is [Prowritingaid](#), which has been updated with AI features. AI is getting better fast. Dan is not bothered by AI doing things he doesn't like, like marketing copy. But he believes the key question is "What are the facts?" He mentioned a case where the AI added a beautiful glowing back-cover recommendation, but attributed it to a person who had never read the book. Paul said that not everyone out there is as ethical as us, and such problems will grow with AI's capabilities. Carol Chapman added in the chat that you can create a Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG) tool on top of ChatGPT that ensures that the responses ChatGPT uses are based on the limited information you suggest in your RAG, not on the ChatGPT general internet training.

Lauren Pedersen commented on this ethics issue in the chat: As a narrator, my concern for AI is that the system could learn to use my voice to say something I would never say. I audition and select projects based on my personal ethics. There is a push in the narrator community that AI-narrated books be labeled as such. And a recent item that came to awareness is that there was a clause in the Rights Holder/Author contract on a platform that gave the Rights Holder authorization to train the AI on the narrator's work. SAG-AFTRA spoke against the clause and affirmed that it should be a negotiated part of the contracting.

Derek was in a group that fell apart because of the different passions among the writers. Some loved the story creation, some the actual writing, etc. AI will allow people to focus on the part they feel strongest about. We all use co-workers now to do the parts we are not good at, so using AI is not too different. We should all focus on the things we enjoy and are good at.

Emilia has used AI as a co-author. She writes romance novels but began using [Sudowrite](#) as a writing partner to keep her ideas flowing. It helps for getting inspiration and to avoid writer's block. Paul encouraged us to acknowledge all those who help in our writing. Should we say which AI system is helping us? In movie making the acknowledgements are hard won in negotiations. So it is a good question.

Michael thinks it is easier for indie-authors to include all the names. They don't need to go on the cover, but should be acknowledged somewhere. Narrated books are a different case—the acknowledgement should be visible up front.

Paul mentioned it is not always obvious where the ethics line should be drawn. He mentioned a case where a book by Bob Dylan was signed by a machine but looked like an actual signature. There will be

many such cases with AI. Dan brought up the example of huge lawyer fees that may be eliminated with AI. Paul said, “We probably shouldn’t talk about the ethics of lawyer fees.” Dan then told us that James Patterson just outlines books and has a staff that helps him turn out a hundred books per year—is that ethical? His point was that most of the ethical questions exist already; it’s just that the support work is being done by humans now.

Paul’s Question 4: When you first try a new application of AI, do you first try to break it?

Emilia said most times she wants it to succeed, but usually it fails.

Ron tried to use [Sembly](#) to write these complex notes, and it was a waste of time. Next time he will try [Otter AI](#).

Derek said it often takes a lot of prompting to get great results. With Midjourney and ChatGPT you used to have very long prompt lists, but now much shorter prompts give good results. The robots are learning. In six months it will be ten times better. They are becoming tools for unskilled users. This will allow far more minority voices in publishing. It won’t take 20 years to become an expert in the future. Michael likes this development as well but warns that many of the biases of the past are on the internet and will be brought out by the AI. We shouldn’t underestimate the value of teams and human interactions. People are the agents that bring out the ideas and experiences. We are the readers too. David Espindola added in chat that AI without humans is meaningless.

This led to another interesting chat debate where someone said, “Only humans have ambition.” This was followed by many Amens. Then finally someone added, “Yes, but for how long.”

Dan said the problems with using AI are mostly with the users. Garbage in, garbage out. He cited an example where an image generation tool was given not only the scene but also the camera settings, time of day, and other details. It turned out to be a wonderful picture. You have to add enough prompts and they need to be smart.

Chat Discussions:

Ownership: One worry is that a person’s art and voice will be absorbed into the BORG (the collective mind).

Michael said that is a viable concern. The generative AI is not currently using inputs with copyrights. He then explained how the AI uses multi-layer neural networks, much like the human brain. He referenced a Sci-Fi book that suggested the AI might be treated as a mouse, just a subservient tool, the opposite of what most currently worry about.

Emilia added that we all appropriate the stories and ideas of each other, so how is this different from AI learning from our ideas online? Paul answered by saying that word-by-word copying is prohibited, but we can’t copyright a “style.” Actually, ripping off the style of Steven King or Ernest Hemingway is one of the things AI does best.

Derek pointed out that most writing is automatically copyrighted, but the big issue for him is art. He uses Midjourney to make starting images and tweaks them with Photoshop. If someone else uses the same prompts, they would get a similar image. He has published AI book covers for an entire book series to get a head start. He can copyright his AI covers, but it is not hard for others to come up with something similar. He prefers Midjourney, which costs about \$20 per month (there are other versions and prices), and thinks it is far superior because so many are using it, which leads to even better images. People are using AI art in social media all over with wonderful images. People like images but this is hard on the illustrator industry. Most stock photo sellers today have an AI option.

AI Tool recommendations: All these tools have a monthly charge, so which are best in your opinion?

Michael said [Sudowrite](#) is best for fiction or editorials. (Watch out for hallucinations.) Ghostwriter will mimic the voice of various famous writers.

For nonfiction, ChatGPT, or GPT-4, is probably best at \$20 per month. Many tools will begin to show up in google docs or Microsoft Word, etc.

For a developmental edit on your book (expensive): [Authors.AI](#)

For copy editing: [Jasper.AI](#) or [Copy.AI](#), watch for total book edits in the next few months.

For legal work: [Creators Legal](#)

For meeting notes: [Otter AI](#)

Notion was also recommended for notes, tasks, docs, organizing and collaboration.

All of these are based on Chat GPT, which may be better, especially with GPT-4. They all will be evolving very fast in the next months.

Publishing Bans on AI: If my publisher makes a rule that authors cannot use generative AI will that limit submissions?

Emilia thinks there will still be plenty of submissions. Paul added, “How would they know if AI were used?”

Other Thoughts:

- Michael says that very soon we will be able to define the data set that the AI uses to generate new stuff. For example, one could input the first book in a series, and the AI could generate book two based only on the ideas and characters in book one. In a sense, you would have your own personal AI.
- You can already chat with bot-clones of famous people using sites such as [character.ai](#).
- Most smart technical people have given up their jobs to focus on generative AI. Try to keep your eye on developments. Find things you don't enjoy and get AI to do it for you.
- Will all of these tools sort of trap us into paying forever? Answer, there will be open source tools on Microscope and Google and from others, don't panic. The history of the internet is that free models always win out in the end.
- Stock photo companies are using their own pile of photos to make an AI tool that doesn't violate anyone else's copyrights.
- People will always trust the recommendation of friends most.

What is the central role of humans in twenty years?:

- AI is an opportunity for us to improve the role of humans. As a species, we are able to define how we use AI and interconnect with others. The worth of humans will not go down.
- Maybe we will do data dumps of our brain and go on forever. Check out San Junipero, the fourth episode of Black Mirror on Netflix.
- Some think that suffering is part of great art. Will that change because AI makes it too easy? Don't worry, that wasn't really true before. It was an excuse for failed art. Spending more time on a project doesn't make it worth more.
- To some this is all disquieting. The speed of change is not comforting. The writing industry moves much slower. Such dichotomies bother us as humans.

Michael says the key is still human interactions and recommends the work of [Christopher Hopper](#) as an example where people pay large sums just to see what he has to say each month.

- Will AI be so successful that the cost of everything gets so low that everyone can live well? It's not possible to know yet whose utopia it will be. AI is like calculators when they first came out and were banned in school classes. Now they are required for tests. It's a wild ride. One estimate is that about \$50 trillion dollars of work may be ultimately affected.