

ARTICLE

An introduction: Journal publications and going digital

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Presenting the final issue of *BESS*, the editorial team reflects on the evolving landscape of scholarly publishing, focusing on the issues of research integrity and the use of artificial intelligence.

I. Introduction

As we press for the final edition of *BESS* as an open-access journal, we would like to reflect upon our journey over the last six years. We could only publish *BESS* due to the financial support of Global Access Partners (GAP), a not-for-profit institute for active policy. Recent discussions with the *BESS* Editorial Board and Editorial Board Executive have resulted in a decision to offer Emerald Publishing an opportunity to take over the journal, which they have accepted.¹

A not-for-profit organisation, GAP initiated *BESS* in 2019 and has since developed it into a respected scholarly publication with a network of dedicated authors, a competent editorial team, an active

Disclaimer

This article examines the accuracy of artificial intelligence systems and the phenomenon of digital hallucinations. Generative AI tools were used selectively to assist with language refinement and to illustrate specific categories of error. All substantive ideas, analytical frameworks and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors. Illustrative footnotes are included to demonstrate instances in which such technologies may generate inaccurate or fabricated information. This disclaimer delineates the boundary between automated assistance and the authors' independent scholarly analysis.

1. GAP (2025), *The Journal of Behavioural Economics and Social Systems (BESS)* opens a new chapter under Emerald Publishing, media release 16 July 2025, https://globalaccesspartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/GAP_media_release_BESS.pdf

Editorial Board and an enthusiastic readership. Under Emerald Publishing, we envision *BESS* evolving into a global, hybrid general management journal with open and subscription access. We believe Emerald's reputation and well-established systems and processes will elevate the journal to this next phase.

The specific disciplines in which we would like to grow the journal's presence include the following ones:

- Responsible management and sustainability
- Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) measurement and accountability
- Global grand challenges
- A social systems perspective on behaviour
- Behavioural economics
- Impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on human decision-making
- Impact on law reform

We also acknowledge that the world of scholarly publications is changing. The traditional IMRaD format (Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion) most articles adhere to is being challenged because "while it may make research writing more efficient, the format ultimately constrains creativity and may even shape the very kinds of studies researchers choose to undertake" (Høydal, 2025). At *BESS*, we have always been creative and allowed authors to present their research alongside their ideas, opinions, outlooks and arguments. The articles in *BESS* range from traditional research formats and opinion pieces to open and exploratory essays. Similarly, our authors are not just academics. They are practitioners, politicians, policymakers, public servants or civil society workers. We hope to continue with the freedom and diversity of articles and authors in *BESS*'s new format.

This introductory paper aims to reflect on scholarly publications, academic research and the use of AI and introduce the papers in this final issue of *BESS*. The paper is structured as follows. In section 2, the background of scholarly communications is discussed and linked to *BESS*'s future. Section 3 provides a brief literature review on academic research and AI. Section 4 outlines the papers in this number of *BESS*. Section 5 provides a conclusion and limitations to be studied.

2. Background to commercial scholarly publishing and a future for *BESS*

Ongoing trends, technological innovations and evolving needs of researchers, institutions and industries shape the future of commercial and academic publishing. The key aspects that indicate where the industry might be moving centre around open access (OA) and open science, publishing market dynamics, research integrity issues and new technologies, especially the rapid deployment of AI.

The gradual growth of OA since the early 2000s has seen it become the primary form of research publication, with over three million OA articles published in 2022 out of a total of 5.2 (Campbell *et al.*, 2023). Many factors, including initiatives such as Plan S, drive this growth, where major European funders mandate OA and so-called transformative agreements, resulting in deals allowing institutions to pay a single fee covering access and OA publication, blending access and publishing costs. OA has also grown through preprint servers like arXiv, bioRxiv and medRxiv, allowing researchers to share findings before formal peer review and speeding up dissemination. As OA has gained traction, new models have also developed based on the author as a consumer and widened to include university presses and non-journal platforms such as F1000Research.

When looking at OA, it is essential to note it is just one sub-segment of a much bigger movement around open science, which also has a bearing on the development of scholarly communications. In recent years, there has been a move away from a reliance on citations as a proxy for quality, with institutions using other metrics to evaluate research, such as altmetrics that look at online influence or measures to help understand how open the publication process has been using open peer review processes. The move away from citations has led to new services and technologies being made available to researchers and their institutions. These have enabled broader collaboration across different countries and academic disciplines and open data sharing to open datasets to the global research community.

The demand for OA delivery and research tools has also contributed to consolidation in the publishing industry, with larger publishers acquiring or merging with smaller publishers. Companies like Elsevier, Springer Nature, Wiley, Taylor & Francis and SAGE – the ‘Big Five’ – continue to dominate. However, some smaller publishers and university presses are discovering niches in OA or specialised fields. Pure OA publishers such as MDPI and Frontiers have challenged Big Five dominance, but the challenge is also waning following research integrity issues.

Research integrity has been one of the hot topics in scholarly communications in 2025. In the wake of several issues – including the emergence of papermills, leading to mass retractions by some publishers as a result (Kincaid, 2023) – some publishers have had to take significant measures to identify integrity breaches and beef up their existing controls. Outside major publishing houses, predatory journals still threaten authors, with

over 16,000 journals listed in Cabells' Predatory Reports (Linacre, 2023, p. 36). Efforts to educate researchers about low-quality or exploitative publishers are ongoing. Tools like *Think.Check.Submit*.² and indexing on platforms like DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals) help combat predatory behaviour and the concerns about eroding research integrity in recent years, further restoring trust in academic research.

The rapid development of AI may present another solution to this and other problems in publishing. We already see AI-assisted workflows, transforming manuscript submission, review and editing processes (e.g., plagiarism detection, grammar tools), search and discovery of academic content with advanced recommendation systems, and the peer review process with tools like ChatGPT for initial reviews or triaging papers. In the future, AI may also allow dynamic or custom publishing to flourish with greater flexibility and personalisation and support decentralised models with innovations like peer-to-peer publishing platforms utilising blockchain technology.

However, for many people, AI presents as many problems as it can solve, particularly around research integrity issues and concerns over equity and equal access to AI models, compounding existing issues around the ability of researchers and institutions in the Global South to pay article processing charges to make their articles OA. Overlaying all of this are geopolitical dynamics, which, in 2025, have been especially unstable with the new US administration in charge and continued conflicts around the globe.

Commercial and academic publishing will continue to alter, driven by financial rewards, openness, speed and equity pressures. The future involves a hybrid of traditional and emerging models, with technology and collaboration at its core.

2. <https://thinkchecksubmit.org/>

3. Academic research and AI

A prominent topic in academic research is leveraging generative AI to help with research by utilising machines. However, this research method has significant limitations irrespective of the AI technology employed. It is essential to consider AI unreliable unless the data's origins are known. For instance, ChatGPT draws its information from publicly accessible internet data, which is not a dependable source. Consequently, academics – or anyone for that matter – should not conclude solely from ChatGPT searches.

3.1 Generative vs. non-generative

What distinguishes these technologies? In simple terms, tools that use generative technologies create new content from scratch, drawing on large

language models (LLMs) and statistical inference in response to user prompts. By contrast, non-generative tools do not produce original content; they analyse, process and improve existing material.

In the context of writing, this distinction can be seen across three broad categories. AI writers, such as ChatGPT, use **generative AI** to produce new text based on a user's prompt. Editors, such as InstaText, rely on **non-generative language technologies** that enhance, interpret or refine existing text without creating content from scratch and without the need for a prompt. Multi-purpose writing tools, such as Grammarly, combine generative and non-generative approaches. Accordingly, when content is described as AI-generated, it means that the text has been created by a generative AI system.

TABLE 1. Categorisation of generative AI and non-generative advanced language technologies, InstaText³

Technology	Generative AI	Non-generative advanced language technologies
Definition	Creates new content based on input data	Analyses, processes or improves existing content
Primary use	Content generation and creative tasks	Text analysis, editing and comprehension tasks
Interaction method	Prompt-based: Yes Users provide specific prompts to create new content	Prompt-based: No Users input existing text for editing or analysis
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ChatGPT • DeepSeek • Midjourney • Canva (Magic Write) • Copy.ai 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Translate • IBM Watson Natural Language Understanding • Google Cloud Text-to-Speech • InstaText

3. Why InstaText edits are not AI-generated, <https://instatext.io/why-instatext-edits-are-not-ai-generated/>

In the context of scholarly journals, originality and clear authorship are fundamental requirements, and the use of AI-generated content is often prohibited or strictly limited. This applies to research articles, conference submissions, dissertations and theses, as well as related outputs such as project proposals, book reviews, white papers, case studies, opinion pieces, journalistic articles and grant proposals.

Regardless of the AI type employed, it presents significant limitations when conducting research. As previously mentioned, when using ChatGPT, researchers need to confirm all data sources before reaching any conclusions. This approach is like using Wikipedia: it provides an overview, but further research should use the references cited in the article. If a reference leads to a credible source, authors cite that source instead of Wikipedia. ChatGPT faces additional limitations because it cannot access

research behind academic paywalls, restricting its capabilities from an academic research standpoint. This limitation does not negate its usefulness. For example, ChatGPT can quickly generate a comprehensive list of issues concerning the use of AI in academic research. It can save time obtaining an overview, but like other technologies, you must use its output judiciously and conduct further research.

To experiment, we prompted ChatGPT with the following instructions:

Outline the dangers of using generative AI for academic research purposes and provide academic references for each threat.

Table 2 below shows the results from the ChatGPT search, generated in less than a minute, which outlines these dangers, accompanied by explanations and academic references to support the claims.

TABLE 2. ChatGPT response regarding the dangers of using generative AI for academic research purposes (OpenAI, 2025)

1. Generation of False or Misleading Information
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat: Generative AI can produce plausible-sounding but factually incorrect or fabricated content. When researchers rely on AI-generated data, they risk introducing inaccuracies into academic literature. • Example: ChatGPT has been noted for confidently producing hallucinated citations and facts. • Reference: Ji <i>et al.</i> (2023)
2. Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threat: Generative AI may produce content that is either unoriginal or closely mimics pre-existing texts without proper attribution, leading to unintentional plagiarism. • Example: Students and researchers using AI tools for writing may unknowingly commit academic dishonesty. • Reference: Cottingham, M. & White, S. (2023)⁴

4. AI-hallucinated citation

3. Ethical Concerns in Data Use and Privacy

- **Threat:** Some generative AI systems are trained on datasets containing sensitive or proprietary information, which may inadvertently surface in the generated output.
- **Example:** Researchers risk breaching ethical guidelines by unknowingly using AI-generated data sourced from private or copyrighted material.
- **Reference:** Bender, E.M., Gebru, T., McMillan-Major, A. & Shmitchell, S. (2021)

4. Bias and Discrimination in AI Outputs

- **Threat:** Generative AI systems often inherit biases from their training data, potentially perpetuating or amplifying stereotypes or discriminatory practices in academic contexts.
- **Example:** Outputs from AI may reflect gender, racial, or cultural biases that compromise the neutrality of academic work.
- **Reference:** Birhane, A. & Prabhu, V. (2021)

5. Overreliance on AI Systems

- **Threat:** Dependence on AI can reduce critical thinking and analytical skills, leading researchers to accept AI-generated conclusions without rigorous scrutiny.
- **Example:** A generation-first approach may hinder methodological rigor and understanding of foundational principles.
- **Reference:** Floridi, L. & Cowls, J. (2019)

6. Lack of Transparency in AI Decisions

- **Threat:** Most generative AI systems operate as black boxes, making it difficult to understand how they derive conclusions or synthesise information.
- **Example:** Researchers may unknowingly use content generated by models trained on unverifiable sources.
- **Reference:** Lipton, Z.C. (2018)

7. Limited Applicability in Specialised Domains

- **Threat:** Generative AI may struggle to generate accurate or relevant content for niche academic disciplines or highly specialised research questions due to insufficient training data.
- **Example:** Misinterpretation of complex scientific concepts, particularly in fields like quantum mechanics or advanced mathematics.
- **Reference:** Marcus, G. & Davis, E. (2019)

8. Unverified Citations

- **Threat:** AI-generated references may include non-existent or irrelevant citations, creating issues with academic rigor and credibility.
 - **Example:** Tools like ChatGPT have fabricated academic papers and attributions in their outputs.
 - **Reference:** Thorp, H.H. (2023)
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9. Dependency on Proprietary Technology

- **Threat:** Generative AI tools are often controlled by private companies, raising concerns about access inequality, licensing costs, and transparency in academic use.
- **Example:** Universities may inadvertently lock researchers into proprietary ecosystems that restrict data portability.
- **Reference:** Perelman, M. (2021)⁵

10. Undermining Peer Review and Expertise

- **Threat:** The ease of generating content could dilute the quality of academic work, making it harder to distinguish between AI-generated research and genuine scholarship.
- **Example:** Peer reviewers may struggle to verify the authenticity of AI-assisted submissions.
- **Reference:** Anderson, K. & Shaw, M. (2023)⁶

As outlined above, there has been growing interest in leveraging generative AI to assist with various research tasks. While these technologies offer potential benefits, such as efficiency in summarising documents and creating presentations, they also have significant limitations. A crucial concern is the reliability of the results produced by AI systems, which depends on the origins and quality of the data they are trained on. Without a clear understanding of this data, the findings generated by AI can be questionable. Therefore, researchers must approach generative AI cautiously and ensure transparency regarding the data sources to maintain the integrity of their scholarly work.

Now, we turn our attention to how several academic journal commercial publishers handle the issues of AI in their published work by examining their public statements on using AI. The order of the publishers is random, and the overview is based on information directly from the official websites as of December 2025.

3.2 Publishers

The following key points were from a web search of the major commercial publishing houses and their positions on using AI in scholarly activities in 2025. Please note that these include abbreviated text and direct quotes, which should be read as an indication of policy rather than exact policy statements.

3.2.1 TAYLOR & FRANCIS

Summary by ChatGPT: Taylor & Francis has articulated its AI policy, guiding authors on the appropriate use of AI tools. They emphasise that authors can use generative AI to improve review language. However, peer reviewers remain responsible for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of their reviews.

5. AI-hallucinated citation

6. AI-hallucinated citation

Extract from the publisher's website:⁷

Introduction: Generative AI tools, such as LLMs or multimodal models, continue to develop and evolve, including their application for businesses and consumers. Taylor & Francis welcomes the new opportunities offered by Generative AI tools, particularly in enhancing idea generation and exploration, supporting authors to express content in a non-native language, and accelerating the research and dissemination process. Taylor & Francis is offering guidance to authors, editors, and reviewers on using such tools, which may evolve given the swift development of the AI field.

Generative AI tools can produce diverse forms of content, spanning text generation, image synthesis, audio, and synthetic data. Some examples include ChatGPT, Copilot, Gemini, Claude, NovelAI, Jasper AI, DALL-E, Midjourney, Runway, etc. While Generative AI has immense capabilities to enhance authors' creativity, certain risks are associated with the current generation of Generative AI tools.

Some of the risks associated with the way Generative AI tools work today are:

1. **Inaccuracy and bias:** Generative AI tools are of a statistical nature (as opposed to factual) and, as such, can introduce inaccuracies, falsities (so-called hallucinations) or bias, which can be hard to detect, verify, and correct.
2. **Lack of attribution:** Generative AI is often lacking the standard practice of the global scholarly community of correctly and precisely attributing ideas, quotes, or citations.
3. **Confidentiality and Intellectual Property Risks:** At present, Generative AI tools are often used on third-party platforms that may not offer sufficient standards of

confidentiality, data security, or copyright protection.

4. **Unintended uses:** Generative AI providers may reuse the input or output data from user interactions (e.g. for AI training). This practice could potentially infringe on the rights of authors and publishers, amongst others.

Authors are accountable for the originality, validity and integrity of the content of their submissions. Journal authors are expected to use Generative AI tools responsibly and follow our journal editorial policies on authorship and principles of publishing ethics, and book authors are expected to do so following our book publishing guidelines. This includes reviewing the outputs of any Generative AI tools and confirming content accuracy.

Taylor & Francis support the responsible use of Generative AI tools that respect high data security standards, confidentiality, and copyright protection in cases such as Idea generation and idea exploration, Language improvement, Interactive online search with LLM-enhanced search engines, Literature classification and Coding assistance.

Authors are responsible for ensuring that the content of their submissions meets the required standards of rigorous scientific and scholarly assessment, research, and validation, which the author creates. Note that some journals may not allow the use of Generative AI tools beyond language improvement; therefore, authors are advised to consult with the journal's editor before submission.

Generative AI tools must not be listed as authors because such tools cannot assume responsibility for the submitted content or manage copyright and licensing agreements. Authorship requires taking accountability for content, consenting to publication via a

7. Taylor & Francis, AI Policy, <https://taylorandfrancis.com/our-policies/ai-policy/>

publishing agreement, and giving contractual assurances about the integrity of the work, among other principles. These are uniquely human responsibilities that Generative AI tools cannot undertake.

Authors must acknowledge within the article or book any use of Generative AI tools through a statement that includes the full name of the tool (with version number), how it was used, and the reason for use. This statement must be included in the Methods or Acknowledgments section for article submissions. Book authors must disclose their intent to employ Generative AI tools at the earliest possible stage to their editorial contacts for approval – either at the proposal phase if known or, if necessary, during the manuscript writing phase. If approved, the book author must include the statement in the preface or introduction. This level of transparency ensures that editors can assess whether Generative AI tools have been used and whether they have been used responsibly. Taylor & Francis will retain its discretion over the publication of the work to ensure that integrity and guidelines are upheld.

Taylor & Francis currently does not permit using Generative AI to create and manipulate images and figures or original research data for our publications. The term “images and figures” includes pictures, charts, data tables, medical imagery, snippets of images, computer code, and formulas. The term “manipulation” includes augmenting, concealing, moving, removing, or introducing a specific feature within an image or figure.

Utilising Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in any part of the research process should always be undertaken with human oversight and transparency. Research ethics guidelines regarding current Generative AI technologies are still being updated. Taylor & Francis will continue to update our editorial

guidelines as the technology and research ethics guidelines evolve.

Taylor & Francis strives for the highest standards of editorial integrity and transparency. Editors’ and peer reviewers’ use of manuscripts in Generative AI systems may pose a risk to confidentiality, proprietary rights and data, including personally identifiable information. Therefore, editors and peer reviewers must not upload files, images or information from unpublished manuscripts into Generative AI tools. Failure to comply with this policy may infringe upon the rightsholder’s intellectual property.

Editors are the shepherds of quality and responsible research content. Therefore, editors must keep submission and peer review details confidential. The use of manuscripts in Generative AI systems may give rise to risks related to confidentiality, infringement of proprietary rights and data, and other risks. Therefore, editors must not upload unpublished manuscripts to Generative AI tools, including any associated files, images, or information.

Editors should check with their Taylor & Francis contact before using any Generative AI tools unless they have already been informed that the tool and proposed use are authorised. Journal Editors should refer to our Editor Resource page for more information on our code of conduct.

Peer reviewers are chosen experts in their fields. They should not use Generative AI for analysis or to summarise submitted articles or portions thereof when creating their reviews. As such, peer reviewers must not upload unpublished manuscripts or project proposals, including any associated files, images or information, into Generative AI tools. Generative AI may only be utilised to improve review language, but peer reviewers will always remain responsible for ensuring the accuracy and integrity of their reviews.

3.2.2. WILEY

Summary by ChatGPT: Wiley welcomes the responsible use of AI tools in manuscript preparation but makes clear that authors remain fully accountable for all content and must verify that it reflects their expertise, originality and voice. Authors should review the terms and conditions of any AI tool to ensure it does not claim rights over the work, and transparently disclose the use of AI upon submission, including how it was used and reviewed. AI must not be used to generate, alter or manipulate original research data, and tools cannot be considered capable of fulfilling authorship criteria or be listed as authors. Responsible use also requires protecting confidentiality when inputting sensitive content and ensuring compliance with ethical standards and publishing agreements.⁸

3.2.3. ELSEVIER

Summary by ChatGPT:⁹ Elsevier recognises that generative AI and AI-assisted technologies can support manuscript preparation when used responsibly, but stresses that human oversight, expertise and accountability remain central to scholarly publishing. Authors may use AI tools to assist with tasks such as organising content, improving clarity or gaining insights, but they must carefully review and verify all AI output to ensure accuracy and scholarly rigour. Use of generative AI in manuscript preparation must be transparently disclosed in a separate declaration statement upon submission, including the name of the tool, purpose and extent of use; basic grammar and spelling checks do not require disclosure. AI and AI-assisted tools cannot be listed as authors or credited for authorship, because authorship responsibilities can only be fulfilled by humans. The policy also prohibits using generative AI to create or alter

images and artwork in submissions, unless it is intrinsic to the research and described reproducibly in the methods, and prohibits reviewers and editors from uploading manuscripts into AI tools due to confidentiality and integrity concerns.

For peer reviewers and editors, Elsevier's policy emphasises that confidential manuscript content must not be uploaded to or processed by generative AI tools, owing to privacy, integrity and ethical concerns. Reviewers should rely on their own expertise when assessing submissions and should not use AI tools to generate review text or to evaluate confidential material. The overarching principle is that humans retain responsibility for interpretation, critical evaluation and decision making throughout the research and publication process.

Elsevier will continue to refine these policies as best practice evolves.

3.2.4. EMERALD PUBLISHING

Summary by ChatGPT:¹⁰ Emerald's policy distinguishes clearly between creation of new content and editing existing material. Authors may not use generative AI tools to create or draft any part of a submission, including the abstract, literature review or research data, because such tools cannot fulfil authorship criteria or be accountable for the work; this reflects COPE's position on AI tools. Any use of AI must be transparently declared by authors in the Methods, Acknowledgements or an appropriate section, specifying the tool, version and extent of use, with proper citation of sources and adherence to copyright and data protection standards. Generative AI may be used only for copy-editing to improve language and readability of author-

8. Wiley Author Services (2025), Best practice guidelines on research integrity and publishing ethics, <https://authorservices.wiley.com/ethics-guidelines/index.html>

9. Elsevier (2025), Generative AI policies for journals, <https://www.elsevier.com/about/policies-and-standards/generative-ai-policies-for-journals>

10. Emerald Publishing (2025), Publishing ethics: Artificial intelligence (AI), <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/publish-with-us/ethics-integrity/research-publishing-ethics#ai>

generated text, with authors remaining fully responsible for accuracy and integrity. Emerald also permits AI-assisted copy-editing of peer review reports, provided reviewers declare this use and take responsibility for the content.

In relation to peer review and editorial processes, Emerald prohibits uploading submitted manuscripts or review materials to generative AI tools or large language models for evaluation, assessment or decision-making, owing to confidentiality, privacy and integrity concerns. Reviewers and editors must rely on their own expertise, and any AI use for language refinement must be transparently declared. The policy also restricts publication of AI-generated images except under specific illustrative conditions with appropriate labelling and rights clearance, and maintains that AI tools cannot be cited or credited as authors. Emerald reserves the right to reject or take post-publication action on work that breaches these principles.

3.3 To AI or not to AI?

As evidenced above, academic publishers offer help and guidance to authors regarding using generative AI tools. However, the speed of development of new AI tools – and new behaviours in response – will inevitably create challenges for them. Major AI players frequently release the latest updates, and new players are also emerging based on different models and training. As such, publishers will need to work closely with all stakeholders to maintain the validity of published research. Inevitably, we must realise that AI is already firmly entrenched in the academic research ecosystem, and new AI tools will continue to evolve. While some researchers and publishers have misused these technologies, undermining research integrity, the vast majority use AI responsibly to strengthen the quality, rigour and impact of academic research.

4. Papers in this issue of *BESS*

We now present an overview of the articles included in this issue of *BESS*.

Neilson's (2025) academic article argues that parliamentary systems of government are superior to presidential systems in safeguarding democracy. The article is timely as President Trump took power and, within a short time, executed several executive orders that were significant for the financial, economic and societal wellbeing of the US and other countries.

The author supports this claim using empirical data comparing OECD nations, highlighting the negative correlation between presidentialism and indicators of democratic health like income equality and judicial independence. The research also examines the erosion of democratic norms due to “executive creep” and the crucial role of an independent judiciary. Finally, the study explores societal factors, such as declining public trust, and proposes reforms to strengthen democratic institutions and rebuild citizen confidence.

Neilson (2025) identifies several systemic factors in the sources as threats to global democracy's stability. First, the erosion of liberal democracy is occurring in many countries, shifting towards flawed democracy, electoral autocracy and, in some cases, a complete collapse into closed autocracy. According to a recent V-Dem report (V-Dem, 2023), advances in democracy over the last 35 years are being eroded. A concurrent drift into autocracy is underway in at least 42 of 193 United Nations members, meaning that 70% of the world's population now lives in autocracies.

Second, presidential systems of government are less effective than parliamentary systems in delivering good governance. Personalising an

over-powerful presidential role is considered a first step toward autocracy. The empirical evidence implies that parliamentary and mixed forms of government offer significantly better forms of democratic government than presidentialism. Additionally, presidential systems are more prone to executive/legislative gridlock, excess concentration of power, and a “winner-take-all” approach to politics, making democratic politics a zero-sum game.

Third, executive overreach and the politicisation of institutions undermine the balance of power crucial for effective democracy. Executive creep, judicial emasculation, politicisation of the public service and the co-option of media and kleptocrats need reversing to ensure the survival of liberal democracy. A key issue is the increasing power of the executive branch at the expense of the judiciary and legislature.

Fourth, a widening trust divide between the electorate and elected officials significantly contributes to dissatisfaction with modern democracy. This divide creates an opening for populist parties and politicians. Voter surveys indicate low satisfaction with democracy and declining trust in government across several countries.

Fifth, the capture of the judiciary by those seeking autocratic power is a significant threat. The politicisation of the judiciary undermines the rule of law, which is essential for democracy. The capture includes the selective appointment of judges, which can transform the judiciary into a facilitator of executive and legislative power. Also, the influence of “personalist leaders”, who are more likely to oversee a steep decline in democracy during their tenure, is a significant threat. These leaders are more likely to use extra-constitutional means to suppress the opposition.

Institutional weaknesses also pose a threat. For example, the judiciary’s lack of independence and public service from executive control threatens the very nature of democracy. Some constitutions’ inflexibility can hinder a nation’s capacity to adapt to changing political realities. Neilson (2025) provides examples of democratic backsliding, including Brazil, the US, Hungary, Poland and Turkey. These countries have experienced a decline in democracy, often under presidential or mixed forms of government.

Ford et al. (2025) explore the implementation of wellbeing budgeting in Australia. The authors critically assess the *Measuring What Matters* framework introduced in 2022, comparing the government’s stated goals with the practical realities of budgeting. The paper analyses stakeholder submissions and government documents to identify challenges, such as poorly defined metrics and focus on economic growth over societal wellbeing. It highlights the need for better data collection and stakeholder engagement. The paper also recommends ways to improve the framework by incorporating inequality measures, regional indicators, wealth distribution, and focusing on First Nations people. It concludes that the wellbeing budgeting framework has become more of a statistical tool than a deeply embedded policy and budgetary approach.

The main finding of this paper is that the Australian government’s rhetoric of adopting a wellbeing framework contrasts with the reality of the budgeting process, which still prioritises economic management and neoliberal ideals. Although the Australian government introduced the *Measuring What Matters* framework in 2022, aiming to align social and economic goals to improve Australians’ overall quality of life, implementing wellbeing budgeting faces a range of challenges.

First, despite the Treasury's rhetoric, there have been persistent challenges in implementing the framework. Critics point out that the government's budget emphasises economic growth, with significantly more mentions of "economics" than "wellbeing".

Second, some data in the framework was collected before significant events like the COVID-19 pandemic and interest rate rises, which may not reflect current conditions.

Third, the concept of a wellbeing budget has faced political resistance from conservative forces over the past decade.

Fourth, there is a need to educate the public and policymakers about the benefits of focusing on wellbeing rather than just traditional economic metrics like GDP.

Fifth, wellbeing budgeting has become a statistical dashboard instead of embedded in policy formulation and budgetary processes. The responsibility for updating the wellbeing dashboard shifted to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in 2024.

Sixth, themes and indicators related to inequality, regional indicators, wealth distribution and First Nations people are underrepresented in the framework.

Seventh, the shift of responsibility to the ABS brings uncertainty to the future of wellbeing budgeting in Australia, potentially shifting the focus to monitoring rather than policy formulation.

Finally, the authors recommend developing more nuanced wellbeing metrics and further research into the impact of wellbeing budgeting across different demographics. Also, in a broader global context, international governments recognise the importance of integrating broader wellbeing

indicators, with countries like Scotland, Wales, Canada, New Zealand, and Germany embracing frameworks to monitor progress on non-economic outcomes. Australia's wellbeing budgeting aligns with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals by prioritising human and ecological needs.

Turnbull's (2025a) paper proposes "lifeboat money", a simplified, self-liquidating currency, as a mechanism for addressing market failures underlining economic and environmental harm. Drawing on historical examples like Stamp Scrip, the author argues this system could reduce financial system costs and incentivise sustainable practices by being tethered to a sustainability index. The index would reflect a region's reliance on renewable energy and other sustainability factors, influencing regional exchange rates. The author critiques existing monetary systems, highlighting their flaws in addressing climate change and promoting inequality, advocating for lifeboat money as a more efficient alternative aligned with ethical and ecological principles. The paper also explores the legal and practical aspects of implementing lifeboat money, considering potential conflicts with central banks and locally issued currencies' historical precedents.

Turnbull (2025a) addresses market failures that harm the planet by creating incentives to stop the degradation of the environment. The current monetary system creates price signals that incentivise activities that harm people and the earth, such as burning carbon, which leads to climate change. Lifeboat money, on the other hand, is designed to promote sustainability and discourage environmentally damaging practices. Here are some of the ways lifeboat money addresses market failures.

First, *tethered to sustainability*: Lifeboat money's value is linked to a sustainability index, which

measures the amount of benign renewable energy consumed in each bioregion as a percentage of total energy produced. Regions with higher sustainability would have more favourable exchange rates, creating incentives for sustainable practices. This contrasts with the current system, where currency values are driven by speculation and can be volatile and unpredictable.

Second, *disincentivising carbon use*: By linking the currency to sustainability, the system creates a disincentive to burn carbon, unlike the current system, which incentivises carbon-intensive activity.

Third, *promoting resource recycling*: The system encourages the recycling of non-renewable resources, supporting long-term sustainability.

Fourth, *protecting biodiversity*: Lifeboat money is designed to incorporate biodiversity protection through sustainability metrics, in contrast to current systems that do not prioritise biodiversity.

Fifth, *matching population to regional endowments*: Lifeboat money aims to align population levels in each region with sustainable regional resources, drawing on examples from Indigenous Australian practices.

Sixth, *reducing inflation and reliance on central banks*: Lifeboat money is proposed as a system that could reduce inflationary dynamics and systemic reliance on central banks through its self-liquidating design and use of negative interest rates. This contrasts with official currencies, which can exacerbate inequality and inflation.

Seventh, *decentralising power*: Lifeboat money decentralises economic power, in contrast to current systems that concentrate it.

Eighth, *shifting from prices to wellbeing*: The sustainability indexes associated with lifeboat money prioritise wellbeing over price signals,

moving away from systems in which economic value is the primary measure.

In conclusion, by addressing these issues, Turnbull (2025a) seeks to create a monetary system that aligns with ecological principles and promotes humanity's and the planet's long-term wellbeing. The aim is to shift away from the current system that creates incentives to harm the earth towards one that promotes sustainability and a circular economy.

The paper by **Lucas et al. (2025)** explores the fossil fuel industry's avoidance of responsibility for its contribution to climate change and the accounting and accountability issues surrounding this. The paper uses content analysis of investigative journalism articles to identify key themes related to the fossil fuel industry.

The main arguments and findings are as follows. First, the fossil fuel industry actively resists decarbonisation efforts while concealing its activities, often with the help of governments. The sector spends considerable resources resisting global decarbonisation efforts.

Second, current accounting and accountability practices do not address the fossil fuel industry's broad social and ecological impacts. Organisational accountability alone cannot tackle the challenges related to the fossil fuel industry.

Third, the industry's focus on profit undermines efforts to address climate change. The pursuit of profit is prioritised over the wellbeing of people and the planet.

Fourth, systemic change is needed, involving governments, companies, civil society and other actors. Systemic change is necessary before lasting organisational change can be implemented.

Lucas *et al.* (2025) research draws on 177 articles from independent and mainstream news outlets published in Australia between 22 September and 29 November 2022. These dates cover the lead-up and outcomes from the COP27 negotiations. Three main themes identified through a content analysis of the selected articles were taxation and subsidies, carbon accounting and carbon trading, disinformation, greenwashing and sportswashing.

The taxation and subsidies of the fossil fuel industry benefit from generous tax concessions and subsidies. The sector can avoid paying income tax through offshore tax havens, transfer pricing, and the grandfathering of tax losses. Governments also provide significant subsidies to fossil fuel companies.

Carbon accounting and carbon trading: Carbon markets and trading are used to justify continued fossil fuel use. Concerns exist about a lack of transparency and the potential for greenwashing within carbon trading. The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) aims to set global standards for sustainability disclosure, but its focus on financial materiality is questioned. There is a contest between the International Accounting Standards Board (IASB) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) over which carbon reporting standards will become the norm. The Australian government's climate-related financial disclosure requirements are aligned with the ISSB and are criticised for a narrow focus on investor needs. Carbon offset schemes, including Australia's, have been criticised for a lack of integrity and the potential for fraud.

Disinformation, greenwashing and sportswashing: The fossil fuel industry uses these strategies to improve its public image. Companies are accused of "greenwashing" by making false claims about their environmental efforts. Sportswashing is used to normalise the operations of fossil fuel companies.

In conclusion, the paper highlights the need for an international coalition of civil society actors and progressive governments to address global climate change. It also explores investigative journalism's role as a valuable data source for social scientists. The study outlines that corporate capture of political processes is a significant issue that undermines efforts to address climate change. The fossil fuel industry uses various strategies to secure benefits from governments. Lucas *et al.* (2025) emphasises the urgency of transitioning from fossil fuels and the need for a just and equitable system transformation, and concludes that choosing to be part of the solution requires working together urgently, given that the future of humanity is at stake.

Fritz *et al.* (2025) introduce the concept of decision sovereignty to explain why well-informed decisions in policy, organisational and technological contexts so often fail to translate into sustained action. The research note argues that while advances in data, analytics and AI have dramatically improved decision quality, they have also increased decision intensity and contestation, exposing weaknesses in governance structures that are not designed to authorise and execute complex choices at scale.

By framing execution capacity as a distinct and constraining variable, the research note shifts attention from decision-making alone to the institutional conditions required for decisions to be carried out, offering a conceptual lens for understanding implementation challenges across both the public and private sectors.

The paper by **Silvi (2025)** revisits the long-standing tension between analytical rationality and managerial intuition, as articulated by Herbert Simon and Henry Mintzberg, and reframes it in the context of contemporary

artificial intelligence. It argues that the rapid adoption of AI systems intensifies, rather than resolves, Mintzberg's core concern: an overreliance on technically correct answers at the expense of asking the right questions.

The paper positions AI as the ultimate expression of Simon's analytical management paradigm. AI systems excel at processing large datasets, applying models consistently and producing coherent, structured outputs. However, this strength also exposes a fundamental limitation: while AI is highly effective at answering well-defined questions, it lacks the capacity to interrogate assumptions, surface unarticulated problems or navigate genuine ambiguity.

Drawing on research in critical thinking and dual-process cognition, the paper situates this limitation within the distinction between System 1 and System 2 thinking. AI demonstrates powerful automated and pattern-recognition capabilities but lacks the reflective and meta-cognitive functions associated with deeper reasoning. As AI-generated answers become more sophisticated, the human capacity to frame, challenge and refine questions becomes increasingly critical.

To address this gap, Silvi (2025) introduces the concept of **prompting advantage**. Prompting advantage is defined not as a technical skill in writing prompts, but as a higher-order managerial competence: the ability to recognise flawed problem framing, question hidden assumptions and identify when convincing answers are being produced to the wrong questions. This capability is presented as a contemporary articulation of Mintzberg's managerial intuition and a core requirement for effective human-AI collaboration.

The argument is illustrated through the Carta Matic case study, which shows how apparently robust financial analysis failed to detect deeper governance, strategic and industry-level risks. Despite strong quantitative indicators, the firm's collapse revealed what the paper terms the numerical sufficiency fallacy: the mistaken belief that comprehensive quantitative analysis alone is sufficient for sound decision-making.

Silvi (2025) further argues that prompting advantage can be developed and embedded through deliberate organisational practices, including structured workshops, canvas-based tools and facilitated human-AI collaboration. These approaches aim to transform intuitive problem-finding into a repeatable organisational capability.

In conclusion, the paper contends that AI does not render the Mintzberg-Simon debate obsolete but instead heightens its relevance. As analytical processing is increasingly automated, the distinctive human contribution lies in the ability to ask meaningful questions, navigate ambiguity and construct shared understanding. Developing prompting advantage is therefore positioned as a foundational capability for management education and organisational practice in the AI era.

Turnbull (2025b) proposes that "promoting democracies by democratising capitalism" involves transforming economic structures to enhance democratic governance. The approach outlines implementing time-limited equities, which are financial instruments or shares with a predetermined expiration date. This mechanism aims to promote fairer wealth distribution and prevent a select few long-term accumulations of power and resources, thus fostering a more equitable economic environment. Additionally,

the proposal includes polycentric self-governance, a system where multiple governing bodies coexist and operate independently at various levels. This decentralisation allows for more localised decision-making, empowering communities and individuals to have a more significant say in policies affecting them. By dispersing power, polycentric self-governance seeks to prevent the concentration of authority, which can undermine democratic principles.

These strategies aim to create a more balanced and participatory economic and political system. By aligning capitalism more closely with democratic ideals, the framework hopes to strengthen democratic institutions, enhance social equity, and empower citizens. Such economic reforms could lead to a more resilient and responsive democratic society where individuals have financial and political agency.

The final two essays, **Fritz-Kalish (2025)** and **Bodrova (2025)**, present complementary leadership perspectives informed by practice, dialogue and systems-level thinking.

Fritz-Kalish (2025) positions the Pacific as a critical testing ground for the Blue Economy, aligning regional experience with the G20's 2024 Blue Economy focus championed by Brazil. It frames Pacific Island nations as Large Ocean States facing acute climate, biodiversity and economic pressures despite minimal emissions, and argues that sustainable Blue Economy development depends on locally led growth driven by small and medium-sized enterprises, gender-inclusive entrepreneurship and innovative finance. Drawing on the work of GAP and the International Centre for Democratic Partnerships in the Pacific, the essay illustrates how Australia-Pacific partnerships can translate global ambitions

into practical outcomes that align ocean stewardship, economic inclusion and regional cooperation.

Bodrova (2025) presents the recommendations of the Orvieto Leadership Summit, held in Orvieto, Italy on 24–26 June 2025, under the theme *Creative Insights for Transformational Human Decision Making*. The Summit's communiqué articulates leadership imperatives for modern decision makers at the intersection of neuroscience, Statement' – a call for the empowerment of human agency through technology, the embedding of scientific thinking in education and governance, and the fair distribution of technological gains across generations.

5. Conclusion

This final issue of *BESS* marks both an ending and a transition. It reflects a period in which scholarly publishing is being reshaped by digital transformation, open science and the rapid diffusion of AI, alongside renewed concerns about research integrity, equity and trust.

The contributions in this issue exemplify *BESS*'s commitment to intellectual pluralism, bridging scholarship, policy and practice and engaging directly with global democratic, economic and ecological challenges.

As *BESS* moves to its next phase under Emerald Publishing, this legacy provides a strong foundation for continued experimentation, critical inquiry and responsible innovation in scholarly communication. The central challenge ahead is not whether to embrace digital tools and AI, but how to do so in ways that preserve human judgement, accountability and the public purpose of research.

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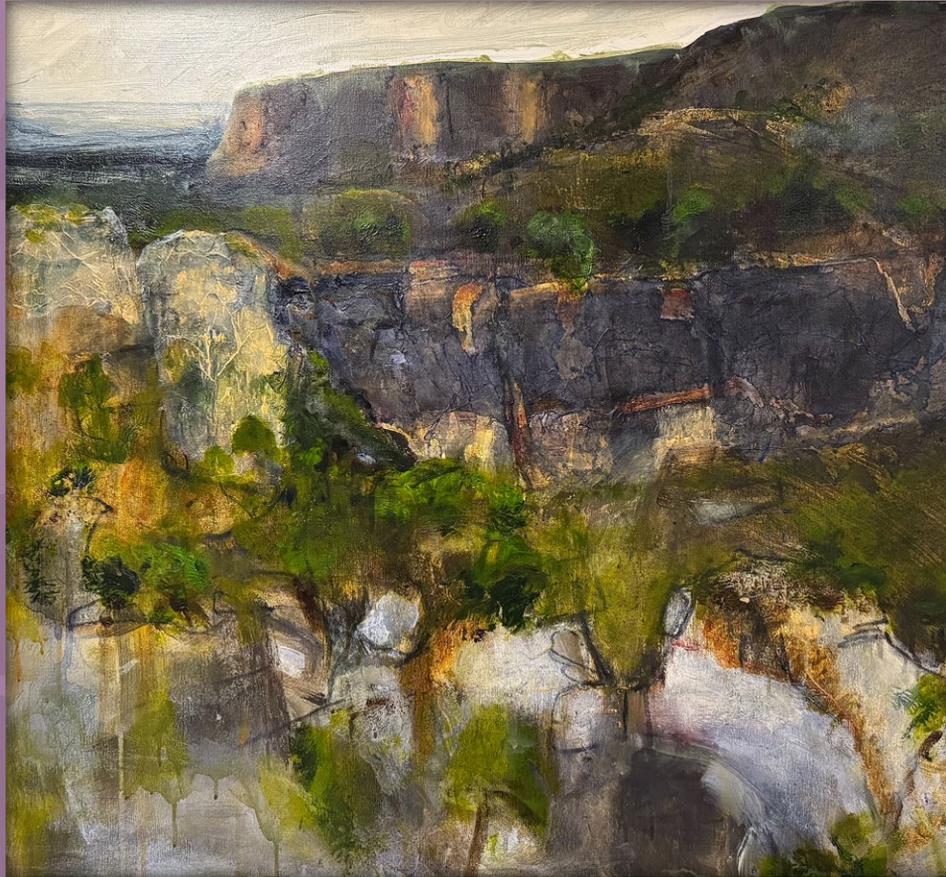
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