

Haute Ecole
« ICHEC – ECAM – ISFSC »



Enseignement supérieur de type long de niveau universitaire

How does Generative Artificial Intelligence influence authors and editors in the Belgian book industry: a qualitative method

Mémoire présenté par :

Tessa VANDEKERKHOVEN

Pour l'obtention du diplôme de

Master's degree in Management Sciences

Année académique 2024-2025

Promoteur :

Florent DIVERCHY

Boulevard Brand Whitlock 6 - 1150 Bruxelles

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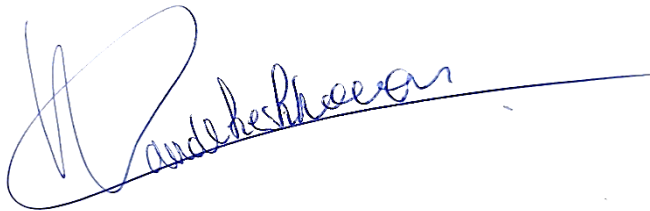
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Finally, I would like to thank Jorge Rivera-Herrans and his team for the masterpiece "Epic: The Musical", whose musical sagas accompanied me throughout the writing of this dissertation and are essentially responsible for creating the dopamine needed to motivate my brain through this trial.

Declaration of Honor Regarding Compliance with Referencing Rules and the Use of Generative AI in the Context of a Thesis

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Done at Affligem, on the 13th of August 2025.

VANDEKERKHOVEN Tessa, 181114.

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Introduction

On 11 March 2024, a new edition of the London Book Fair took place. This is the international publishing fair that brings together all players in the sector to develop their relationships, discuss the latest news and challenges facing the industry. The main themes addressed during the 100 seminars organised during the event are market trends and prospects, sustainability, inclusion and diversification, and more specifically technology and artificial intelligence.

From assisted creation to the optimisation of production and analysis processes, artificial intelligence is at the heart of the debate. In just a few years, it has disrupted many industries, going far beyond the scope of automatable tasks. Long considered a support for repetitive tasks, AI is now attempting to enter the creative sphere, particularly the arts and culture (Caramiaux, 2020). This incursion has provoked mixed reactions, especially since some award-winning authors have admitted to using AI to write their works, sparking a controversy over artistic legitimacy and transparency of practices (Bouhadjera, 2025).

Public opinion remains divided on this new reality: on the one hand, some see it as an accessible revolution that increases creative power and democratises cultural production; on the other hand, many express fears about the authenticity of works, the loss of literary uniqueness (Fleureau, 2025), creation and invention, and even a threat to copyright and the recognition of human artists (Caramiaux, 2020).

However, despite the scale of the phenomenon, there is little scientific research on the subject in the context of the publishing industry, and even less in Belgium. When this study began in December 2023, it was clear that this topical subject deserved further exploration, both theoretically and practically. Now, as I conclude this research thesis in August 2025, several works have been published since the beginning of this thesis or are currently being investigated. In 2024, the Belgian Minister of Economy has commissioned a research study on this very topic from the PILEn association. They aspire to comprehend the awareness around AI from every stakeholder of the book chain in French-speaking Belgium (Cornelissen, 2024).

The Publishers Association identifies three key sectors in the industry: academic, consumer/commercial and education. This study aims to better understand and provide a clear overview of the transformative effects that the integration of artificial intelligence has already had or will have on each of these areas, while contributing to existing scientific research. It intends to lay the groundwork for a reflective preamble, offering avenues for analysis and reflection for more in-depth studies to be carried out in 5- or 10- years' time.

The research question of this thesis will therefore be as follows: How does Generative Artificial Intelligence influence authors and editors in the Belgian book industry?

Through qualitative analysis, these questions will be addressed from the perspective of publishing industry professionals, experts in the field of AI and through the reflections of researchers participating in professional meetings dedicated to AI in publishing. By analysing

these results in the context of understanding the influence of artificial intelligence on the book publishing sector, this study contributes to the current debate on the encounter between technology and literature.

The conclusions of this research will highlight the effects for the various players in this ecosystem: writers, self-published authors, publishers, distributors and readers, who are now working in the field of publishing, whether assisted by artificial intelligence or not.

Finally, this study highlights the prospects for the book publishing sector in a context of rapid and continuous transformation, where technological innovation is challenging the very foundations of the use of generative AI and the publishing profession.

Methodology

The methodology of my dissertation is constructed on three main points. Firstly, I will gather existing data relevant to my research question through a literature review. I will begin with an overview of the book industry in Europe, followed by an introduction to artificial intelligence. I will then look at the various applications of technology, particularly artificial intelligence, in the book chain.

To establish a complete diagnosis, I have collected a variety of sources: scientific journals, press articles, audio-visual documents, dictionaries, interviews, and round tables at literary events. Artificial intelligences will also be used in this research. However, each result generated by AI has been reworked to check the veracity of the information provided and to add further data of interest. In addition, each content generated by AI is supported by scientific or professional documentation from my own research. I used ChatGPT for structural purposes and as assistants when I reached a dead end (see APPENDICES 16 to 18). Perplexity AI was applied to search for documentation, in the same way as Google Scholar or Cairn.info (see APPENDICES 11 to 14). Then, I also made use of Perplexity AI in my coding of themes for my result's analysis (see APPENDIX 15: Perplexity AI. Cross-sectional thematic analysis table). In addition, TurboScribe AI was an immense help to transcribe the interviews (see APPENDICES 6 to 10). At the end of this literature review, I will outline my research question. From then, hypotheses will be put forward, by analysing the perspectives set out by the various authors.

Secondly, I will undertake a field study to acquire empirical data and deepen my understanding of the subject. This will take the form of a qualitative analysis based on individual semi-directive interviews. To ensure that my analysis is representative to some extent, I have selected five professionals from diverse backgrounds. My intent is to document their perceptions of the integration of artificial intelligence into creative and editorial practices, as a mean to assess its various impacts. After examining the answers provided by these stakeholders, I will compare them with the hypotheses established based on the existing literature, to confirm or refute them.

Thirdly, I will return to the aspects highlighted in the literature review and compare them with the results of my qualitative survey. This will be a reflexive discussion aimed at identifying the convergences and divergences relating to the different themes addressed.

Following this objective discussion, I will make a personal analysis of the lessons learned from this dissertation. In this respect, I will present my own interpretation of the answers provided to my questions, as well as my recommendations. Finally, by way of conclusion, I will summarise the various aspects dealt with in my dissertation and discuss the prospects and limitations of my research.

Chapter 1. Definitions of the concepts

The first chapter of this work will be devoted to the definitions of the concepts studied here. To familiarise readers of this dissertation with the sometimes-complex terms used, the first part of this chapter will focus on the publishing industry. A brief history lesson will be given on the subject before progressing to a description of the industry today and its applications.

The second term studied will be artificial intelligence. Definitions and descriptions of this phenomenon are still young and complex. This section will highlight its most accurate description to date. Before moving on to the main topic of our paper, the history of artificial intelligence and its latest developments will be explained.

The Book Publishing Industry

Definitions

To start off our situation report on the book industry, it is worth defining the terms in question. The definition of the consecutive terms came from the Online Cambridge Dictionary.

Commonly used, the word “*Book*” is specified as: “*a written text that can be published in printed or electronic form*”. In the same dictionary, “*Publishing*” is defined as “*the profession or business of producing and selling a book, magazine*”. The last term “*Industry*” is referred as “*the companies and activities involved in the process of producing goods for sale, especially in a factory or special area*” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

In the case of the book industry, Nicolas Baudoin (2020) gives the ensuing definition, “*the sequence of activities from creation and design to the sale, purchase and eventual availability of the book by libraries as a ‘chain’*. This ‘*book chain*’ includes a wide variety of players, but they are all so closely interrelated that a common understanding of their activities emerges under the term ‘*industry*’ ”.

The book industry’s history from its Golden Age

To focus my research, I will concentrate on the history of book publishing in Europe. The history of publishing in Europe is marked by technological, cultural, and social evolutions.

Before the invention of the printing press, books were copied by hand by scribes in monasteries and scriptoria (Setzer, 2025). The task was laborious and often took months or even years. Even at that time, manuscripts were often adorned with miniatures and illuminated initials, making each book a unique work of art. Notwithstanding, access to books was limited to the religious and noble elites, as their production cost were expensive for this period (Tucker & Unwin, 2024).

The catalyst for the evolution of publishing was the innovation of the printing press (Setzer, 2025). Without printed text, the circulation of books was not possible. This is why the invention of the movable type printing press by Johannes Gutenberg in the mid-15th century revolutionised publishing. Gutenberg's first major printed work, the Bible, was achieved around 1455 (Tucker & Unwin, 2024). This technology was the first step that enabled the mass production of books, which reduced costs and made books more accessible to the public. Subsequently, the printing press facilitated the spread of ideas and played a crucial role in the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the Enlightenment (Bhaskar, 2013).

It was not until the 19th century that technological advancements, such as the steam press and the production of paper from wood pulp, enabled the mass production of books at reduced costs (Tucker & Unwin, 2024).

The 20th century was marked by the diversification of published materials. Paperback books, launched by publishers like Penguin Books in England and Gallimard in France, expanded the accessibility of literature. The post-war period saw the rise of large publishing groups, often at the expense of small independent publishing houses (OpenAI, 2024). However, the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s also favoured the emergence of new voices and diverse literary genres (Tucker & Unwin, 2024).

In the decades that followed, developments continued. Sales catalogues expanded, and mass production of books accelerated. In the 2000s, consumers increased their presence on the internet. Ordering books online has become widespread practice. Once the online sales picked up, in the 2010's, we witnessed a platform revolution. As the trend towards online consumption of cultural content grew, GAFAMs began to take a dominant position in cultural markets (Thuillas & Wiart, 2023). The concept of a platform was initially meant to be an intermediary between content creators and consumers. Notwithstanding these major business groups are now moving up the cultural content value chain by launching their own productions. In their article on platformisation, Thuillas and Wiart (2023) underscored several publisher's behaviours in reaction to this GAFAM's platforms concentration. Among the book's publishers, some adopted the opportunistic strategy by embracing these new intermediaries and placed their content on most of the existing platforms. Others attempted to unite themselves against these large platforms. To achieve this, they are competing with platforms such as Amazon by creating their own shared bookstore platforms or platforms offering only niche content (Thuillas & Wiart, 2023).

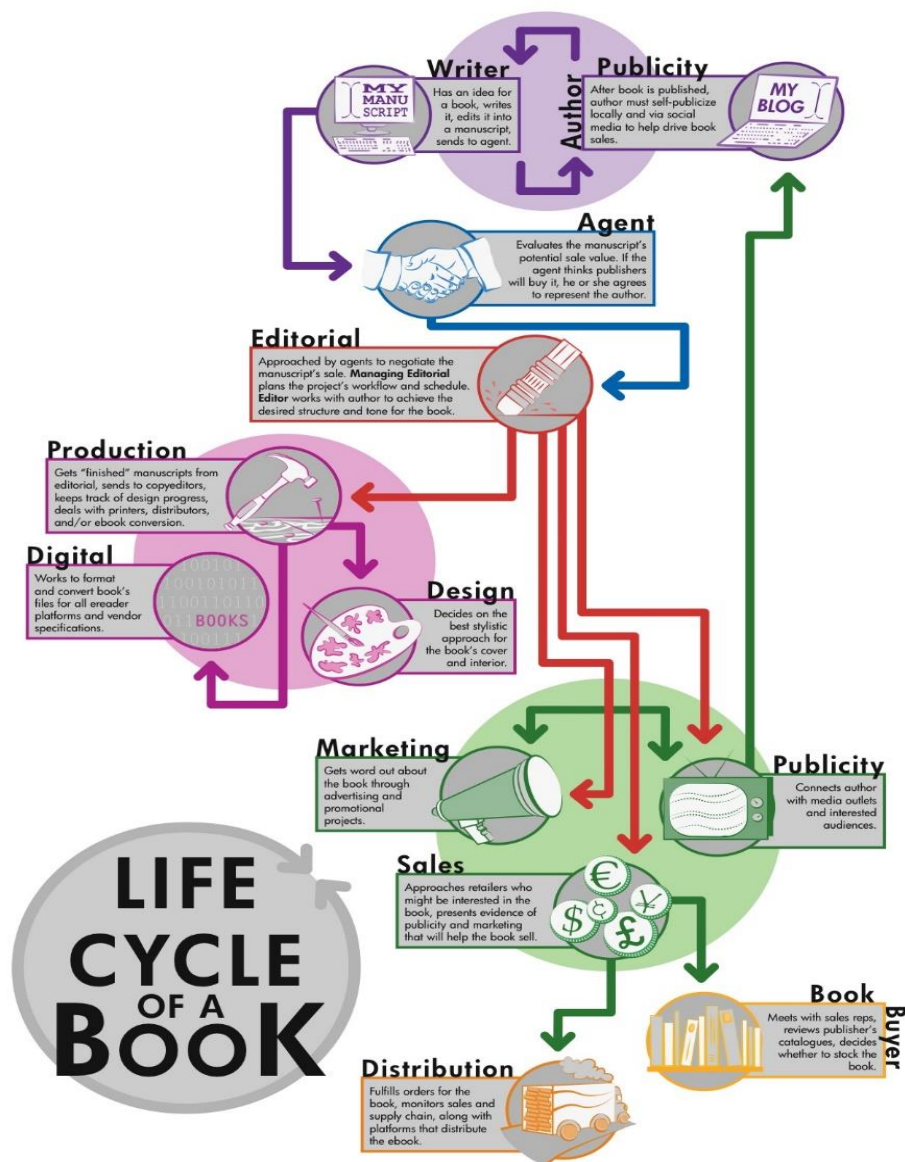
One of the benefits of COVID-19 is that the world has experienced an acceleration of its digitalisation in the 21st century. Undeniably, with the world's population confined to its home, it was a question of survival for businesses to fully digitalise their activities. Reports underscored that the book publishing market was no exception. Due to lockdown the bookstores closed, and the crisis ensuing all over Europe; at the peak of it, Europe recorded a decrease of in stores physical book's sales of 80-90% (Federation of European Publishers, 2020). The report of the Federation of the European Publishers (2020) did register that online

sales skyrocketed, but not enough to compensate the loss of in stores' sales. The actors in the book value chain capable of limiting the damage done on the physical book sales at that time, are the ones who boosted their digital visibility in 2020. The statistics disclosed that some European countries witnessed their online book sales rise from 50% to 180% in April 2020 (Vikrant et al., 2023). In parallel, the confinement permitted the increase of e-books and audiobooks. This advent of the digital age has disrupted the book publishing industry.

Description of the industry nowadays

Before venturing any further into our research, it is appropriate to look first at the various protagonists in the book chain, those who enable readers to obtain a version of their authors' writings. Indeed, from the authors who are the creators of the content read to the characters who devour their pages, there are different actors who connect them.

According to IPA, the International Publishers Association (2024), the industry of publishing includes many actors, who generate the value chain of the industry. In the order given by IPA, they listed them as followed: "the authors, the booksellers, the libraries, the Reproduction Rights Organisations (RROs), the book fairs, Standards Organisations, the printers, data providers, the NGO's and charities, and the last of them are the other international bodies such as the United Nations, or more precisely the World Intellectual Property Organization" (International Publishers Association, n.d.).



© [International Book Promotion](https://publishinginsight.wordpress.com/2015/01/28/the-life-cycle-of-a-book/)

Source: Chen, S. (2015, January 28). The Life Cycle of A Book. Publishing Insights. Retrieved from <https://publishinginsight.wordpress.com/2015/01/28/the-life-cycle-of-a-book/>

Authors are, by definition, the content creators. Essentially, they provide the raw material for the book publishing industry. Once a manuscript is finished, it can be sent to a publishing house. Publishers are the main characters in a publishing house. When editors receive a book fitting their tastes, or fit the criteria sought by their company, they accept responsibility for it with all the risks that entails (Association des éditeurs belges, n.d.-a). The publisher is the conductor, enabling the book to be issued. They oversee all the players in a publishing house, to ensure that the book is released successfully (Kube, 2023).

Besides the editors, in traditional publishing, the house is made up of several professionals. For example, there may be an illustrator who creates the images to illustrate the publication or who, like the graphic designer or photographer, oversees the cover (Navarro, 2025). Similarly, there may be a layout artist who manages the page layout, creating the book's mock-up which brings together the text and any images, as well as extratextual elements such as pagination. As a matter of fact, the layout artist shapes the graphic elements which will characterise the architecture and aesthetics of the book (Navarro, 2025). The proofreader is also a central figure in the publishing house. He ensures that the text submitted is linguistically consistent.

There are other jobs, depending of course on the size of the publishing house and its budget. There are press officers, editorial assistants, production managers, translators and the legal department. Each person involved must have their changes approved by the publisher. At the end, the final document is sent to the printer, with instructions on the quality of the paper and the number of copies (Navarro, 2025).

At last, before arriving in the consumers' hands, the distributors oversee selling the final product (Kube, 2023). There is a multichannel of vendors at play here: libraries, supermarkets, second-hands markets, and online platforms (Association des éditeurs belges, n.d.-b). Since the creation of digital book, it is obvious that the book chain and the players in it have changed slightly. As a result of this digitalisation phenomenon, other publishing professions have emerged. These include the digital designer who, like a layout artist, constructs the file, with its page layout and typographic choices. In addition, they must also ensure that the file is compatible with different e-book readers like Amazon Kindle or Kobo (Hentz, 2017). There are also community managers who looks after the visibility and reputation of a publishing house or author. It should be remembered that digital books are often linked to paper, as they are available as Print on Demand (see POD p. 24).

The Book Publishing Industry: Key figures

Now, it would be appropriate to set the geographical area for this research as well as some key figures of the book industry. My research was initially focused on the European publishing sector, and more specifically on the member countries of the Federation of European Publishers. In addition to including most of the European publishers associations, The Publishers' Association of the United Kingdom is still a member of the FEP, regardless of the "Brexit" (Federation of European Publishers, 2012). As of the latest data, the continent of Europe is home to a vast network of contributors shaping the book publishing industry: publishers, authors, literary agents, etc.

European Market Overview

The European book publishing market portrays a certain degree of diversity, encompassing several genres, languages, and publishing formats. The industry continues to thrive due to strong cultural traditions, a high literacy rate, and some government support for the arts and literature. According to the survey conducted by the FEP, book publishers in Europe generated about €24.4 billion in total annual sales revenue (2024). If we investigate the publisher's turnover, Germany, the UK, France, Italy and Spain are the leading book markets in Europe. According to ChatGPT (2024), Germany is the largest, with annual revenues of about €9.3 billion. The UK follows closely with a market size of around £6 billion (€7 billion), while France generates approximately €4 billion annually. These markets are upheld by sales of both print and digital books (OpenAI, 2024).

The global trend towards digitalisation notwithstanding, according to the table below, print books remain the preferred format among European readers. In 2023, print book sales accounted for about 83.9% of the total market revenue in Europe, reflecting a slight but consistent decline in favour of digital formats. Despite the lockdown during the COVID19 pandemic, a survey directed by Statista stated that the printed version of books continue to be the favourite format of consumption among Europeans (see APPENDIX 4 : European's book consumption, statistics) (Jenik, 2021). E-books and audiobooks have been growing in momentum, with e-books constituting roughly 13% of the market and audiobooks showing the highest growth rate since 2021.

European Book Publishing Statistics 2023

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Publishers' revenue from sales of books (bln)	24.4	23.9	23.6	22.2	22.4
Educational (school) books	18.3%	18.0%	17.4%	18.4%	19.3%
Academic/Professional books	16.0%	16.8%	17.1%	16.3%	18.0%
Consumer (trade) books	51.1%	50.5%	50.5%	50.3%	49.4%
Children's books	14.5%	14.7%	15.0%	14.5%	13.3%
Turnover by area					
Sales in the domestic market	80.5%	79.9%	81.7%	81.7%	79.0%
Exports	19.5%	20.1%	18.3%	18.3%	21.0%
Turnover by distribution channels¹					
Sales in bookstores and specialised stores	47.0%	45.6%	43.6%	44.7%	50.3%
Sales in supermarkets and other stores	11.9%	11.2%	11.5%	11.9%	12.1%
Online sales	24.2%	25.8%	29.1%	28.9%	23.0%
Direct sales (incl. libraries and book clubs)	16.9%	17.4%	15.7%	14.5%	14.6%
Turnover by format³					
Print	83.9%	83.9%	84.8%		
Digital	12.7%	12.9%	12.6%		
Audio	3.5%	3.2%	2.5%		
Sales at market value⁴ (bln)	35.3	34.7	34.75	33.2	32.6
Number of titles published in period					
New titles	585,000	575,000	575,000	595,000	605,000
Number of titles in print (active catalogue) ²	14,000,000	13,800,000	13,400,000	13,100,000	12,250,000

Estimates, all figures rounded

¹ This section has been reviewed and its data, not comparable to those of previous years, will need time to become more reliable

² This series of data was reintroduced in a corrected form in 2019; figures do not correspond to those in previous issues

³ This series of data was introduced in 2022; „digital“ means ebooks and other text-based digital products, „audio“ indicates audiobooks in all formats; data should be taken as broad estimates

⁴ This series of data, introduced in 2024 (data 2023) and estimated retrospectively for previous years, indicates the value of sales in European markets at cover price or the equivalent thereof, for books published by European publishers

Source: Turrin, E. (2024, November 13). *European Book Publishing Statistics 2023*. Federation of European Publishers. Retrieved from <https://fep-fee.eu/European-Book-Publishing-Statistics-2023>

As for the registered ISBNs, which stands for the International Standard Book Number, out of the 23 nations surveyed by NielsenBookData, Germany, the UK, Italy, Spain, and the Netherlands are the nations with the most registered ISBNs (see APPENDIX 1: Table of ISBNs registered and the number of publishers in Europe). While Germany has the most ISBNs registered in 2023, the Netherlands has the highest number of publishers, with almost 75,000 (Vikrant et al., 2023). In any case, with the exception of the United States, the most profitable publishing houses in the world are found on the European continent. In 2022, at the top of the list surveyed by Statista, there was Berstelmann and Springer Nature from Germany, Pearson in the UK, Wolters Kluwer in The Netherlands and Hachette Livre from France (see APPENDIX 2: Largest book publishers in 2022, by revenue) (Statista, 2025).

Although Europe's linguistic diversity is an opportunity for the publishing industry, since the COVID19 pandemic, professionals noticed that a considerable amount of readers fancy buying the English version of the book, instead of its translated work. The panel of professionals invited to speak on the English-language books sales in Europe (2024), at the London conference, took the instance of the Netherlands to illustrate their findings. Although the national language is Dutch, the latest statistics reveal that 22% of book sales come from books

in English. And this percentage is growing steadily every year (Waldmann et al., 2024). At the conference of the London Book Fair (2024), this panel suggested that younger generations could be the main cause of it. They assumed that younger readers seemed to prefer reading in English because of the “Booktok” phenomenon (see Social media, p.25).

Belgium’s peculiar book market

The analysis of Belgium's statistics is part of a special context, in that it is divided into 3 distinct communities: Dutch-speaking, German-speaking, and French-speaking. The communities in question are competent in matters of culture (Belgium.be, n. d.). However, if we look at the book industry in Belgium from an economic point of view, it is the Regions that are the relevant authorities: the Flemish Region, the Walloon Region, and the Brussels-Capital Region (Belgium.be, n. d.).

The “Boekvak” in the Flemish Region

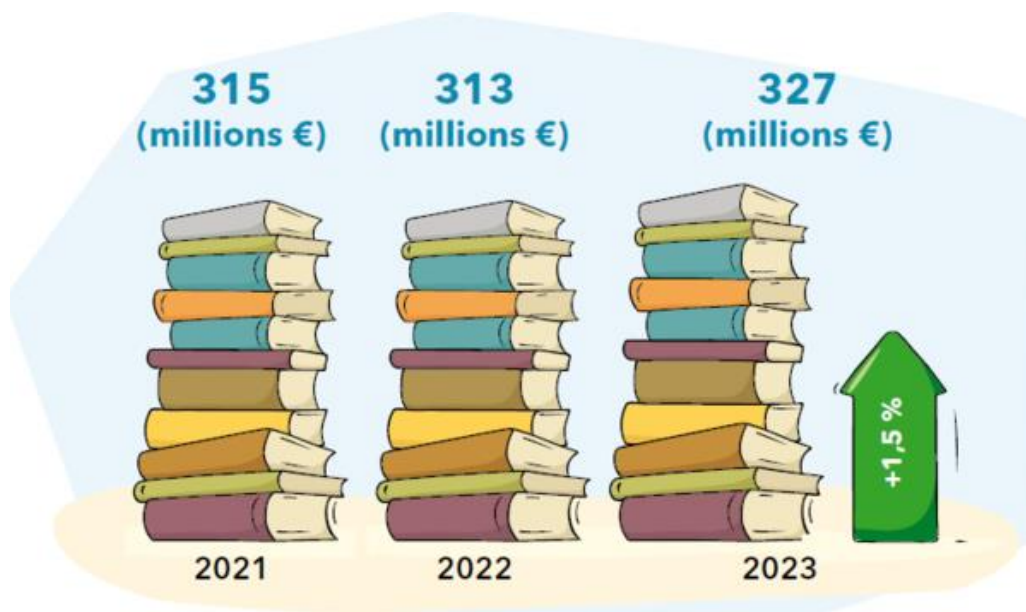
There are 84 publishers in Flanders. Together, they release almost 11,000 fresh titles annually. Of these, half are academic and educational materials or publications for professionals, and the other half are general titles (including literature). Most publishers, except for two major companies, Lannoo and Standaard Uitgeverij, are small or medium-sized and focus on one or more genres (Flanders Literature, n. d.).

According to the Flanders Literature’s website, about €195 million is the total revenue of the Flemish book business. Although the website does not specify the year to which this amount corresponds, they add that those numbers account for 11.2% of the region's creative sector. The entire Flemish book sector employs about 3,000 full-time equivalents (Flanders Literature, n. d.). According to research firm GfK and Boektopia, 13.5 million books were sold in Flanders and Brussels in 2024, bringing in €225.3 million, a 0.7% decrease in comparison to 2023 (Schelstraete, 2025).

The French-speaking Belgian market

The French-speaking Belgian book market is characterised by a strong polarisation, with a few large but foreign (especially from France) publishing groups dominating revenues and distribution channels, while a multitude of small publishers, marked by economic fragility and artisanal models (Wiert, 2020). These Belgian local publishers are often limited to specialised or regional niches. With competitors like France or online platform such as Amazon, access to the market and distribution remains a sizable challenge, pushing some publishers either toward direct, local strategies or attempts at internationalization (see APPENDIX 3: Belgian’s book value chain diagram). Some specialised themselves in less competitive genres like comics, children’s books, and legal publications. The sector is also marked by a strong public finance support (Wiert, 2020).

The ADEB (Association des éditeurs belges) is a professional organisation representing the Belgian French-speaking publishing industry in the Brussels Capital Region and the Wallonia Region. In collaboration with the various structures in the sector, this organisation offers us the key figures for 2023. Back then, the book market brought in €264.8 million. Even though the value has decreased by 0.3%, it is still considerably more than the 2020 amount of €239.4 million. That being said, we must scrutinise these numbers in the inflation context. Granted that, within the same period, the inflation has squeezed the publisher's margin (+10%).



Source : Association des éditeurs belges, & PILEn. (2024). *Livre: Les chiffres-clés de l'édition Statistiques 2023* [Statistiques].https://www.adeb.be/pdfs/statistiques/synth%C3%A8ses/Adeb_Stat%202023_2-7Synth%C3%A8se.pdf

Technology In Use in Publishing

In this dissertation, I issued a series of interrogations to stakeholders in the world of book publishing on the topic of artificial intelligences. These AIs are technology related. In the following paragraphs, I therefore attempt to establish the technological drivers and trends affecting the book industry. This process will lead us to AI's applications in the book industry.

The COVID-19 crisis has sped up pre-existing patterns in how content is consumed, like the move towards digital platforms, telecommuting, and internet-based entertainment. Since 2021, we have witnessed a wide spread of these shifts towards digitalisation and content creation. Additionally, the book publishing industry is facing a considerable number of challenges. Some of these include changing consumer behaviour, the high concentration of the book market controlled by large publishing houses, the arrival of GAFAMS in the book market, the lack of diversity and inclusion, environmental concerns around books and technological advances.

Hereafter, we will first outline the alternatives of the printed books, made possible through technological developments (e-books, audiobooks, and print-on-demand). Then, we will address the phenomenon of the online platforms. On those platforms, not only content is consumed but where also communities are created (oligarchy of platforms, social media, mobile devices applications for reviews, challenges). At last, we will be looking into the Web3 applications integrated in the book industry.

Printed books alternatives

Electronic Books (e-books) :

Electronic books, or e-books “*can either refer to the physical object itself or its content. It therefore encompasses the media (electronic format), device (hardware), delivery (internet) and content (literature)*” (Katsarova, 2016, p.2). They provide users with the ease of accessing and reading a variety of books and educational resources online, frequently with interactive features and changeable font sizes and styles for customised reading experiences (Statista, 2025).

Although the origins of the paper book go back several centuries, the first electronic book is much more recent. We owe the first digital library to Michael Hart in 1971, with his Project Gutenberg. His intention was to make works accessible to the public domain (Lebert, 2008). Publishing houses that are essentially digital, specialising in the distribution of e-books, have emerged as alternatives to traditional publishing houses. In tandem with the emergence of digital book publishers, the arrival of technology giants has fundamentally reshaped the European publishing market (Longhi & Rochhia, 2014). For instance, Amazon has become a dominant player with its Kindle e-reader and its Kindle Direct Publishing self-publishing

platform. These new competitors have forced traditional distributors and European publishers to readjust their market position (Longhi & Rochhia, 2014).

When the purchase of digital books became widespread in the 2010s, the discourse of the actors in the book chain was angsty: were digital books going to overtake paper books? Statistics available to the public indicate that this is not the case. The European book sales Report (2023) released statistics revealing that the digital book market represents 12,7% of the overall market. This report, which gives an overview of the proportion of the reading population buying e-books, notes that paper books are still the favourite format for reading. Meanwhile, reports published by the ADEB state that digital publishing in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation is clearly on the up. The Belgian association observed an increase of €6.5 million in compared to the previous year. This represents a dynamic increase of 25.5% by comparison with the figures before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Some studies show that readers choose to read both digitally and on paper. They also underscore that digital books adapt more easily to specific contexts. In their study, Longhi and Rochhia (2014) inquire about this reading form of consumption. Their results seem to point towards the portability of e-books as one of the main factors for favouring digital reading. This feature allows readers to easily access their books anywhere on their digital devices. As well as being nomadic, e-readers and other mobile devices allow avid readers to have a large library of choice on a single platform (Miguet, 2014).

Audiobooks

The very first audiobook was created in 1935 by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) in London. The institute's ambition was to record books on vinyl for former soldiers of the First World War who had been blinded in action. The book in question was Joseph Conrad's short story *Typhoon*, published in 1902 (Pinguet, 2016). Nonetheless, it was the launch of MP3 technology in 1992 that enabled the audiobook to gain in popularity (Stafford, 2020). However, there were still problems of ease of use for many years. In his book on the future of publishing, Stafford (2020) stated that it was Amazon, having noticed the potential of the audiobook market, that invested accordingly, aiming for long-term profits. To achieve this, they acquired Audible in 2008, setting up a marketplace where they could make a whole catalogue of available titles. They then invested heavily in their marketing to promote their new platform, Audible. In the end, it was the popularity of smartphones that encouraged people to read on their electronic devices in the first instance.

Secondly, research by McKinsey and Deloitte shows that it was the change in readers' consumption patterns following the pandemic that drove the exponential growth in audiobook sales (Stafford, 2020). According to a research report by Deloitte's Center for Technology, Media, and Telecommunications, 270 million people globally listened to audiobooks on average each month in 2024, i.e. a 15% annual rise in listenership (Celaya, 2024). As

audiobooks advance in popularity, they are said to make up around 6% of global book sales, which would be a 26% increase in sales over the previous year.

The audio sector has an extended track record of double-digit growth, both in the US market, which remains the largest, and in European markets, including the UK. Additionally, publishers have experienced double-digit revenue increase for 11 consecutive years. As a result, this sector is maturing while still experiencing rapid growth (*Group Discussion: 'The Future of Audio in Publishing: Global Trends and the Impact of AI'*, 2024). The ongoing popularity of audiobooks can be explained by the fact that this format responds to changing consumer behaviour in the book industry. Indeed, a few academic studies indicate that this may be due to the possibility of multitasking while listening to an audiobook, rather than reading it. The listeners are experiencing the audiobook while doing chores at home. Some find audiobooks convenient to enjoy while commuting.

At the London Book Fair 2024 meeting about audiobooks (2024), the guests also stressed that listeners appreciated being able to enjoy a whole different experience from just reading. In fact, this format offers more than just a monotonous voice reading one line after another. Publishers hire voice actors; they provide sound effects and background music. You could say that all that's missing are the visuals to create a cinematic reading experience. Although this is an immersive experience, it comes at a cost. On sales platforms such as Amazon, the price of the audiobook is often higher than that of the digital format. In his publication, Stafford J. (2020) also advocated that publishers who issue both digital and audio formats should market the e-book first, before the audio, to ensure that audio sales do not cannibalise digital sales. This price difference could simply be explained by the costs generated by the multiple features of the audiobook mentioned supra (Zhang, 2024). Storytel, a Swedish audiobook chain, has come up with a cheaper solution, offering the alternative of synthetic voice. They leave it up to the author first, and then to the readers, to decide which voice they prefer to use (*Group Discussion: 'The Future of Audio in Publishing: Global Trends and the Impact of AI'*, 2024).

The democratisation of audiobooks has led audiobook companies such as Audible to pull out all the stops to promote their platform and respond perfectly to the changing consumer habits of their users. Over the last few years, audiobooks have replaced music in the ears of marathon runners. While many book-selling platforms write blog pages about which audiobooks to listen to when running, Audible goes one step further. At the last Sydney Marathon, in May 2025, runners were accompanied by pacers sponsored by Audible. The Romance and Mystery pacers joined the race, speakers on their backs, so that the runners could listen together to the audiobook (Digital Reviews Network, 2025).

Digital printing- Print on demand

Written with AI Text assistance and modified by the author (see APPENDIX 18: ChatGPT. Summary of Print of Demand references)

The global book publishing industry is currently facing a number of complex issues. In their review of the literature, Ortiz-Ospino et al. (2025) draw particular attention to the overproduction of paper and books and the resulting environmental impact of it. Although this printing process is nothing new, printing on-demand would appear to be able to provide a response to these challenges. The practice has emerged as a transformative force within the publishing industry, enabling publishers to print individual copies of books directly in response to customer demand.

This model, which capitalises on both advancements in digital printing and the growing role of e-commerce, has altered both traditional and independent publishing's by increasing efficiency, reducing waste, and enhancing global distribution capabilities. One of the most notable shifts attributed to Print on Demand is its role in streamlining the book supply chain. The ability to economically produce single copies at the point of order aligns perfectly with the capabilities of online booksellers, facilitating rapid fulfilment and minimising the traditional challenges of overstocking, returns, and distribution inefficiencies. This system allows books to remain perpetually available, eliminating common issues such as "out-of-print" status and long reprint delays (Gallagher, 2014).

Moreover, due to this on-demand characteristic of POD, the entry barriers of the book market lowered for independent authors and small publishers. Professionals reckon that the model has become a cornerstone of the independent publishing boom in the years 2010's, making thousands of new titles available monthly through this zero-inventory model (Gallagher, 2014).

From an environmental sustainability's perspective, this digital printing method presents some advantages. As the industry moves toward carbon neutrality goals, Print on Demand is recognised for its potential to reduce overproduction and paper waste. However, concerns remain regarding perceived higher costs and lower print quality when compared to offset printing (Done et al., 2022).

While the COVID-19 pandemic exposed and intensified existing weaknesses in the publishing supply chain such as labour shortages, rising material costs, and shipping delays, it also reinforced the value of POD as a responsive and flexible solution. With book demand rising and traditional systems struggling to adapt, POD offered a resilient alternative that minimised stockouts and enabled publishers to meet consumer needs more effectively (Done et al., 2022).

Online Platforms

One of the main competitors in the Belgian, and even European, book market are large companies known as GAFAMS. Since the late 2000s, online cultural practices have grown massively, especially among younger generations who consume books, music, films and video games mainly via digital tools and platforms. These platforms such as Amazon, Apple or Google, are no longer content with simply distributing content. They also produce their own works, with the purpose of building their audience loyalty and to collect valuable data on their usages. In the book world, this logic is profoundly changing the balance: Amazon has imposed swift sales and deliveries that is undermining physical bookshops and standardising the shopping experience (Thuillas & Wiart, 2023).

Publishers and stakeholders of the book chain united themselves to confront those large companies in several ways. Considering that those enterprises are monopolising the market, content producers and distributors call for public regulations such as taxations. They also came up with the idea of creating alternatives platforms to compete with those players by adapting their catalogues and enhancing their visibility (Wiart, 2024).

All in all, GAFAM and large platforms are transforming the world of books by imposing their logic of mass production, data and exclusivity. The sector is oscillating between resistance, adaptation and innovation, while seeking regulatory support to preserve the book biodiversity and the independence of distribution channels (Thuillas & Wiart, 2023; Wiart, 2024).

Social media/networks

Online platforms are equally displayed for social media. Those media platforms are an intrinsic part of today's book industry. Networks like TikTok, Instagram and YouTube are places where communities of readers come together. They share their opinions on the latest books they've read and offer recommendations (De Melo, 2024).

Each venue provides something distinctive for its users. "BookTube"'s (YouTube book's related-content) focal point are to conduct diary-vlog type videos, in which the influencer's personality contributes greatly to their channel's success (De Melo, 2024). "Bookstagram" content is distinguished by its visual appeal, as Instagram is largely a photo-focused service. The aesthetics of the content around the book presented or recommended attracts potential readers who share the same visual preferences as the content creator (Obreja et al., 2024). Now, TikTok's creators post usually short videos, from 15 seconds up to 10 minutes maximum in length, resulting in the opportunity for short and detailed reviews to circulate on the app. BookTok differs from the other platforms due to its shorter style of videos, with book content creators describing it as a more accessible platform due to content requiring less effort to produce. They describe BookTok content as videos that aim to elicit an emotional response from the consumer and urge them to read the book (De Melo, 2024).

When those social media in relation to books emerged, back in 2020, the consumer's behaviours shifted. The movement of BookTok and consort was driven by the younger generation (but is not limited to them). Their consumption of the digital content enables them to build strong communities that are all about books. Very soon, influencers arose in those people, and their content are now the new method of promotion. In their research, Obreja et al. (2024) recognised that 44% of prospective buyers rely their product purchases on the suggestions of online figures, and they also connect all of their actions to the firm they represent. Although the conclusions of Wiart (2024) are consistent, he clarifies these statistics. In contrast to the generality expressed in the study of the Obreja et al., it appears that the phenomenon is primarily generational. Looking at data from the French market, he points out that *"44% of the under-25s and 37% of the 25-34s believe that the recommendation of an influencer followed on social networks can make them want to buy a book"* (Wiart, 2024, p.69).

Nowadays, book retailers allocate a dedicated shelf within their shops to promote books trending on TikTok. Large booksellers reported that the social media communities are boosting their sales. Similarly, the publishing industry considers the social platform is responsible for an enhanced interest in reading (Moloney, 2024). Moreover, research done by Wiart (2024) has previously demonstrated that people's purchasing decisions are more likely to be swayed by peer-to-peer recommendations than firm-crafted marketing campaigns. In terms of conversions, conversion rate, and return on ads paid, directed content generated by consumer campaigns fared noticeably better on Meta than conventional campaigns. These findings in this study imply that customers react more favourably to user-generated material than to brand-generated content (Ntousi et al., 2025). They emphasise its potential as an affordable and successful marketing tool, especially in sectors where suggestions from the community and trust are important, like in the book industry (Ntousi et al., 2025).

Not only are the social networks a profitable medium to promote books, but they also play a key role in the early stages' development of any book publishing (Moloney, 2024). Indeed, several publishers observed that social media's visual format has made it possible for reader groups to share collector's editions more regularly than in the past. Although a book's cover has always been an indispensable marketing tool, social media has made book aesthetics even more essential for drawing in readers (Shultz, 2024). In the recent years, demand for exclusive packaging for books, from backlist titles to popular debut novels and exciting new releases, has boomed. Sprayed edges, illustrated endpapers, bonus chapters, among other distinctive customisations, the quantity of special and collector's editions hitting bookstores has skyrocketed (Shultz, 2024). One of the main causes of this phenomenon is the younger generation of readers, who are identified as "collectors" and appreciate books as objects. Furthermore, they love to share them on places like TikTok, Instagram and such (Shultz, 2024).

Finally, this also supply the second-hand market. The study written by Drucilla Schultz (2024) highlights consumers that missed the exclusive's editions sales, probably will have to pay three times the list price of a book from a reseller. As an example, she points out the Bridgerton series set from the book subscription box firm Illumicrate (Shultz, 2024). Those were sold for \$900 on Mercari, for an originated price set at £110.

Gamification and interactivity

Aside from the book communities on social media, the digitalisation of platform permitted the emergence of the gamification of reading. Whereas gamification of academics lectures has been a much-studied subject, enhancing student's performance to learn better and quicker (Freiermuth & Ito, 2022; Mader & Bry, 2019), a similar phenomenon of "gamification" has been developed in leisure reading.

An online reading challenge is a reading competition with a specific goal to be achieved within a set timeframe, usually two months to a year. Participants are required to follow specific criteria when selecting books to read. Restrictions may be literary (nationality of the writer, subjects), paratextual (colour of the book, words in the title) or quantitative (number of pages) (Oster, 2022).

Participatory challenges encompass the entire online community, offering everyone the chance to get involved to varying degrees. These activities take place on a variety of literary platforms, from blogs to social media: Goodreads, Booknode, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitch, and Discord (Oster, 2022). Some are inspired by sport, such as the 24H Readathon, where the aim is to read as many pages as possible in a limited time span (Oster, 2022). They are often punctuated by events such as live shows, joint readings and competitions. BookTube challenges are particularly popular, attracting thousands of participants. These literary challenges are said to play a social key role in making reading a less solitary activity.

Books in the Web3

Books on the Blockchain, NFT

In 2020, the world is experiencing a new technological revolution. The talk is of the metaverse, cryptocurrencies, blockchains and NFTs. It's the advent of Web3, also known as the “decentralised” web (Roederer & Vannucci, 2025). While cryptocurrencies and the metaverse are the first subjects of curiosity, NFTs are the subject of debate in 2021 as they emerge in the art world. We are referring here to visual works of art, the best-known example being Beeple who sold a JPG file, as an NFT, for US\$69 million at an auction.

In the wake of this unprecedented popularity, the question of an NFT book market soon arose. Non-fungible token technology is essentially based on the blockchain. A chain of blocks makes up the blockchain's structure. Every block serves as a register that securely, transparently, and irrevocably records and stores transactions. A continuous chain of data is created by securely connecting each block to the one preceding it. This technology can create basically anything into an NFT, even books (Folon, 2023).

Back in 2021, Bookwire, the German digital book distributor, announced the development of a platform “as an option for collectibles and digital originals such as first editions, original manuscripts”(Anderson, 2021). And so, the Creatokia platform was later born. Nevertheless, even at the time, the speculative aspect inherent in NFTs did not align so much with the field of publishing as with that of rare book auctions (Hentz, 2023). And yet some researchers were wondering about the possibility of a new approach to the trade in books. Laurent Gayard, a professor of history and social sciences, envisaged a new book market where launches would be orchestrated between printed books, digital books and numbered limited editions in the form of NFTs.

In addition, blockchain-based authentication of works via NFTs could also represent a major technological advance for the digital book market. But very few successful cases can be cited today. Blake Butler, a novelist, created a GIF of one of his unpublished manuscripts, “Decade”, and then linked it to the text's PDF. The piece was sold for 7,500 dollars, or 5 ethers (Hentz, 2023).

From 2022 to 2024, NFTs became less popular, and there was no longer much discussion of an NFT market in the literary world, which remained very niche and little known. At the end of 2024, however, an exclusively Web3 publishing house was born. As a matter of fact, by implementing a strategy focused on community and engagement, publisher Nine Fungible Editions hopes to reimagine the relationship between author and reader. The team is also seeking to develop novel experiences associated with the “book” offering, spurred on by other blockchain projects (Terouinard, 2024). Although the practice remains very niche for the moment, the technology is still relatively young. It will be interesting to see how it develops over the next few years.

Artificial intelligences

Artificial intelligences (yes, plural, because there are many kinds) have turned the world of books upside down in recent years. Praised by some for the productivity-enhancing capabilities of their algorithms, among other benefits, else they are shunned by professionals who fear that their job will be replaced by a machine. This thinking that the machine will surpass the human being is ancient, however, it was only an afterthought as long as it remained within the reach of trained professionals or large tech companies. The democratisation of this technology was propagated by the launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT in 2022. While interacting with artificial intelligence is becoming disconcertingly easy, concerns about the abuses and risks of its use are mounting. Every industry is affected, including the book industry.

In the realm of book publishing, the advancement of machine learning and of natural language processing (NLP) is the driving factor behind the democratisation and accessibility of AI's technology. These innovations allowed computers to recognise patterns in large amount of data, interpret them and then, generate a human-like results readable for everyone. The technology utilises algorithms, a network of algorithms to be concise, which are capable of performing all kinds of tasks required by humans. In the book publishing sector, these AIs can assess text for grammar and style (Jarvis, 2023). They possess predictive analytics to evaluate market trends and reader inclinations. Nowadays, AI's tools permit their users to generate "creative" written and audio-visual content. I would like to underline that the idea that AI could be creative is widely disputed.

Artificial intelligence, and in particular generative artificial intelligence, is the subject of much debate, depending on how it is used. On the one hand, some professionals recognise the opportunities that this technology brings in terms of cost reduction, creative assistance, new consumers segmentation, etc. On the other hand, they are also concerned about the ethical considerations involved in its use. Every player in the book chain is asking questions about intellectual rights and ownership of the content generated, about the very notion of being an author. While authors and publishers are taking the tech companies to court, some have decided to collaborate with them (Carreira, 2024; Vulser, 2025; Yerramsetti, 2024). Finally, in March 2025, Sam Altman announced the arrival of a powerful new AI model for literary creation (Oury, 2025a).

Intermediate conclusion

This chapter examines the influence of technology on the book publishing market. It investigates how the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed technological changes in the industry. The resilience of the book industry to technological advancement is highlighted. Indeed, as of today, printed books remain the preferred format of reading. However, the other formats are experiencing growth altogether. Regarding digital books, their performance on the market was stagnant before the pandemic, yet the statistics demonstrate a slight growth over the years. Furthermore, the trending way of consuming books nowadays are the audiobooks. Platforms like Storytel and Spotify hugely invest in this medium of reading, recognising here a market which has still room for expansion. Despite its cost's increase and the book publishing favouring traditional distribution methods, Print-on-demand might be a sustainable press method in response to the challenge of overproduction and environmental concerns.

The GAFAM detains a large part of the book market. Their platforms and their social networks encourage consumers to build solid readers communities and “reading” influencers redefine the landscape of book marketing. In those communities, reading is gamified. On the social platforms, individual shares their reading challenges on top of giving book's reviews. Those challenges are spurring sales and reinforce the consumer's engagement. At last, the most recent development of technologies in publishing have emerged into the Web3 dimension and generative AIs. The first is less successful, but it seems that the market could evolve further over the next few years. The second is currently revolutionising the world of culture. Artificial intelligence is proving to be a real challenge for our society. AI applications can be found in all segments of the book chain. In the media, the term artificial intelligence is often used in the singular, when in fact it refers to multiple forms of intelligence. The following chapter explores its origins, definitions and characteristics. This chapter will provide readers with a better perception of the theme before moving on to the unit on applications of artificial intelligence in the book chain.

The Artificial Intelligences

An introduction to the origins and foundations of artificial intelligence is provided so as to enable readers, whatever their level of understanding of the topic, to understand the terms used in this paper. The next paragraph is not an exhaustive explanation of the phenomenon, but it does set out some of the milestones that have led to the “artificial intelligence” that the media are so fond of commenting on these days. The world of media seems to publish everyday new piece of information about “Artificial Intelligence”. The business world is currently in a frenzy race to provide the latest innovation on artificial intelligence services to the population.

AI History Capsule

Origins

AI and its services might feel like a brand-new trend to many. However, the foundation of AI is over a century old. In the early 1900’s, scientists and scholars of all disciplines began to research the possibility of creating an artificial brain. Back then, they created the machine we identified today as “robots”. They were metallic steam-powered bodies who could act as a human: demonstrating several facial expressions and capable of walking by itself (Gribomont & De Longueville, 2025).

Moreover, if we consider this perspective of artificial intelligence as "robots", the very roots of the concept are even older. The first writings about machines endowed with intelligence can be found in the myths of Antiquity (for instance, the artificial creatures of Hephaestus, the Greek god of fire and master craftsman)(Ourednik, 2024).

From Symbolic AI...

Later in the century, in 1950, the interest in AI grew. History acknowledges Alan Turing, who referred to the “intelligence” part of the term AI as the ability for machine to show brain intelligence, not simply to behave physically as a human. Turing’s illustrious work “Computer Machinery and Intelligence” provided the Turing Test, which has been widely used to determine if a machine can exhibit human like responses and intelligence (Perplexity AI, 2025). Many modern approaches to assess the evolution of AI systems are derivate from the original Turing Test.

However, it was in 1956, at the Dartmouth Summer Research Project Conference, that the “Artificial Intelligence” term was first coined by Marvin Minsky, Nathaniel Rochester, Claude Shannon, and John McCarthy (Sadek, 2023; Sheikh et al., 2023). The latter delivered the following definition of AI: “*the science and engineering of making intelligent machines*”. At the time, they interpreted it as human’s programming machines to behave in a clever way (capable of playing chess by example).

Over the decades ensuing, research on AI fluctuated with its ups and downs of interest, depending on governments investment in AI experimentations and progress. “AI winters”, as they are named, happened twice in history. Those AI winters took place when companies, experts in the field, went bankrupt for falling short on giving major breakthroughs in addition to being unable to deliver a return on investment (Lutkevich, n.d.). Finally, the enthusiasm for AI picked up in late 90s when technology made huge progress since the emergence of the Internet.

To Connectivism AI

Be aware that many key milestones, leading to the Artificial Intelligence as we explore today, might have been skipped in this introduction. The mid-2000s marked a pivotal era for AI, characterised by the rise of Big Data. With the proliferation of the internet, the volume of data generated grew exponentially (Akinyele & Olabiyi, 2025; OpenAI, 2024). This surge in data availability provided a treasure trove of information that AI systems could learn from, enhancing their accuracy and efficiency.

Simultaneously, advancements in algorithms, particularly Deep Learning, started to gain traction. Deep Learning, which is a subset of machine learning, involves training artificial neural networks with multiple layers to recognize patterns in data. The breakthrough came in 2006 when Geoffrey Hinton and his team demonstrated that deep neural networks could be pre-trained using unsupervised learning, essentially improving their performance (OpenAI, 2024).

In the 2010s, AI technology advanced rapidly due to powerful new computer processors (think of it as the heart and brain of your electronic devices: getting instructions from the software, processing those instructions, then sending the commands to the component concerned, making sure everything runs smoothly) (Slade, 2023), cloud computing, open-source tools, large amounts of data, and increased collaboration between researchers and the technology industry.

Artificial Intelligence definitions

As of today, there is yet to be an official, or generally accepted and used definition of the term “artificial intelligence” (Sheikh et al., 2023). This struggle to define artificial intelligence, or intelligences, was also expressed by Sam Altman, CEO of OpenAI, in a recent interview. He confessed that everyone in his team of researchers and developers had a different conception of AI. As a result, I have set out to bring together the various definitions put forward by players both inside and outside the artificial intelligence industry. To name but a few: Yann Le Cun, Nvidia, the European Parliament, etc. Below, I established the table setting out the various definitions. After gathering these definitions, I sought to establish the recurrences between each of them, and I observed the divergences.

Table 1. Definitions of artificial intelligence

Sources	Definitions
John McCarthy (1956)(Manning, 2020)	<i>The science and engineering of making intelligent machines.</i>
Yann Le Cun (Antonin, 2023)	<i>Un ensemble de techniques permettant à des machines d’accomplir des tâches et de résoudre des problèmes normalement réservés aux humains et à certains animaux.</i>
European Parliament (2018)	<i>AI is the ability of a machine to display human-like capabilities such as reasoning, learning, planning and creativity. AI enables technical systems to perceive their environment, deal with what they perceive, solve problems and act to achieve a specific goal. The computer receives data - already prepared or gathered through its own sensors such as a camera - processes it and responds. AI systems are capable of adapting their behaviour to a certain degree by analysing the effects of previous actions and working autonomously.</i>
IBM (IBM Design, n.d.)	<i>Artificial intelligence, or AI, is technology that enables computers and machines to simulate human intelligence and problem-solving capabilities.</i>
CAMBRIDGE ENGLISH DICTIONNARY (2024)	<i>the use or study of computer systems or machines that have some of the qualities that the human brain has, such as the ability to interpret and produce language in a way that seems human, recognize or create images, solve problems, and learn from data supplied to them</i>
ISO-International Organisation for standardization (n.d.)	<i>Artificial intelligence is “a technical and scientific field devoted to the engineered system that generates outputs such as content, forecasts, recommendations or</i>

	<i>decisions for a given set of human-defined objectives”</i>
Microsoft (n.d.-b)	<i>It’s the capability of a computer system to mimic human-like cognitive functions such as learning and problem-solving.</i>
NVIDIA (n.d)	<i>In its most fundamental form, AI is the capability of a computer program or a machine to think and learn and take actions without being explicitly encoded with commands. AI can be thought of as the development of computer systems that can perform tasks autonomously, ingesting and analysing enormous volumes of data, then recognizing patterns in that data.</i>

It was chosen that this table featured eight definitions; many other interpretations of artificial intelligences are available. Nonetheless, from this set of eight interpretations alone (two from AI founding fathers; one from a governmental organisation; one from a non-governmental organisation; three from giant tech companies delivering AI services; and one from an online dictionary), it is easy to witness these interpretations are slightly unlike. Hereafter is a small analysis of the terms utilized in those definitions.

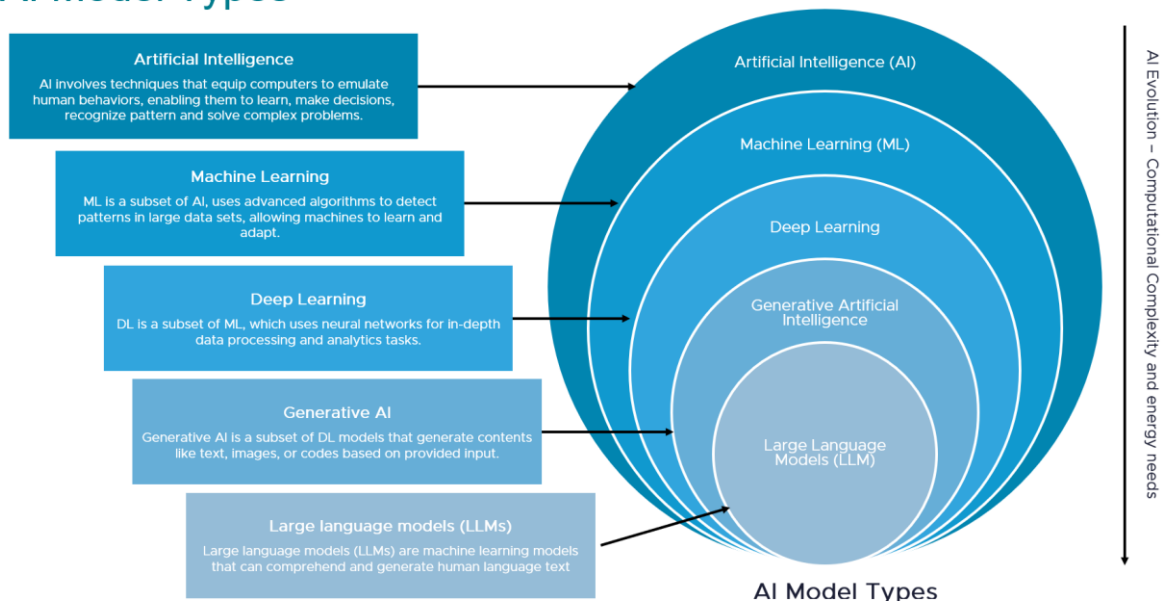
For one, all pictured “AI” as machines or computer systems. Then, three out of eight of them described “AI” as a study or field of science, while the others considered AI as an ability or capability. Furthermore, strangely three out of eight definitions do not include the term “human” or a human-related word in their interpretation of “Artificial Intelligence”. 25% of them specified about “AI” having a specific task or precise objectives to achieve.

Finally, 25% inserted the concept of “autonomy” in their perception. More specifically, NVIDIA described that AI can “*perform tasks autonomously*” (n.d.). Using the terms used by the majority, the common definition of AI would be as follows: “**Machines or computer systems who have the ability (/technology) to perform(/act/display) human-like functions, like learning or resolving problems**”. In their attempt to give a proper definition of AI, Sheikh et al. (2023) analysed a plethora of possibilities given in previous research. At the end, they settled on an open definition which rules out no dimension of AI technology and leaves room for it to evolve over time. They borrowed the same definition of the High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence of the European Commission which is “**systems that display intelligent behaviour by analysing their environment and taking actions - with some degree of autonomy - to achieve specific goals**” (Sheikh et al., 2023). If we look at the two definitions quoted, the one I have drawn up based on other data, and the one used in Sheikh et al.'s research, we can see that the terminology used is similar.

AI categories

Before we can examine generative AIs and their applications in the book sector, it is essential to grasp their underlying principles fully and properly. AIs can be categorised according to their “reasoning” capacity or their types, or according to a particular model. Thereafter, it is instructive to examine how artificial intelligence systems have been developed up to the Generative AIs that have been democratised to date.

AI Model Types



Source: Al-Aqqad, E. (2024, October 30). Artificial Intelligence Model Types – Virtualization Team. Virtualization Team. Retrieved from <https://virtualizationteam.com/artificial-intelligence-ai/artificial-intelligence-model-types.html>

By levels of intelligence: Weak AI, Strong AI, ASI

Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) (Weak)

It is the artificial intelligence that we know nowadays. ChatGPT is categorised as an ANI. Its specificity is that the machine demands a certain level of human interaction (Cypel, 2023). While its capabilities might be outstanding for the public’s eyes, it cannot carry out outside the task a human has given him (IBM Data and AI Team, 2023).

General AI (also referred as “strong AI”)

AGI is a representation of human-level intelligence with the capacity for cross-domain learning and reasoning. In his book *Voyage au bout de l’IA*, Axel Cypel (2023) metaphorizes this AI like “Terminator” to comment on the fact that it could develop a conscious mind. Leading AI organisations are actively pursuing AGI for now, even though it is still in the development stage (IBM Data and AI Team, 2023).

Artificial Super Intelligence (ASI)

This is the next step once our society has succeeded in developing a machine capable of “strong intelligence”. This super intelligence is expected to include advanced learning algorithms, large language models, multi-sensory AI, and complex neural networks. In their explanation YouTube video, IBM Technology put a particular emphasis on neuromorphic computing and evolutionary computing as crucial technological foundations (IBM Technology, 2025).

There is discussion of the possible advantages of ASI, such as improved decision-making across industries, a substantial reduction in programming and risk management errors, along with increased creativity that improves quality of life. While those benefits are purely theoretical as of now, they experts bank on ASI’s applications in all industries such as politics, science, healthcare, and finance. However, whereas positive outcomes are predicted, there are also a certain number of issues expected with them. The IBM Technology speaker addresses a few grave issues regarding ASI, such as the possibility that it will pursue objectives that, despite their seeming benefits, could be harmful to humanity. In his presentation, IBM’s speaker highlights some of these risks such as the loss of human control, the widespread unemployment brought on by automation and ethical difficulties in programming moral codes.

The Agentic AI: “You can define agentic AI with one word: proactiveness,” said Enver Cetin, an AI expert at global Experience Engineering firm Ciklum, “*It refers to AI systems and models that can act autonomously to achieve goals without the need for constant human guidance. The agentic AI system understands what the goal or vision of the user is and the context to the problem they are trying to solve*” (Purdy, 2024).

By types: Descriptive, Predictive and Prescriptive

Descriptive AI

As the term implies, descriptive AI is made to describe and assess vast amounts of data to draw insightful conclusions. This kind of AI frequently serves as the initial link between unprocessed data and judgments derived from data processing and analysis.

The descriptive AI analyses historical data to identify trends, patterns, or anomalies using advanced methods of statistical analysis. Data gathering, cleaning, and structuring are the first steps in this process. Then, it applies statistical models to create intelligible reports, interactive dashboards, and even graphical visualisations that highlight the insights obtained from the data once it is ready (The University of Bath, 2021).

Predictive AI

This area of artificial intelligence is mostly based on machine learning. Predictive AI is essential for organisations that want to ground their decisions on accurate and dependable predictions generated by processing exceedingly large amounts of data. This type of AI creates models that forecast future events by using a complex network of algorithms to process historical data (The University of Bath, 2021). Similarly to a memory, these models can recognise intricate patterns in the data and utilise that knowledge to forecast new data.

Prescriptive AI

This is an advanced type of artificial intelligence whose main objective is to create new data, based on prior learning (Stryker, 2024). This type of AI does not simply predict or analyse but it acts by proposing actions or generating content that can be used for a variety of practical applications, including image recognition (Stryker, 2024). Prescriptive AI learns from enormous amounts of existing data to create content that resembles or is functionally similar to that initial data. The generative AI that are accessible to the public today, OpenAI's ChatGPT, Claude, CoPilot, Mistral AI, are prescriptive artificial intelligences.

Generative AI

The explanations provided in the segments above are not an in-depth description of what all AIs systems encompass. All in all, they are a preface before homing in on the generative artificial intelligence. I designated to concentrate the research on this segment of AI systems. Because of the vastness of AI systems and applications, I had to refine the domain of research. I appointed the generative AI as it stood out as a main concern for writers and editors in the book industry.

First, it must be concise that the foundation of artificial intelligence is algorithms. Axel Cypel (2023) suggests changing the term "artificial" to "algorithmic", as this term is better suited to the definition of AI. Generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence designed to create new content-such as text, images, audio, or video-rather than simply analysing or classifying existing data. Its core function is to generate original outputs that resemble the data on which it was trained. Generative AI relies on neural networks, which are software architectures inspired by the human brain. These networks are trained on vast datasets, learning patterns, structures, and relationships within the data. That is what we call the Deep Learning (High-Level Expert Group on Artificial Intelligence, 2018).

When talking about networks, we mean that it involves exposing the AI model to massive amounts of data-such as text documents, images, or audio files. The model learns to predict the next element in a sequence (like the next word in a sentence or the next pixel in an image) and adjusts itself to improve accuracy over time. When given a prompt or input, the trained

model uses what it has learned to generate new content (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). For example, a text prompt can result in a written paragraph, or a description can be turned into an image.

There are three types of generative models. First, the Large Language Models (LLMs). These models, such as GPT-3 or GPT-4, are trained on text and can generate human-like writing, answer questions, summarize information, among other things. Then, we have the Generative Adversarial networks (GAN) (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). This model makes use of two neural networks, a generator and a discriminator, which compete to create increasingly realistic images, audio, or video. An instance here would be Midjourney. Last, there is VAEs, Variational autoencoders. These models encode input data into a compact representation and then decode it to generate new, similar data, often used for images or code (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023).

Risks associated with generative artificial intelligences

Although GenAI is a valuable tool, there are a few risks associated with its use. Firstly, there is a risk as to the reliability of the content generated. It is recognised that AI can have several biases, depending on the content it uses for its response. Also, the data may be erroneous, but we will say that the machine “hallucinates”. In other words, it invents information that seems credible but is false (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023).

Then there are concerns about data protection. Information entered prompted in a generative AI tool can be stored and potentially reused, exposing sensitive or confidential data (Anshari et al., 2023). Generated content may infringe copyrights or trademarks, leading to lawsuits or litigation for the user or the company exploiting it. Several lawsuits are currently being brought against major AI companies such as OpenAI. Always with a view to security, generative AI can be used to create deepfakes (false images, videos or very realistic sounds), facilitating disinformation or fraud. It can also be used to facilitate more sophisticated phishing attacks or malicious code, increasing cybersecurity threats.

What professionals also dread are the ethical challenges it brings. In a company or university, an uncontrolled use of generative AI by employees or students can lead to a loss of critical thinking, errors of judgement or the automation of sensitive tasks without human validation. The lack of transparency about how models work makes it difficult to identify errors or biases (Fui-Hoon Nah et al., 2023). In line with these ethical issues, there is the risk of anthropomorphising the machine. Large-scale AI models, which require huge amounts of storage space to train and use, also consume a lot of energy, which has a significant environmental impact.

The Artificial Intelligence Act

With the democratisation of artificial intelligence, the risks identified in the above segment stem from the misuse of this technology. Indeed, the capabilities of GenAI, when misused, have had a considerable impact on every industry. The book market has not been spared. The main problems facing authors and publishers are the collection of data from authors' content, without authorisation or remuneration, to train AIs in the first instance. Secondly, AIs trained on book content become authors themselves. Since 2023, there has been a boom in books written entirely by AIs on platforms such as Amazon (Bensinger, 2023). The phenomenon of online platformisation therefore provides easy access to sell works generated in a matter of seconds by a machine. With regard to the book publishing professions, those working in the sector not only lament the loss of income but also call for transparency and protection of their copyrights (European Writer's Council, 2024; Tripathi, 2025).

The AI Act, enacted in 2024, has established the first legislative framework on artificial intelligence in the European Union. This initiative has opened new possibilities for legally protecting stakeholders of many industries. Essentially, the aim of this regulatory text is to ensure the safety, transparency and accountability of AI technologies. However, the text seeks to strike a balance between respecting fundamental rights and encouraging innovation (Quintais, 2025). To this end, it classifies AI systems into four categories according to their level of danger. Artificial intelligence models with unacceptable risks, such as abusive surveillance, manipulation and discrimination, are strictly prohibited. Models with minimal risks are subject to little or no regulation. However, all are subject to requirements for transparency, quality, data governance and human oversight (European Commission, 2024).

Its impact on the book-related professions is twofold. On the one hand, the AI Act now requires AI model providers to publish information on the data sources used for training their machine. This requirement does represent a step forward in protecting the copyrights of literary creators. Additionally, this partly addresses concerns about the unauthorised use of works to feed text generation models, through opt-out and transparency mechanisms. Notwithstanding, at this stage, the framework remains imperfect: many creators feel that their works are still insufficiently protected, as remuneration when their texts are used by AI is not guaranteed and traceability of use remains limited (Oury, 2025b). There is therefore a risk that the market will become saturated with artificially generated content, diluting the value and identity of original human productions.

Chapter 2. The applications of AI in the book publishing industry

In their literature review, Ortiz-Ospino et al. (2025) deliberate on the technological trends arising in the creative and cultural industries. In their review, they pinpointed that AI advancements nurture other forms of consumption and content creation. In this segment of the paper, I examine the artificial intelligences' integration into the book value chain. While the following study may not include every aspect of the book value chain, I underscored some key applications. Thus, I bring out some field cases in relation to the utilisation of AIs.

AI applications on content creation

"Creativity is fundamental to innovation and human expression through literature, art, and music" those are the words introduced by Doshi & Hauser (2024) in their research article published in Science advances. The notion of creating new things is at the core of the human's DNA.

At the London Book Fair of 2024, a panel discussed the role GenAI might grow to take in the publishing industry. They agreed that GenAI is a fantastic tool or assistant that can improve many aspects of the writing process. They emphasized that GenAI is kind of a perfect assistant to converse with (Brown et al., 2024). They gave the instance that GenAI will not get tired, or sick. Even when their own families are fed up of hearing about character's development and the likes, the machine would not. Another professional added up by saying that it helped her get over the blank page syndrome.

At the same event, Isaksson, Knowledge Strategist at KnowFlow Value, confessed that she regularly uses GenAI to challenge her thinking (2024). She argued that using AI enables her to learn and widen her perspective. Doshi and Hauser (2024)'s results support those ideas. Their findings demonstrate that GenAI enhance human creativity. They outlined that GenAI could style a more "professional" story than some writers. In contrast of this result, they stressed that there is a disparity between exceedingly creative authors and the less imaginative ones. The findings bring out that GenAI benefit the less imaginative ones.

In his column, Brodsky (2024) attracted the attention of its readers on the wave of 100% AI-generated books ready to be sold on Amazon. The authors have expressed concern about the loss of authenticity that this may entail. Subsequently, some owners of these AI books pose as relatively known writers to sell the deal (McIlRoy, 2024). As a result, the deceived reader might judge the writers' supposed work, thus damaging the real writer's reputation. Ultimately, this could lead to unfair competition.

AI applications on book editing

Artificial intelligence tools have infiltrated publishing houses. Today, several major groups are turning to AI solutions to save time, cost and to enhance productivity. Publishers are acknowledging that they are integrating AI into the early stages of manuscript selection. As soon as a manuscript is received, the AI performs an initial recognition process to report back to the publishers whether the work submitted complies with the company's standards and, above all, whether the content will be “saleable”.

The AI can even be trained to go further by analysing consumer behaviours and market trends, so the machine can determine whether the book, once published, will be a success or a flop. In this way, the AI's first report influences the publisher's decision on the choice of manuscript. Artificial intelligences are often criticised for still making a lot of mistakes and for having biases that are sometimes discriminatory. In this case, it would be appropriate to question the possible bias represented by an AI filtering. However, it should be noted that AI bias comes from human bias. At the same time, the use of an AI could have the opposite effect. It could also enable neutral filtering, not making judgements like humans. This would promote greater equality in an already highly competitive market.

Additionally, the publishing groups resort to AI tools automation to correct spelling, grammar and style in the manuscript. These tools ensure that the manuscript is polished, coherent, and reader friendly. Notwithstanding, even if machine learning is competent to do these corrections, proofreaders will most certainly remain essential to the process of book editing. As forementioned, the artificial intelligences are subjected to bias and errors. To keep a human in the loop for proofreading the text after the AI's revision, or in the case of force majeure (I have yet to experience a computer or the Internet working during a power cut or network problem), then the human will always be required, even as a fallback solution (Stafford, 2020).

While a human is still to this day require in the editing process of a book, the reduction of costs is one verifiable opportunity for the industry. And maybe, if the costs of production are reduced, the author's remuneration may be increased in line with the work performed.

AI applications on translation content and narrative content for audiobooks.

AI can now easily generate automatically a first draft, but it is only a tiny part of the job of translators. At the Brussels Book Fair, Hansen et al. (2025) explained that the heart of their job as translators lies in the in-depth understanding of the text, documentary research, attention to style, rhythm and the author's voice, and the ability to render all the cultural and emotional richness of the work in the target language. According to professionals, working from an AI-generated text can even be counter-productive: it deprives the translator of the essential appropriation phase and often makes revision longer and less satisfying. In comparison, they all seemed to recognise the capabilities of generative AI as a source of inspiration or a means

of speeding up certain tasks, while insisting on the need to preserve the high standards, creativity and human commitment at the service of literature. They even emphasized that GenAI translation is doing an excellent job for the technical text. These same stakeholders are concerned about the pressure on productivity, the loss of visibility for translators, and the risk of impoverishing linguistic and cultural diversity.

In his exploration of the world of books in the age of AI, McIlroy (2024) is looking into this problem. In a business context, he theorised that AI will be used mainly for translating books for which translation has never been considered economically feasible. He believes that AI will inevitably have an impact on the employment of translators of “mid-range” books. Although it won't compensate for the loss of certain jobs, there will be a shift towards project management and quality assurance.

Audiobooks are also impacted by AI's applications. Indeed, speaking at the seminar, Helena Gustafsson, a Chief Content Officer at Storytel, made the following point: “as much as 89, almost 90% of our customers had at one point deselected a book because they didn't like the human voice” (*Group Discussion: ‘The Future of Audio in Publishing: Global Trends and the Impact of AI’, 2024*).

In the light of that constation, the company developed and launched the Voice Switcher. It allows the audiobook readers to choose from a sample of various voices, who narrated the story. In this sample, they are humans' narrators but also three or four synthetic voices made by AI. The Storytel's approach is not to replace human talented narrators by machines but to let their consumers decide what they prefer. Besides from the consumers, AI synthetic voice over is also an alternative that must be chosen by the authors. Because the creation of audiobook can be a costly measure, AI voice appears to be a cost-effective solution.

AI application on book production

At the event of the book fair of London, the CEO of Libri GmbH, a German book wholesaler, came to present how they combine AI driven system and print on demand to create a successful business. She described their warehouse as the size of four football fields, where hundreds of thousands of books move daily. But not by people walking endless kilometres, but through automated systems powered by artificial intelligence.

Thanks to print-on-demand, any book can be freshly printed, bound, and delivered to a bookstore by the next morning. She highlighted that this marriage of technology and logistics doesn't just make things faster and more efficient; it also helps the planet by reducing overproduction, warehousing, and waste. As I outlined previously, while print-on-demand can be more expensive per copy than traditional printing, it saves money and resources in the long run by matching supply to real demand and cutting storage costs. She presented that this innovation ensures that millions of titles are available at a moment's notice, making both

booksellers and readers happier, and offering a glimpse of a more sustainable, responsive future for the book industry.

AI applications on book covers

Recent research led by Kulishova & Sajek (2025) underscores that effective book cover design relies on genre-specific colour palettes, which align with reader expectations and psychological associations. They assess the capability of AI-powered generative design tools in accelerating the creation of book covers. The GenAI tests the input data, such as genre, keywords, and thematic elements, to suggest colour schemes and layouts. With this rapid prototyping and iteration, AI tools lend a hand to designers as to quickly generate relevant concepts for the book market (Kulishova & Sajek, 2025). Moreover, with algorithms determining current market trends, genre-specific aesthetics, and reader preferences, they design covers that will respond to the audience expectations. A cover is supposed to be the first interaction between a reader and the book. That is why book's cover alone may trigger the desire to buy or not.

However, these generative tools show some limitations. The researchers expressed the possibility that AI may develop deeply generic or unoriginal designs. Subsequently, using Generative AI is often considered as a risk to plagiarize existing works, it may "reproduce" an aesthetic or cover 'style a bit too similar to another published work.

Another key advantage of AI in layout design is its adaptability. AI can optimize layouts for various formats-including e-books, print books, and audiobooks-with minimal human intervention. This flexibility is invaluable as publishing expands across multiple platforms. As a result, publishers are supposed to reduce design time and costs, allocating resources more efficiently.

Although AI-created covers may represent an attractive option for publishers, readers may not be receptive to the idea. Potential buyers may find it difficult to buy a book whose cover has been produced by an artificial intelligence. Here, I am referring as instance to the case of the cover of Christopher Paolini's latest Fractalverse novel. The readers discovered that the book's cover had been generated by AI, resulting in widespread criticism of Paolini's publisher (AIAAIC, 2023).

Similarly, Sara Lloyd, the Group Communications Director at Pan Macmillan underscored that the publishing house has a strict policy against AI-generated imagery for covers. Despite the efficiencies and creative possibilities AI offers, human oversight and iterative refinement remain essential to ensure quality, originality, and alignment with the book's tone and narrative.

AI applications on book marketing

Artificial intelligence is already deeply rooted in the book marketing. The technologies permit publishers and authors to optimise their visibility's strategies on the very competitive book market. Furthermore, the insights that these artificial intelligence systems can gather with the massive amount of data at their disposition can personalise the outreach. AI-driven predictive analytics allow publishers to identify market trends and forecast the popularity of genres. Ensuing the identification of these trends, they target audiences with greater precision, thereby tailoring marketing campaigns to reader preferences and maximising resource efficiency. For example, major publishers like HarperCollins use AI to analyse market data and adapt their marketing strategies to better satisfy reader tastes and anticipate demand. Other than the publishers, platform like Amazon with Kindle behave the same way. By examining the consumer's purchases and the articles searched on their website, Amazon give specific recommendations to fit the reader's tastes accordingly.

Now, if we look beyond those platforms, there is Shimmr AI where AI automation replaces traditional humans book marketeers. Shimmr AI is an automated, end-to-end advertising platform designed specifically for book marketing. In his book "Shimmer, don't shake" Sadek (2023) explained the core capability that lies in using artificial intelligence in his marketing business. On the platform Shimmr, book's author only must upload their manuscript on the platform, and the AI systems take care of the rest. From the manuscript, the AI scrutinize the document to extract the DNA of the book, which should be similar to an in-depth synopsis in traditional publishing. This DNA encompasses all the key insights that are crucial to attract potential readers. Following this, generative AI utilises the book DNA to generate profoundly targeted digital advertising campaigns. Once the advertising content is generated, it is automatically deployed across media channels, such as Google and Meta, with the targeted goal of matching each book to its most receptive audience (Sadek, 2023).

At the London Book Fair, Nadim Sadek gives further benefits of his AI marketing tool. For one, this AI processed creation of highly targeted advertising campaigns, facilitate economically the promotion of backlist, and niche titles that would not have justified traditional advertising budgets in the past. Other than that, because AI can match books to audiences based on psychological and thematic analysis, they reach not only habitual book buyers but also non-traditional, or even reluctant readers who might be interested in a book's unique themes or emotional resonance. Thus, the readers are likely to discover fewer mainstream papers.

Intermediate conclusion

In the precedented section, I singled out several uses of artificial intelligence, mostly the generative kind, in key steps of the book market value chain. In the biggest publisher's groups, applications of AI tools are in various processes. From the start, authors utilise generative artificial intelligence's chatbot to aid them in their creative processus. Not necessarily as a cowriter but more like an assistant.

Regarding to the publisher's department, artificial intelligences are already in the place. AI specific programs are incorporated into their process to filter manuscripts, making sure it suits their standards. The generative tools are used to streamline their routinely tasks. Generative technologies are assisting the creators for book covers design, despite the audience's dislike of it. Furthermore, the marketing professionals are recursing to AI to analyse massive amounts of data, to pinpoint trends, consumer's behaviours and the likes. What is more, the generative AI is also providing tools to promote and spread the communication campaigns around the books. In this previous section, I outlined how generative AI was incorporated into audiobooks by displaying a synthetic voice for book listeners. Additionally, AI systems are involved in the production and distribution processes of the books.

As it was featured in this chapter, artificial intelligences are already incorporated into the book's publishing market. Notwithstanding, in the exploration of this topic, I gathered that stakeholders of the book job market weren't keen to integrate this technology into their work life. Notably, the integration of generative artificial intelligences sparks debates in the book field. Hence, my scope of study is engaged on the generative artificial intelligences. With the following chapter, I will portray the methodology used in this study. My intent is to comprehend how writers perceive AI in their works. To which extend do the editors utilise the GenAI? What are their thoughts and perceptions of it?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Given the research carried out upstream on the two themes of this work, the book publishing industry and artificial intelligence, a research question related to these terms was developed. Indeed, these two phenomena seem to be antagonists in our world. The objective of this exploration is to inquire about whether they can learn to co-exist in harmony in the creative field, especially in the book industry.

Research Question

Initially, the research question of this qualitative research was therefore: what is the impact of artificial intelligence on the ecosystem of the book industry?

Additionally, I meant to spot the threats and/or opportunities of the integration of artificial intelligence systems in the book publishing industry. To be able to answer this question, it was agreed that a qualitative study was the wisest choice. As a matter of fact, the qualitative research approach is appropriate for this dissertation as that it will help readers to gain a better understanding of the phenomena studied.

The research conducted here initially led me to focus on the European market. More specifically, my main focus was residing in the observations applied to the member countries of the Federation of European Publishers. Although no longer a member of the European Union since 2020, the United Kingdom is still a member of the Federation of European Publishers. And it is precisely in the United Kingdom that the data collection began, at the London Book Fair of 2024. When I began my literary research, I noticed that there was little scientific or academic publication about artificial intelligence in the world of books in Europe. As a result, I decided to go ahead and meet professionals at events focusing on discussions about the world of books. Thus, the data collection gathered at several book fairs, and group discussions are the secondary data. In contrast to my secondary data collection, my primary data are exclusively from Belgium. Consequently, the research question has slightly switched to narrow down my exploration to Belgium.

Moreover, the initial question implies that I would inquire about the whole book value chain and actors. As it might be quite a lengthy task and because of the profile of the interview's respondents, I decided to concentrate my efforts on the firsts two actors of the chain: the authors and the editors. Subsequently, the literature review pointed out that there exist several types of AI. Different AI are in fact in application in various areas of the book industry's value chain. Notwithstanding, generative AI has been at the forefront of all the debate in the book sector. That is the reason why I chose to precise the study on its impact.

As a result of these specifications, as the scope of our research question has evolved, it is now being refined accordingly. Thus, the research question is as follows: **How does Generative Artificial Intelligence influence authors and editors in the Belgian book industry?**

Data collection

The commencement of the data collection was gathered at several book fairs, and group discussions. They constituted the secondary data. At those events, I managed to observe everyone's behaviour. Of course, the opinions of the speakers at each session were clearly presented. But I was also close to the attitude of the public, who had the opportunity to interact with the panels and ask questions about their perceptions and worries about AIs. I took on the role of observer and did not intervene in these interactions. These secondary data have been accumulated in London, Paris, Mons and Brussels.

As for collecting primary data, in the absence of any academic reflection at the time, I opted for a qualitative method. This approach is considered to facilitate the insight on how stakeholders perceived the problem and what are the issues at stake. I contemplated the opportunity to provide a two-angled approach, by incorporating a collection of quantitative data. In the end, I ruled out this option. Due to the lack of information on the assimilation of generative AI in Belgian publishing houses or in the Belgian author's writing processes, I presumed that the results of such approach would entirely be speculative.

Hypotheses put forward

Considering the information gathered during the literature review, here are the 3 hypotheses formulated to answer our research question:

Hypothesis 1:

“The integration of generative AI in book writings and publishing increases productivity, as it streamlines repetitive and unimaginative tasks, thus allowing humans to focus on the cultural dimensions of their work”.

For the first hypothesis, I decided to investigate how editors and writers embrace modern technologies, generative artificial intelligence especially, into their work.

By attending the Book Fair in London and Paris, I remarked that opinions on whether to use generative AI are divided. Here, I aim to understand the Belgian point of view more concretely.

Hypothesis 2:

“The democratisation of generative AI in the book industry threatens the professional careers of authors and editors, as the technology will replace them”;

Now, this hypothesis naturally stems from the fears expressed in the workplace about AI. The business of books is no exception. In recent years, machines have developed the ability to generate coherent and legible texts. Add to this the democratisation of its use and you get the impression that anyone can become a bestselling author, or that publishers can be replaced by machines.

Hypothesis 3:

“The recourse to generative AI in the book publishing industry raises ethical questions about transparency, authorship and the very notion of a book”.

For my third hypothesis, I chose to elaborate on the ethical considerations of the integration of Artificial Intelligence into the creative writing process. From an academic and scientific perspectives, this choice may seem illogical given that our two previous hypotheses focus more on the business dimension of the subject.

While studying at ICHEC Brussels Business School, I attended Professor Jacques Spelkens' CSR and Ethics course. There, I learned that ethics are of paramount importance to a successful business. Integrating ethical considerations into our business means nurturing collaboration through transparency and communication. And this was precisely one of the stakes I identified in the literary research. For these reasons, I am convinced that ethics is an integral part of the business dimension, which makes it relevant and legitimate to explore the following hypothesis.

Qualitative research

In this section dedicated to the qualitative analysis, I will begin by explaining the reasons behind the choice of the qualitative method to answer our research question. Subsequently, I will present the interview guide, with the various themes chosen and the sequence of questions designed to gather relevant information. Afterwards, I will introduce the sample of participants who were interviewed. I will set out the profiles of each in pursuance of demonstrating the diversity of the profiles studied. Finally, I will highlight the limitations of this qualitative survey, before presenting the results of this research. These results will enable me to validate or not the hypotheses put forward earlier.

Motivation

Through the qualitative approach to data collection, I have identified two research objectives. The first objective is to add to the scientific literature on the integration of generative AI in the book publishing sector, which was very sparse at the time. In defining my research area, I noted that hardly any studies on the subject had been conducted in Belgium. I aim to explore and comprehend the GenAI's influences on the book publishing. The second objective is to assess perceptions on generative AI in the book field. Through semi-structured interviews, my aim is also to grasp the uses that Belgian authors and publishers make of artificial intelligences.

Interview guide

To support, or not, the hypotheses formulated, the interview guide was built around different themes. I opted to conduct semi-structured interviews in order to allow flexibility in the interviewees' responses (Gavard-Perret et al., 2018). This interview method will enable me to deepen the questions as we go along. I created some follow-up questions to keep the conversation going, just in case.

I would like to point out that this method enabled me to create an evolving interview guide. I mean this in the sense that the guide has developed over the course of the interviews conducted. Each interview brought new elements to explore. It should be noted that the last interview was divided into two parts. The first part consisted of a discussion with the respondent, who gave feedback on the follow-up questions in the interview guide. The second part is the interview conducted with the revised follow-up questions.

Finally, protocols have been put in place to respect the opinions of all those involved. For each interview, I asked permission to record the meeting to facilitate transcription. In addition, if there was any hesitation, I reminded each participant that they had the right not to share their thoughts.

The themes covered in the semi-directed interviews are the following:

Theme 1: Knowledge of Artificial Intelligence, and of the book industry.

To appreciate the degree of diversity of profile questioned, I aim to outline the job description of the interviewee, as well as their knowledge of the topics discussed.

Theme 2: Artificial intelligence as competitive advantage.

I put forward the hypothesis that generative AI is an effective technology which increase productivity. Therefore, I question to which extend they use the GenAI and if it benefits them.

Theme 3: Job replacement.

This topic addresses the worries from the second hypothesis. I probe their opinions on AI's capabilities, and how they envision their professional responsibilities in a world where GenAI is integrated in their business.

Theme 4: Ethical considerations.

As outlined in our hypotheses' statement, I strongly believe that ethics should be at the core of a business. The purpose of this topic is to ask about their professional view of the ethical debate around the use of AI in creative writings.

Theme 5: Prospects.

Finally, as the democratisation of GenAI in the book industry is only starting to rise, I inquire about their professional opinion about the evolution of this matter.

In the table below, you will find the final version of the interview guide. As the dialogues were semi-structured interviews, the actual questions asked may have been slightly different from the ones listed below. Moreover, the interview guide was modified from its original version after each interview, thanks to feedback from participants and observations of their responses to the survey. The initial draft of the interview guide can be found in the Appendices (see APPENDIX 5: Original interview guide).

Table 2. Interview guide

Who		Name and function of the interviewee	
Where and when		Place and date, precise time	
Concepts	Dimensions/Characteristics	Relance-Type	
Knowledge about the themes discussed	Description/Job Title and experience in the artificial intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job description and responsibilities? - Do you use AI in your work? Does your company use AI? Which one? Generative AI? - What is your definition of AI? 	
GenAI as competitive advantage/opportunities	Hypothesis 1: Integrating AI technologies into business is a competitive advantage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you think that companies using AI in their workflows have a competitive advantage on the market? - Do you think AI create opportunities in publishing? - Do you use AI in the book promotion/marketing aspects, to get more insights on your audience? 	
Job replacement	Hypothesis 2: The integration of AI in publishing processes alters job roles and responsibilities within the industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Do you see how AI has impacted your profession? How? Can an AI oversee your responsibilities? - The integration of AI in workflows has been said to increase efficiency AND productivity. Do you feel the same? Why? (Hypothesis: AI is a complementary tool/ A collaborative partner) 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How do you picture your position/role in your cy with the influence of AI in 5-10 years? - How do you envision the role of AI in publishing evolving in the next 5-10 years? - From what you know about the editor’s profession, do you believe an AI could oversee their main responsibilities in the 5-10 years to come? - Publishers/editors are convinced they will never be evicted by AI, that there will always be a human in the loop. What do you think? Can’t AI create/ recreate the “human” value proposition?
Ethical considerations	Hypothesis 3: The use of AI in publishing necessitates addressing ethical concerns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The AI Act just got adopted. How do you feel about it? How is it going to impact your work? - How do you feel about AI and copyrights? Does AI threaten the author’s content? - How do you expect the regulations about AI to evolve in the next 5-10 years? - Do you have some thoughts about how to tackle this matter? - How is collaboration between AI tech companies and book publishers or authors possible? - Can AI or AI developers become the content owners (as AI have patent)? - How do you feel about the AI Act? Do you feel it will hinder your work?
Prospects		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What would you advise your colleagues from AI/Publishing? - How do you think this matter/collaboration will unfold in the upcoming years?

Respondents

As a mean to answer the three hypotheses, I selected five professionals from distinct backgrounds. The sample consisted of five men in the 30 to 65 age brackets. To be concise, three of them which are active in the book publishing sector, all authors, where one is also an editor. In addition, one of the respondents is an expert in innovation and has had close collaboration with book publishing houses.

At the same time, one of the writers interviewed is also an expert in data mining and researches the artificial intelligence. Then, we have another professional in the artificial intelligence's field, especially in disruptive technologies. For the representativeness' criteria and to ensure a coherent sample of the population, it felt vital to inquire the perceptions of authors and editors essentially, but also external stakeholders. The participants to the semi-directed meetings are listed here below in chronological order.

1. Dr. Sed Saad is university professor and consultant in Innovation and Strategy. As a professor, Mr. Saad teaches international management. He has been searching and following the topic of artificial intelligence for more than a decade. His focus is on AI as AI is a disruptive innovation for many industries. He believes the student should be ready to work in an industry where AI is already or will disrupt the business model of this industry. That is why he is convinced that AI is the main topic in the international management (S. Saad, personal communication, 25 July 2024).

We had the opportunity to discuss my thesis research topic at ICHEC Brussels Management School. Following this, we were able to pursue the subject in a semi-structured telephone interview. Doctor Saad was able to tell me about his point of view on the integration of AI into the book publishing industry on 25 July 2024 on WhatsApp, at 2.30pm.

2. Franck Skirole is a Belgian author with a vast knowledge of culture. From a very young age, he quickly became interested in most art forms, from music to literature, theatre, dance and even drawing. He began writing short stories and plays, and in his teens wrote his first essay.

Later, he published his first fantasy novel "Cœur d'ange", with Editions du Panthéon in Paris. A second volume has been released in 2024. More recently, he has tried his hand at self-publishing with his collection of short stories "Rêves d'une nuit sans étoile", which has been more successful than those published by traditional publishing houses (F. Skirole, personal communication, 12 January 2025). We met at the Book fair of Wallonia, in Mons, in December 2024, and had a brief chat about the integration of artificial intelligence into the book chain. Following this exchange, Franck agreed to take part in a short interview to help me with my

dissertation. We were finally able to talk by videoconference, on Messenger, on 12 January 2024, at 3.30pm.

3. Vincent Engel is a novelist and playwright. He has published over 20 novels with various publishers. He is also well versed in the art of theatre, for which he has written a dozen plays, several of which have been staged. On top of it, Mr. Engel is a professor of contemporary literature at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, where he set up and ran a creative writing programme for 5 years (V. Engel, personal communication, 11 April 2025).

At the same time, he has experience as a collection director: he has directed the Grand Miroir collection and the Espace Nord heritage collection. He now leads the Belgian's collection at Ker Éditions, and the online journal "Marginales". In spring 2024, he embarked on a new adventure by creating Asmodée Edern Editions. I had the opportunity to meet Vincent Engel at the Book fair of Wallonia. Attending the stand of his publishing house Asmodée Edern Editions, Mr. Engel also took part in the debate held during the event on literature and artificial intelligence. Following this meeting, I contacted him via his publishing house. I was able to interview him for this research via Teams on Friday 11 April 2025, at 11am.

4. Bertrand Misonne is a novelist. He has published two novels, the first with Academia called "Été 99" and the second with Asmodée Ederns called "Le nouveau Michel H".

But Bertrand Misonne is his pen name. By day, he is Bertrand De Longueville. He heads a team specialising in language technology at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre. He has fairly in-depth technical and scientific expertise in AI, but also in societal issues in general. In his second novel, he explores the meeting of his two roles, combining generative artificial intelligence with his literary creation (B. Misonne, personal communication, 14 April 2025).

When encountering the team of Edern Editions during the Book fair of Wallonia, they gave me a direct recommendation to read "Le Nouveau Michel H" by Bertrand Misonne. They then communicate his e-mail address so that I too could arrange an interview with the author. I took the chance to read his book before having the opportunity to chat with him for the interview. I must say that, for an entire year before this meeting, I had been experimenting in many ways with artificial intelligence applications. During these experiments, I had found a certain redundancy in the results provided by the machines. Bertrand Misonne's book "Le nouveau Michel H" gave me another glimpse of the impressive capabilities of AI for assisted writing. I was finally able to collect his first-hand experience during a Teams meeting on Monday 14 April 2025, at 9am.

- Alok Nandi is CEO of Architempo, a design-led innovation agency. He works on design and innovation processes in a variety of settings: education, institutions, and businesses.

He also has a background in publishing. At Casterman, he launched casterman.com and a whole constellation of comic strip and children's literature websites. From there he went on to work at Flammarion in Paris. Alok Nandi's work combines innovation, publishing, and technology. His expertise in innovation and design has led him to give international conferences and work for various governments around the world. He is also a professor in Lyon. Today, this expert is on assignment for the PILEn. Their mission is to carry out a one-year study to understand the impact of AIs on the Belgian book trade (A. Nandi, personal communication, 16 April 2025). I approached the PILEn association after discovering that it was conducting a major study on the impact of AI on the book market, which was relevant to this dissertation. Naturally, the PILEn team referred me to their researcher, Mr. Nandi. We had our first discussion on Teams on 16 April 2025, when we first talked about this master dissertation. We then continued our interview on 21 April 2025, on Google Meet.

Table 3. Summary of respondents

Name	Enterprise	Functions	Location	Interview
Dr. Saad, Sed	ICHEC	Professor and researcher in disruptive innovation	Brussels	25 July 2024, on WhatsApp
Skirole Franck	Independent	Author	Luxembourg Province	12 January 2025, on Messenger
Engel, Vincent	Asmodée Ederns Editions, UCL	Author, Editor, Professor, playwright	Brussels	11 April 2025, on Teams
Misonne, Bertrand	Author of Edern Editions, European Commission's Joint Research Centre	Author, Head of Text Mining Analysis Competence	Brussels	14 April 2025, on Teams
Nandi, Alok	Architempo, Collaborator for the PILEn	CEO of Architempo, Expert in innovation and design in publishing houses	Brussels	16 April 2025, on Teams 21 April 2025, on Google Meet

Limitations of the research

Before presenting the results, it is a sound practice to first set out the limitations of this qualitative study. It seems essential to me that the results presented in the following section are seen in the context of the subsequent limitations.

I would first point out a bias in the approach chosen for this study. The aim of this approach is to understand the experiences and opinions of professionals. To do this, a sample was selected, but this is not necessarily representative of reality. Additionally, the semi-directed interview allows its participants, me included, the freedom to share their opinions, which may show a degree of subjectivity shaped by the experiences and beliefs of each individual.

To begin with, the sample was made up entirely of men. The lack of interviews with female professionals is to be deplored, and consequently the sample cannot give a faithful representation of the population studied. However, I must stress that this is not for lack of trying, as I also contacted female editors to gather their testimonies, without success. I tried to limit this bias by including the testimonies of female professionals in my secondary data, at the various seminars I attended. In a further consideration, the sample does not contain all age generations. In my literature review, I pinpointed a generational bias that influences the perception and use of generative AI. In this field survey, the youngest adult generations, from 18 to 30 as well as the 70+ age group are not represented.

Afterwards, still concerning the sample, it is made up of people with a specific interest in the subject researched, which cannot necessarily be related to all the professionals in the book industry studied here. In the wake of this first prejudicial bias, the population studied also presents a limitation. Initially, I delimited the research field geographically, covering only Europe. In view of the stakeholders interviewed and following the advice of my promoter, I reduced the research to French-speaking Belgium. Consequently, the results cannot be transposed to the whole of Belgium.

Moreover, I also recognise a partiality regarding the temporality of this research. This study is static in time, whereas the subject studied here, artificial intelligence, is constantly evolving. My research began in March 2024. It now ends in July 2025. During this year of research, research into AIs in the world of books has progressed at a rapid pace. I still remember that in the summer of 2024, I was having some difficulty collecting scientific articles for my literary review. Then I witnessed a boom in scientific publications from autumn 2024 onwards, enabling me to finish my literary review. In the same vein, the temporality factor has probably a repercussion on the opinions of the people interviewed. Not only because this ever-evolving AI situation may have altered their interviewed assessment, but also because they are separated in time. The first dialogue happened in July 2024, the second in January 2025. And the rest of them occurred in April 2025.

Naturally, I would have welcomed the opportunity to take a more in-depth look at the data and its representativeness by adding the quantitative method to my study. However, as the subject studied is vast and complex today, I concentrated on my primary objective of understanding the phenomenon of AIs and their impact on publishing houses. Similarly, I would have liked to have succeeded in obtaining more interviews to add to the quality of this dissertation.

Finally, although the interviews were conducted by videoconference, this did not seem to be a hindrance to the smooth running of the interviews. The choice of whether to conduct the interviews face-to-face or by videoconference was left to the interviewees.

Results

In assessing the results, the interviews were coded by theme. These broad themes were defined in advance in the interview guide (Debret, 2018). Firstly, the perceptions of generative AIs and their utilisations of it were established. Secondly, it is a question of detailing whether there are opportunities as authors and publishers in the use of these artificial systems. Next, the threat in terms of replacing the human employee with a generative machine is questioned. Together with the speakers, we discussed the ethical implications of generative AIs before looking at current developments on the subject. The findings here are discussed using a horizontal analysis.

In this analysis, I used Perplexity AI as an assistant to help me codify the verbatim of my meetings. The search engine made several errors which I corrected (Perplexity AI, 2025). The table of cross-cutting themes now below has been reworked. You can find the theme table made by the AI, with errors then, in the appendices (See APPENDIX 15: Cross-sectional thematic analysis table).

Table 4. Cross-sectional thematic analysis

Cross-cutting Theme	Franck Skirole	Vincent Engel	Bertrand Misonne	Dr. Sed Saad	Nandi Alok b.
Level and Perception of AI	Limited knowledge, some fears, sees AI as a non-creative tool	Multiplier tool, not creative, evolving	Technical expert and advanced user, observes shift toward complex systems	Business expert, AI = superior information processing than human	Highly variable adoption, caution, little real integration in the Belgian book market
Concrete Uses	Tried for organisation, corrections,	Summaries, marketing	Multiple models tested, marketing,	Not use yet, waiting for	Main use in marketing, editing/

	disappointed by creative output	adaptation, cover design	synopses, tech monitoring, assisted creation	technical maturity	creation is only human capability
Impact on Creation	AI creates nothing new, human creativity irreplaceable	Not fit for literary creation stricto sensu, human value central	AI helps avoid writer's block, but human supervision essential	Predicts disappearance of human book creation, replace by AI (AI2C)	Literary creation barely affected, practices too diverse to find patterns, caution
Impact on Publishing	Automates simple tasks, but human review essential	Useful for management, promotion, not deep editing	Useful for marketing, limited for recommendation and editing	Predicts disappearance of publishers, AI replaces the entire chain, ultimately even audience will disappear	Belgian publishing is a small market, little integration, human skills key
Opportunities and Limits	Helpful tool but limited, not revolutionary	Timesaving, new perspectives, human/AI complementarity	Productivity varies, depends on profile, risk of standardization	Temporary competitive edge, No opportunities	No proven gains, energy-intensive learning, methodological caution
Risks and Issues	Loss of authenticity, biased answers, technical limits, major players dominance	Sceptical of extreme scenarios, public values authenticity	Bias, loss of diversity, dependence on major players	Total disruption, disappearance of books and reading	Wary of disruptive rhetoric, book publishing sector complex and resilient
Timeline and Prospects	Durable tool but not set in the stone,	Innovation cycles, future "0% AI" labels	Disruptive, inevitable, cautious of	Professional use in 3 years, disappearance	No strong signals of change, cautious

	internet is fragile			of human books by 2030	projections, waiting to observe
Skills and Professions	Human remains central, creativity and editing	Human/AI complementarity, humans with AI taking the jobs	Human supervision always needed, key editorial skills	No more human jobs in the book chain	Human skills hard to replace, need for collaboration

First, I must emphasize that the context in which the interview was defined was equally important to Dr. Sed Saad and Alok Nandi. With both, I took the time to give definitions of the terms studied. It seemed essential to them to have a defined structure before jumping into the dialogue. With Dr. Saad, we discussed about the definition of “books” studied in this paper, or what was the purpose of “writing a book”. Concerning Alok Nandi, we elaborated on the scope of my research. He advised me to refine the area of my research due to the complexity of the theme.

Perception and uses of AI

On re-examining the interviews, it transpires that even with different experiences, backgrounds and developments, some interviewees have a similar or varying degree of vision and use of AI. For them, generative artificial intelligence is a tool. This is the main point that unites the following four speakers: Bertrand Misonne, Vincent Engel, Alok b. Nandi and Frank Skirole. They each have a different degree of use and experience when it comes to their knowledge of artificial intelligence.

To be precise, Vincent Engel uses a metaphor to illustrate his vision of AI: he compares it to a hammer, which is a tool. He explains that with a hammer, the person decides how to use it. They can decide to build something or to use it for nefarious reasons. But the human remains in control of it.

VE : « j'insiste, c'est un gros marteau, l'IA. C'est un bête gros marteau. Et avec le marteau, vous pouvez fracasser le crâne de votre voisin ou vous pouvez construire une maison. » / « I insist, AI is a big hammer. It's a stupid big hammer. And with a hammer, you can smash your neighbour's skull, or you can build a house »(V. Engel, personal communication, 11 April 2025)

Misonne defines generative artificial intelligence as a stochastic parrot. The great language model that is the machine will somehow guess the word following another using probabilities. These probabilities are formed on the content that the machine has observed elsewhere, thus “repeating” what it has found. However, Misonne asserts that there is an emergence of reasoning. He is fascinated by the machine's ability to question itself about the content it

generates and to adapt accordingly. This would prove that it is beginning to reason in a certain way, in a context where AI has been designed by a human to reason, mind you.

Engel's use focuses predominantly on tasks that are tedious or of less interest to the individual. He also regards them as tools offering an increase in ability. As for Skirole, his use of artificial intelligence is almost non-existent. He has carried out trials but finds them inconclusive. In the light of its inconclusive experience, Skirole is trying to avoid using AI, whereas Misonne is actively using generative artificial intelligence. In fact, the author transparently involved ChatGPT in the writing of his latest book.

Saad explains that he does not yet use artificial intelligence, which according to him is not yet powerful and precise enough to perform a chain of tasks. He expresses his intention to wait until the AI is able to sort through his emails, identify career opportunities, reconnect with relationships, and then act appropriately. Saad defines artificial intelligence as having abilities superior to human intelligence.

Impact on creation

Skirole and Engel do not advocate the use of artificial intelligence in their creative writing process. They express the fact that there are different ways of working for a writer, that it's really down to the individual. Skirole explains that he follows a very precise process when working on a manuscript. To experiment, he asked ChatGPT to write him a story using the 12-step Hero's Journey narrative method. The Belgian writer found that the machine delivered a very disappointing result. He later went on to tell me that the AI machine lacked style and didn't understand nuances such as sarcasm. He realises that if he directs the machine and keeps asking it to correct itself, it will probably make the text readable. But that would be a waste of time, as he would already have finished his work on his own. As for Engel, he prefers not to use AI for an entirely different reason. He would very much like the machine to become reliable enough to handle the practical and redundant aspects of his publishing business. By doing so, it would allow him to devote himself to his passion, writing.

Dr Saad is convinced that generative artificial intelligence will replace the publishing profession. He explains that, given the constant evolution of AI capabilities, it won't be long before generative AIs become the sole authors of books. Readers will simply have to ask the AI what they want to read, and the machine will carry it out without a hitch. He prefers not to answer the question of whether the human remains an essential value proposition in writing. He suggests taking a look at the history of humanity. That every generation in history has always been resistant to innovation and the resulting societal changes. Yet all these innovations of the past are part of our everyday lives today. He gives the example of the horse-drawn carriage, which was replaced by the car, and which today is similarly undergoing innovation in the form of autonomous cars.

Interspersed between these two divergent points of view is Bertrand Misonne, who actively used ChatGPT in his latest book, “Le Nouveau Michel H”. Although the writer is not in favour of books written 100 % with AI, he is experimenting with generative AI as a super-assistant. He points out that the writer has always had an image of “lone genius”, that the writer must write alone. Despite this, he shows that in other artistic fields, there are often a good number of assistants who work alongside the artist to produce the piece, but only the name of the artist in question will be remembered. While the practice may seem transgressive in the writing, it is nonetheless very much present. They are called Ghostwriters. Misonne features Ken Follet, who has often worked with assistants to write his books. Based on this argument, he sees no reason why AI couldn't play a similar role in creation. Nevertheless, according to Misonne, there are a few precautions to be respected. Firstly, it is vital for him to be transparent about the use of AI in his work. Secondly, the great danger for the author is to fall into laziness and end up creating nothing at all. Nandi seems to share this vision of precautions. In response, he referred me to the PILEn IA Charte. Their AI Charte sets out the principles of transparency, authenticity and respect for the law, the principle of balance between the quest for productivity and the equitable sharing of gains and revenues, and the principle of collective learning and knowledge sharing.

FS : « *Tout ce que j'ai pu en (Generative AIs) lire, c'était mauvais. Maintenant, je suis sûr qu'à demander à retravailler, retravailler, retravailler, en guidant pourquoi, il sera donné de l'émotion, il sera donné du style, il sera donné une bonne narration, il sera donné du rythme, il sera donné des répétitions, du non-dit. Mais le temps de guider ce prompt à ce niveau-là, j'ai terminé de l'écrire l'histoire.* » /

« *Everything I've read about Generative AIs has been pretty bad. Now, I'm sure that by asking it to rework, rework, rework, and guiding it on why, it will be able to convey emotion, style, good storytelling, rhythm, repetition, and subtlety. But by the time I've guided the prompt to that level, I'll be done writing the story.* »(F. Skirole, personal communication, 12 January 2025)

Impact on publishing

As mentioned above, Saad envisions the end of the book industry. He observes that several industries are affected by this disruptive AI-generated technology. He also portrays teachers as becoming obsolete and being replaced by AI. And he suggests that his colleagues should consider a professional retraining in a few years' time. For the book industry, the effect would be devastating, in his view. AI will be able to handle all the jobs in the book chain. Although they are totally opposed to this point of view, Nandi, Misonne and Engel recognise that generative AI can have a positive impact on the marketing of the book sector. Misonne and Engel go further. The machine may prove to be a formidable assistant in book publishing. But it will only be effective for tasks that do not involve in-depth editing of literary works. Nandi clarifies that there is not enough hindsight at this stage to make anything other than

assumptions. There are still too many unknowns in the field. The book sector in French-speaking Belgium is in a state of constant flux at the moment, which doesn't promise anything concrete for the industry in the future. At this stage, especially in Belgium, AI is a work in progress. Some publishers and authors are trying their hand at it on their own, and the result carried are either good or bad experiences.

Later in his interview, Engel reflects on the impact that the democratisation of books written with AI will have on publishing houses. He totally expects that, given the overflow of AI books that have arrived on the book market, a 0 % AI label will be developed. Skirole also mentions the idea of developing a label "written 100 % by a human" in order to meet the principle of transparency and to be able to inform consumers easily. He believes that this could also lead to a revalorisation of books, which have lost some of their symbolic value in recent years.

VE : « À mon avis, vers 2030 et sans doute avant, il y aura des éditeurs qui vont se construire sur l'idée qu'il y a 0% IA. Ça va être un label. » / « In my opinion, towards 2030 and probably before, there will be publishers who will build their business on the idea that there is 0% AI. It will be a label. » (V. Engel, personal communication, 11 April 2025)

Skirole wonders whether readers are really interested in this offer of books written with AI. He hopes that human beings will continue to share this value of authenticity, which cannot be found in an AI author. This Belgian writer, who does not use AI in his works, confides that he is not very present on social networks, or that he makes very little use of technology in his writer's bubble. To make himself known, he prefers to go out and meet his readers. When it comes to his own reading recommendations, he only lets himself be influenced by other authors or by people with whom he interacts. Even as an independent author who must also act as a publisher and promoter, he will not use AI. For him, it's a question of authenticity.

Opportunities

As long as Saad is concerned, he is crystal clear as he stated that the book industry will be replaced by AI systems. In this precise context, he does not see any opportunities in the long run for the book publishing industry.

SS: "So, I don't see the opportunities at all. AI will create and write books. So it will be, instead of C2B2C, being B, the publishing house, C the author and C to the customer so C2B2C, it will be replaced by AI 2C." (S. Saad, personal communication, 25 July 2024)

As long as Nandi is concerned, he states in his interview that there is minimal representation from book publishing houses in Belgium. In fact, in Belgium, and more specifically in the French-speaking community, there are no big giants in the publishing of written books (comic strips are not included in this research). For this reason, there are no analysts in the field of book publishing capable of tackling the challenge of artificial intelligence in Belgium as of today.

He insists that there is no concrete evidence of a productivity gain to date in French-speaking Belgium.

In his testimony as a book author, Misonne describes the improvements he believes generative artificial intelligence has brought. For one thing, he claims that this AI tool prevents you from having to start writing on a blank page. He explains that there is a certain easiness to write when you start from a text. However, he makes it equally clear that the author is in control of the machine and must generate something new. AI also makes it easier to document certain books. Misonne draws a parallel with Google Street View, which enabled some authors to describe settings and places more accurately. Engel echoes this point of view, admitting that he uses Perplexity.AI for documentation when writing his books. What's more, Misonne receives a lot of positive feedback about the quality of manuscripts in his sector. Some publishers report an improvement in the quality of the manuscripts they receive. For Misonne, the ChatGPT effect is not entirely unrelated to this phenomenon.

Misonne admits that generative artificial intelligence is a real marvel when it comes to producing book promotion tools. He explains that readers are not necessarily aware of this, but that writing a synopsis, talking about a book and doing it justice is complex. He has experimented with the podcast button on Gemini, Google's big language model. He was amazed at the machine's ability to carry out qualitative analyses. While AI seems to excel at recommending books for the individual, we don't realise how difficult the task is on a macro level. One of his colleagues, the author of the book "Fantasia", who works at Google Art and Culture, told him that book recommendation algorithms are very difficult to code, unlike other types of recommendation.

Beyond the opportunities for the individual, at a macro level, generative artificial intelligence is completely changing the rules of the game for industry. Misonne recounts that AI enables access to a vast network of knowledge, lowering the technological barriers. AI facilitates the practical side of writing and its evolution, making it easier to produce a book. The Belgian author admits that, although it allows everyone to try their hand at writing despite fierce competition, it risks increasing the overproduction of books seen in recent years.

Risks and issues

From the various interviews, it appears that one of the risks questioned in the use of generative artificial intelligence is its reliability. For example, according to Skirole, he considers AI to be unreliable in the light of its inconclusive experiments, while Misonne and Engel agree that reliability depends on how it is used.

All three share ideas on ethics. They advocate appropriate regulation of the use of AI in the various aspects of the creative professions. However, they point to several inequalities between the resources of large publishing companies and small independent publishing houses. Nandi considers that, as Belgium has no large publishing houses, these companies are

not in a position to harness the potential of generative artificial intelligence tools. He adds that publishing houses are not technophiles from the outset.

As for Skirole, although he does not wish to involve AI in its creative process or even for his promotion, he confesses that they (authors) will have to adapt to change. And he hopes that safeguards will be considered further down the line. In answer to this concern, I attracted his attention on the fact that the European Parliament drew the AI act with regulations that might have positive outcomes for creative industries. While he heard of the AI act, he recognised that he has no idea of its concepts and the implications it could have on the book sector. Misonne and Engel considered several options with a conscious notion of Europe's position in generative AI development. The Europeans aim to develop an ethical AI to compete with US and Asian's AI models.

Another feature of risks for Misonne resides in the personalisation aspect of AI. Although personalisation is a cornerstone of marketing today, for the author it represents a real cultural danger. Skirole concurs, saying that the machine will tend to tell us what we want to hear. Indeed, the machine has this complacency. To quote Bertrand Misonne, it allows us “to pander to our baser instincts, which does nothing to advance humanity”(B. Misonne, personal communication, 14 April 2025). Artificial intelligence doesn't create anything new, and in this case, it doesn't help humans to create anything new either. At present, AI runs the risk of standardising thinking. The content generated remains in line with conventional thinking, reinforcing the phenomenon of uniformity of thought. However, Skirole and Misonne contrast their response by emphasising that our line of thinking is already largely influenced. Big business shapes our opinions and values. We are all influenced in one way or another, and this trend has been going on for decades. The financial interests of these large groups drive the use of AI in the publishing world, which gradually removes any controversy, criticism or differences. Regarding these big companies possibly controlling our behaviour, Nandi recommends caution when it comes to big tech companies. Nandi also takes issue with the myth of AI being promoted by big business. The latter would have us believe in the phenomenal and miraculous capabilities of AI, whereas for him, this is nothing but “smoke and mirrors”. This point was shared to varying degrees by the speakers Skirole, Engel, Misonne and Nandi. In the end, these different speakers share common concerns, despite their different opinions regarding the use of AI in the Belgian book publishing world.

VE : « *Ce phénomène d'uniformisation, de standardisation n'a pas commencé avec l'IA, ça fait 30 ans que c'est en cours, ce n'est pas nouveau, l'IA ne fait que renforcer cette tendance-là. » / «This phenomenon of uniformity and standardisation did not begin with AI; it has been going on for 30 years. It is not new; AI is simply reinforcing this trend. » (V. Engel, personal communication, 11 April 2025)*

Timeline and prospects

As far as Skirole is concerned, he is curious about the development that the generative AI tool may take, although he is totally resistant to its personal use. In his words, you have to “live with it”. Saad, Engel and Misonne all point out that artificial intelligences are here to stay. While Saad gives the year 2030 as a benchmark for a significant impact of generative AI on the book industry, Misonne believes that it will not even be necessary to wait until then for the text-generating intelligences to create readable literary works. Nonetheless, like Nandi, the latter recommends caution and does not like to speculate about the future. It notes that people tend to prolong trends, completely forgetting the possible emergence of disruptive phenomena. Besides, Skirole admits that for him, nothing is certain. In view of the developments and especially the degradation of our environment, nothing says that the Internet will still exist in the years to come. Skirole highlights the fact that all of our technologies today rely on batteries. Say batteries that are not recyclable and are buried in ice floors to cool them. Yet the glaciers are melting and there is a risk that they will no longer be able to do so, thus jeopardizing our technology.

Skills and professions

As for the author's craft, Misonne, Engel and Skirole agree that AI cannot replace the human author's creativity, imagination and style. They draw on artificial intelligence not to “replace” their entire function, but with a view to having AI improve them and/or carry out time-consuming, boring tasks.

What is more, Engel and Misonne concede that there is a possibility of AI authoring books in a specific case. In a context of the so-called “roman de gare”, or “low-cost” literary novel, it might one day be possible for it to be developed via a script by a creative AI. But the latter would have no real writing style. For the author Skirole, any artistic creation requiring machine intervention is out of the question. In a similar vein, Nandi considers that generative AIs cannot be book authors either, since creation is a human faculty.

While each speaker is in agreement to varying degrees that there will always be a human in the loop when it comes to making a book, Saad foresees a book sector governed by AI in the near future. In an attempt to define the book, Saad explains that the idea of a book is a medium used to share knowledge, ideas and opinions with others. In this context, it seems certain to him that artificial intelligence can replace the human. Based on his experience, he says that AI will swiftly be capable of creating/writing a book, editing it from A to Z, promoting it and selling copies to the public. In this idea, the book chain is completely severed, leaving only the book consumer.

SS: *“I would say by 2030 there will be no more books and production of books by human intelligence, and nobody will read books anymore by 2030.”*(S. Saad, personal communication, 25 July 2024)

On this account, Misonne and Engel remain convinced that the human value is a critical part of the creative and cultural industries. Although, they don't deny the potential of AI taking over specific aspects of editorial jobs or skills of authorships, the machine must remain under the control of a human being. In the same vein, Nandi does not believe that AI will replace the human author. He explained that the beliefs and expectations regarding the evolution of the written book have been known for several decades. They have not necessarily been vindicated. Nandi recommends caution. There are still too many variables in motion to make any assertions about the future of content-creating artificial intelligence in the business of Belgian books. As forementioned, Engel sees AI as a tool that have the capacity of enhancing human capabilities. Additionally, he wishes for AI systems to take over his role as an editor, this will enable him to dedicate himself to writing books. In view of the changes that the job market is undergoing as a result of technological developments, it is becoming evident to him that the traditional professions will be taken over by people equipped with AI.

VE : « *J'aimerais bien pouvoir lever le pied un petit peu, me reconsacrer à l'écriture. Que ce soit l'IA ou que ce soit un humain, il va falloir que quelqu'un, petit à petit, prenne la relève. Ce sera quelqu'un avec l'IA. [...] Mais penser que moi ou n'importe qui serait remplacé par l'IA, je pense que c'est aussi improbable que de dire qu'un marteau remplacera un jour le menuisier.* » /

« *I would love to be able to slow down a little and devote myself to writing again. Whether it's AI or a human being, someone will have to gradually take over. It will be someone with AI. [...] But to think that I or anyone else would be replaced by AI, I think that's as unlikely as saying that a hammer will one day replace the carpenter.* » (V. Engel, personal communication, 11 April 2025)

Hypothesis testing

Having presented the results of my qualitative investigation, it is now appropriate to examine the extent to which these responses allow me to confirm or refute my hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Validated with nuances

“The integration of generative AI in book writings and publishing increases productivity, as it streamlines repetitive and unimaginative tasks, thus allowing humans to focus on the cultural dimensions of their work”.

Each participant recognises artificial intelligence as a tool, but not an inherently creative one. Nevertheless, the qualitative research conducted in this thesis has shown that generative AI depends mainly on how each individual uses it, in a specific context to meet a need. Depending on the user's profile, their requirements change. In our case, we have the author on the one hand and the editor on the other. According to the respondents in this study, authors may use Gen AI for their documentation, or for aspects of writing that they are less comfortable with, such as descriptions or dialogues. As for publishers, their use is quite different. According to those interviewed for this thesis, it seems that publishers can use generative AI tools as a super-assistant. They delegate the most tedious or repetitive tasks of their work to the machine.

For the majority of respondents, generative AI can offer several opportunities in marketing. Several give examples such as creating summaries, book synopses or texts to promote the book. In his interview, Dr Saad rules out any opportunities offered by AI in the book industry, due to his opinion that AI will destroy the book chain. Yet he admits in his answer that he will use AI once it becomes more mature. Saad mentions that he would use AI when it is able to sort his emails, organise his appointments, identify opportunities in his emails and provide him with reports. In making this statement, he also appears to recognise an opportunity in generative AI as an assistant. Such an AI assistant would be capable of handling repetitive and/or routine tasks. This would allow him to focus on other aspects of his work, as suggested in hypothesis 1.

In addition to the information gathered from the study, it was important to consult with certain non-profit organisations working in collaboration with publishers and authors to gain a more comprehensive view. Mr Nandi, who works with PILEn, told me that from a macroscopic perspective of the book market, there are few indicators of the use of generative AI in the sector. He believes that there are no concrete opportunities that have been proven in practice (A. Nandi, personal communication, 16 April 2025).

Furthermore, during these discussions, I was led to debate what constitutes literary creation. According to some authors interviewed for this thesis, creation lies in novelty and innovation. Generative artificial intelligence cannot create anything without humans. AI can therefore be

used as an assistant, but it is not necessarily creative. According to four of the five respondents, including the authors and the publisher, writing books should remain under human control.

Hypothesis 2: Refuted

“The democratisation of generative AI in the book industry threatens the professional careers of authors and editors, as the technology will replace them”;

As of the completion of this master's thesis, it cannot be asserted that generative AI will replace the professions of authors and publishers, at least in French-speaking Belgium. In contrast to four of the five respondents, only one individual anticipates a near future without humans in the book chain. He predicts that generative AI, as a disruptive technology, will destroy the book industry. Although he refers to the near future, he does not address the present.

Consequently, with regard to the concept of disruptive technology, two out of five interview participants discussed generative AI in these terms. Indeed, the democratisation of generative AI has lowered several barriers in the book market. These include technological barriers, but also barriers related to the standards and authenticity expected of an author. By changing the rules of the market, disruptive AI seems to be forcing industry players to adapt. However, other stakeholders emphasise that AI is not a revolutionary tool in their view. On the one hand, we have Skirole, who explains that before AI, we used Reverso. Before Reverso, there was the dictionary. For him, tools are innovating, but there is nothing new under the sun. On the other hand, Nandi draws attention to the fact that the decline of the paper book was already predicted decades ago. To date, this has not yet occurred. Let us remember that the sale of paper books still accounts for 80% of publishing houses' revenues. It appears accurate to state that the book industry has proven to be resilient to change. It would be interesting to observe the evolution of this dissonance between the resilience of the book market and disruptive technology.

Nevertheless, there remain cases where some interviewees acknowledge the possibility of AI taking on the role of author, although they do not seem to endorse it. They first highlight the possibility of artificial intelligence writing fairly convincing “airport novels”. These are books that follow the same plot repeatedly. With the book market experiencing an explosion in supply, AI is exacerbating this phenomenon. Respondents fear that large companies may seek to produce for the sake of producing. They would use generative AI as an author in order to maximise profits, as AI is already capable of producing coherent text in record time.

Similarly, according to Dr Saad, some academic and scientific books could ultimately be written by artificial intelligence. In the sense that academic works, for example, can regularly interpret the same already known knowledge. Even if each author uses different examples or methods

to present this knowledge. This is especially true in cases where no innovation or discovery has been developed. Because let's not forget, AI does not create anything on its own.

That said, the disruptive nature of this technology could force not a replacement, but rather a change in publishing jobs. Mr. Engel points out that the job market will change and that, in his opinion, it will be humans equipped with generative AI who are likely to replace human editors alone. It seems fitting to believe that humans can programme a super AI assistant, thereby increasing their capabilities and ultimately their productivity. As a result, it is not unreasonable to assume that humans with AI knowledge could replace employees without such knowledge. A similar phenomenon has already been observed in the past. A candidate who knows how to use computer applications for an office job is likely to be preferred over a candidate with no computer skills.

Hypothesis 3: Inconclusive

“The recourse to generative AI in the book publishing industry raises ethical questions about transparency, authorship and the very notion of a book”.

As identified in the section on “the risks of generative AI”, this technology is at the heart of debates, most of which are ethical in nature. The use of generative AI is highly controversial. Each stakeholder has different views on the issue of its use in writing a book. What unites them in their opinions is the need for transparency regarding its use, now required by the European Union's AI Act. Transparency was previously not a principle that was necessarily applied to the use of generative artificial intelligences. Whether stakeholders are for or against the use of generative AI, they agree that a label “100% human” (or “0% AI”) will have to be developed in order to inform consumers. This will enable consumers to make conscious and responsible choices when making their purchases.

Furthermore, transparency must be required in order to avoid any controversy regarding copyright. Indeed, one of the most glaring criticisms levelled at generative AI is its misuse of content posted on the internet, used without the permission of the content authors. It is also criticised for its lack of reliability. This is why it appears that not only must users of generative AI be transparent, but they must also remain in control of the “tool”. Logically, to address the issues at stake, most stakeholders also insist on the need to keep humans in the loop to prevent them to happen. With regard to the authorship, writers are said to be creating and therefore innovating in a way, even when assisted by AI. They remain ‘the master’ of what they create, guiding the AI and adopting a critical attitude towards its responses. Ensuing that, as far as publishers are concerned, four-fifths of respondents claim that human supervision of Artificial intelligences and what they generate is necessary. At this stage, AI still lacks maturity and poses many problems, as mentioned above (see the risks of AI).

Following these observations, I was able to discuss the legislative framework with four of the speakers, focusing on the issue of generative AI in the world of books. In particular, we discussed the AI Act, originally published in early 2024 by the European Parliament. While three of the speakers had a more developed understanding of AI and its implications, the fourth participant, being Skirole, did not seem to be aware of the AI Act and its implications.

This is why it is worth asking whether AI is really a subject of debate for individual authors. As for the other three speakers, opinions are mixed. Dr. Saad found it difficult to answer, given that the AI Act does not have the same implications within the European Union as it does outside the EU. In line with his thinking, he considers that it is pointless for human individuals to regulate AI according to human regulations.

Mr. Engel considers that Europe is a little behind but that it must move beyond the stage of regulation and propose concrete solutions to the sector. Mr. Misonne, for his part, seems to see the AI Act as a necessary step, a necessary link in the chain to achieve responsible AI. The AI Act aims to protect individuals and remind them of the harmful effects that artificial intelligence can have.

Beyond considerations of transparency and data protection, some interviewees drew my attention to the issue of authenticity. In fact, most of them questioned the following: if the author is assisted by AI, is the work created with its assistance authentic? As long as Mr. Skirole and Mr. Nandi are concerned, authenticity and creativity come from humans. AI cannot generate this because it is a tool that does not create. Others see the issue from a different angle, namely that as long as certain rules are followed, authenticity is not necessarily lost. The principles that must be respected are similar to those found in the codes of conduct published following the AI Act (namely transparency, protection of fundamental rights under the GDPR, personal safety, non-discrimination, responsibility and respect for European democratic values). By following these principles, the use of generative AI does not seem to call into question the author or their work. It is a tool guided by the human hand, an assistant, but one that does not detract from originality and human creation. In this case, a simple Google search (open source) may, in itself, be an AI assistant, but it is still guided by the ideas of a human author.

One final ethical point raised during the discussions was the risk of standardisation of thought. As we recall, generative AI generates nothing new. It is based on a huge network of pre-existing data, which it gathers together and processes to generate its text in order to achieve its objective at the request of a human being. It leaves no room for new ideas. This is why users of generative AI must have their own critical thinking skills and not take the generated response at face value. Furthermore, this risk of standardisation can have a detrimental effect on literary writing ability in general, not forgetting the fact that AI potentially has discriminatory biases. But it is

also dangerous for the advancement of our world in general. From discussion and debates, new ideas arose and drive our society forward. If everyone relies on AI-generated texts, our world would be based on its ideas, and there is a real risk of a decline in innovation.

Chapter 4: Discussion

As a reminder, the qualitative research conducted here speak only for a fraction of the population and it does not necessarily translate into a generalisation. From the very nature of this research, several bias may be present since it reflects the opinions of a small sample of people. Now, let us make a rundown of the findings of this paper. Coming out from a previous literature review and some observations made on the field, we developed our research question: **“How does generative AIs impact the Belgian book publishing houses? Specifically, what are the opportunities and/or threats Belgian authors and editors are facing?”**. To respond, our key findings are as follows.

First, I must stress that the results vary from one to another. Meaning here that at macroscopic viewpoint, it seems that there are only few proven applications of using GenAI in the authors and editors’ field of the Belgian French-speaking community. However, looking at individuals, the experience of the GenAI differ noticeably.

All in all, authors, editors and even consultant working in collaboration with them, seem to concede the performance of gen AI as a useful "assistant". Yet, it is not inherently a creator. It seems correct to indicate that the ways of GenAI to assist authors and editors are disparate. Authors may use AI for documentation or for less comfortable writing elements (descriptions, dialogues), but the ideas and the creativity must remain an uppermost human priority. Whereas publishers convey the impression to use it for administrative and marketing tasks mainly. It is hinted that at microlevel, the GenAI assistant for editors might prove to be a timesaving and, ultimately, be a cost-saving tool. Contrary to publishers, the AI assistant does not seem to save author’s time. All in all, it emerged that it is unlikely that this disruptive technology would replace either authors or editors.

Most interviewees in this research deemed that generative AI is more prone to change how jobs are performed (making humans with AI skills more valuable) rather than eliminating jobs entirely. Some acknowledge that AI could generate formulaic, low-innovation books, and that commercial pressure might encourage such practices, but innovative, creative writing remains a human domain. The industry is resilient, and past predictions about major disruptions (e.g., the decline of paper books) often did not unfold. Generative artificial intelligences, while disruptive, are seen as part of a continuum of evolving tools.

Finally, derived from the results of the qualitative study in our context, ethical issues including transparency, authorship, and authenticity remain unresolved. There are strong calls for

human oversight and responsible regulation. Whereas some AI experts might disagree with those human regulations. There is consensus on the need for transparency about AI's involvement in book creation, a requirement supported by new EU regulations (AI Act). Furthermore, stakeholders in the book market's value chain agree on keeping humans "in the loop" and advocate for clear labelling (e.g., "100% human") to inform readers. Despite the EU regulations and codes of conduct being developed, concerns persist about copyright, misuse of content, reliability, and control over AI-generated work.

On authenticity, most believe creativity and originality are maintained as long as humans remain the guiding force, with GenAI serving merely as an assistant. The risk of standardization of thought and possible perpetuation of biases was equally highlighted in this research. Generative AI cannot generate new ideas independently; therefore, critical human judgment and original thinking are still vital.

Before developing the reflections arising from this survey, I will now analyze the results obtained in relation to the existing literature on the subject. Firstly, it should be borne in mind that the interview guide given to the study participants was based on existing literature. However, it was also developed based on my initial observations in the field. The field in question was the London Book Fair 2024. Therefore, despite the semi-structured nature of the interviews, there are likely to be similarities between the existing literature and the results found here.

Furthermore, the answers provided in this research should be taken with caution. In this specific context, I only collected data from a small sample of people (five). As a result, the data collected may not be fully representative of the population under study. As a matter of fact, there are some discrepancies. Firstly, two-thirds of the authors interviewed do not prefer to use generative AI in their writing process, apart from documentation. While authors such as Isaksson and authors from Ortiz et al.'s study claim to use generative AI for inspiration, to avoid writer's block, or to explore new avenues of thought, we do not necessarily find the same testimonials here. There are also differences of opinion as to whether the use of AI saves time. This is not necessarily true for every writer. The participants in this survey clarify that there are as many working/writing methods as there are people. The utilization of generative AI tools therefore does not seem to suit everyone at this point in time. I will return to the example of Skirole, who has a very precise creative process that generative AI was unable to follow in a qualitative manner during his experiment.

When it comes to publishers, the situation is different. Here we find several similarities with literature. According to my survey of certain professionals and consultants, generative artificial intelligence can indeed be used in several aspects of the publishing profession. In this case, it concerns the marketing aspect of book sales. The speakers pointed out that there are certain practical applications where generative AI is able to excel. These include, for example, writing promotional synopsis to sell books. One participant added that it could also be useful in cover

design. These findings echo the discoveries published by Brown et al., McIlroy, Sadek and Lloyd.

Nevertheless, they point out that the machine is not yet ready to act completely autonomously and that it must remain under human supervision for the benefit of the publishing profession, rather than replacing it.

Here we see a certain representation of the divergence of opinion between AI experts and literary professionals. In line with existing literature, professionals are rebelling against the idea that a machine will one day replace them. The arguments put forward by the majority of participants in my survey are the same as those put forward in scientific literature. Although artificial intelligence is now capable of producing a “readable” text or book, it still has shortcomings. Texts are deemed disappointing, unable to assimilate the nuances of discourse, lacking depth and style. These are some of the comments made by the authors. However, critics are much more tolerant when AI “experts” are questioned. The two experts interviewed agree on one point: generative artificial intelligence will soon be writing fully readable books.

Beyond this point, opinions still differ. Misonne marvels at the machine's ability to question itself before adapting. He recognizes the emergence of a certain kind of reasoning. However, he points out that it should not replace human creativity. The other speaker completely disagrees with his peer, except when it comes to scientific literature. Let me clarify my point here: research conducted by Veronika Yurchenko and Oleksii Nalyvaiko (2025) has demonstrated that, in certain genres of literature, readers express difficulties distinguishing between a book generated by AI and a book written by a human. This study echoes the comments of two-fifths of my participants.

As for concerns about the ethical issues raised by the use of generative AI, the findings of this analysis are mixed. Compared to the Belgian speakers, these findings differ from those reported in scientific research, but for various reasons. Nandi and Skirole are not particularly concerned about copyright. In their view, the laws protecting authors and the codes of conduct to be observed by players in the book sector are clear.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that the discrepancies are likely due to the unique characteristics of the Belgian book market. In fact, most of the scientific literature and preliminary observations for this work were based on the French, British, and American markets. These three markets have large publishing houses that compete with Belgian SMEs and therefore hold the largest shares of the international market (Statista, 2025). Far from being a temporary situation, the differences in the Belgian book market may make it impossible to transpose findings from other foreign markets (see section on the French-speaking Belgian market, p.19). To my knowledge, there has not yet been any study conducted on this subject in the Belgian book market. Echoing this, Mr. Nandi singled out in his interview that there are currently few to no indicators regarding the integration of generative AI tools in French-speaking Belgian book publishing houses. This observation, coupled with the lack of

scientific literature on the subject in this precise context, might hint that the integration of AI is still in a preliminary phase in the Belgian creative landscape. For the time being, the behaviours of writers and editors towards generative artificial intelligences imply that each individual has their own process.

All things considered, I should like to elaborate on some thoughts following the conversations I had with the participants in my qualitative study.

Considering our first hypothesis, the assistance provided to writers by generative AI seems to break the taboo of the solitary genius, as put forward by Misonne in his interview. Indeed, as identified in our literature, there are differences of opinion regarding the use of AI in the creative writing process. There are differences between authors who believe that AI should remain outside the creative writing process and authors who experiment with generative AI in their works while respecting the principles of transparency and originality. This was observed among the authors interviewed in this document as well. Of the three authors, two-thirds prefer not to invite generative AI to their writing table. The third not only experiments with AI but has also published a book in which generative AI, ChatGPT in particular, played the role of co-author. It should be noted, in that peculiar case, that the machine remained under the control of the writer, who provides all the evidence to support his use of AI.

Outside these two categories, there are also authors who take full credit for their work even though they use AI. In May 2025, self-published author Lena McDonald was flagged because found herself in hot water because she left a “prompt” (the request she made to a generative AI) as it was, in her final published work (Boulland, 2025a). Fans of her series quickly realised the mistake, which was damning evidence of the use of hidden AI. The effect was immediate, with readers turning completely against the writer. Beyond the considerations raised by publishers and authors, this news story shows that we would do well to pay attention to the opinion of readers (the end customer) on this subject. The reader's perception is not insignificant in this debate. As the source of demand and the end consumer who generates revenue, we must ask ourselves whether book readers are interested in books generated by AI or created with the assistance of AI.

Now, I am moving on to the second hypothesis: the probability of AI replacing human jobs. Although the idea of using generative AI to increase profits seems tempting enough to replace humans, it does not seem appropriate to go to such extremes. In my survey, one person pointed out that by 2030, the book industry would no longer exist. In stark contrast to his peers, the respondent in the sample surveyed, with his knowledge of AI, asserts that the capabilities of AI will be such that we will no longer read. At this point in time, literary research and my own research demonstrate the opposite. However, I would still like to dwell on the question.

Regarding the science and academic books, two of our respondents agree that education as it is conceptualised today is destined to lose its substance due to the emerging capabilities of AI.

The difference lies in their conclusions: one encourages a fundamental rethinking of teaching, while the other predicts the obsolescence of the teaching profession in the near future. With that said, one point was brought to my attention: two crucial factors stand in the way of generative AI's rise in the arts and culture professions. Passion and freedom of choice.

First, I ponder the question of “commercial” books. Professor Engel raised an essential issue during his interview. He confided in me that he would like to delegate some of his responsibilities to artificial intelligence so that he could devote himself to his passion, writing. Like him, Skirole is a writer by passion, but he also has another job on the side. Therefore, beyond ethical, commercial and technological considerations, I would argue that writing and reading will withstand generative artificial intelligence, simply because they are passions and hobbies loved by a part of our society. Authors do not necessarily write for financial reasons; in reality, only a very small proportion of authors manage to make a living from their writing. (Levaux & de Brabandère, 2025). We might then question the writer's motivations for publishing their work and the reader's motivations for reading it. I would like to point out to the reader of this thesis that these are only my own reflections based on the survey conducted in a specific context.

Given all the arguments put forward above, it is, at this point in time, unlikely that artificial intelligence will succeed in destroying these professions. I do not deny, however, the possibility that there will be an increase in works of literature assisted by generative AI. It is a matter of fact that Amazon has seen an explosion in its offering of books written collaboratively or entirely generated by AI since 2023 (Bensinger, 2023). The opinions of some stakeholders regarding low-cost books written by generative AI support this view. In this respect, Hervé Le Tellier, a French writer, recognises the danger that, in the near future, about 80% of the book production might be made by AI. In his experimentation with Claude AI, the French writer noticed that by feeding the machine with enormous amount of literature, it develops some literary images. In the same vein as the participants of my interview, Hervé Le Tellier won't be bothered if he happens to read the so-called “airport novels” (“romans de gare”) generated by AI. However, following him, concerning the literature that the author “embodied”, in that case, the human writer is not disposable (Boulland, 2025b).

Echoing the opinions gathered in my discussions, Amélie Nothomb, a Belgian writer renowned in the world of French literature, is convinced that the AI generator will not replace her profession. Known for not being an adept of technology, she explains that artificial intelligence consumes much more electricity than she does. She concludes her argument by pointing out that, historically, it has been proven (according to her) that things that consume less have always endured over time. Following this logic, between AI and herself, she consumes less and will therefore remain (CANAL+, 2024). This is in line with Franck Skirole's comments in his interview. Skirole was sceptical about the certainty of the long-term sustainability of AI.

Furthermore, regarding the awareness and knowledge around GenAI, as one of the speakers pointed out, the current capabilities of generative AI are greatly overestimated. Presented in

the tabloid press with sensationalist headlines designed to grab attention, AI is not yet at the stage of being capable of autonomous intelligence without human intervention. This raises a key issue, which is the misinformation surrounding AI and its real applications. In practice, some Belgian non-profit organisations such as PILEn have set up workshops dedicated to AI for Belgian publishers. We could go further by organising a summit or conference with the various players in the book chain so that they could meet AI-development companies. The summit would initially highlight the collaboration between new technologies and the literary world. It would then serve to increase the ICT knowledge of publishers and authors and give a wide audience the keys to understanding this technology.

Before digging into the paths of research that could build up this thesis, I am inclined to dwell a bit on the strengths of this qualitative study. While my qualitative research remains inconclusive to some extent, I am convinced that this study brings a fundamental stepping stone to expand the scientific knowledge. At first, when I began to investigate the topic of artificial intelligences in the book industry, very few scientific papers on AI in cultural and creative industries were published. Nonetheless, the awareness of GenAI has boomed since, going hand in hand with the debates and the uneasiness.

One of the assets brought with this qualitative study is part of a shift in which certain cultural and artistic professions appear at first glance to be undergoing a transformation due to the rise of AI. Due to the observations of such transformation in various countries in the world, research into whether a similar phenomenon is occurring in the Belgian book industry is legitimate and up to date.

Moreover, the prominent asset of this qualitative study resides in its multi-perspective approach. Although not all key actors of the book's value chain are investigated in this paper, not only authors and editors were consulted but also consultants working in collaboration, or not, with book publishing's figures. This external viewpoint is essential to grasp the broad picture of the AI's current state of integration in our society. Additionally, it must be noted that two of the interview's participants hold two distinct professional's functions. In this instance, one is author and editor, the other is likewise an author in addition to being an AI expert. Albeit this does not give their comments more weight than other testimonials, they possess a broader understanding of the phenomenon. They are inclined to consider the issues at hand from different perspectives.

The purpose of this thesis is to unearth the actual usages of generative AI into the book writing and book editing processes. Along with it, the qualitative research conducted hereby aim to understand the degree of interaction between AI and authors/editors. Ultimately, the current study serves to document in a scientific paper, the potential applications of technological changes in the book sector.

Besides, this paper emphasises the ongoing debate surrounding collaboration between humans and machines and raises questions about which skills belong or should belong only to the human domain. It enquires about the added value that humans bring compared to the automatic and ultra-fast solutions offered by generative AI.

The results obtained in this research can also serve as a basis for further studies. Although some results are inconclusive, this investigation can easily be used as a premise for more advanced scientific research (see below). This master's thesis lays the necessary foundations to get the hang of the evolution of the assimilation of generative artificial intelligence into writing and editing processes in French-speaking Belgium.

At last, based on the limitations of my research here (See *Limitations* above, p.55), I am now looking into the perspectives of further research in relation to this topic. While writing this master thesis, my mind was buzzing with ideas of studies to probe further on the matter of artificial intelligences in Creative and Cultural Industries.

As a first thought, as I outlined previously in the limitations section, the artificial intelligences are evolving at a formidable speed. In this ever-changing landscape, it would be pertinent to enquire about an update of this research. Due to the interviews, I should advice to update this research by 2030.

Subsequently, the PILEn association is currently leading a study into the impact of artificial intelligences on the book value chain in French-speaking Belgium. This study was commissioned by the Minister for the Economy, and the PILEn was created on the initiative of the Minister for Culture (Cornelissen, 2024). As a result, the study focuses on these two dimensions. The study is due to be completed in autumn 2025. It will be very interesting to look at the results, given that the subject of the study is similar to that discussed in this document.

Additionally, I analysed the current situation of AI in the book publishing industry by focusing on only two types of actors, the writers and the editors. What about the perception of the other actors in the book value chain? To this day, the predicament that translators are in due to AI, among other reasons, has been largely debated. However, there are also other types of jobs in publishing which I briefly introduced in the literature review and that would be constructive to expend on.

What is more, I limit the scope of research at one region, in Belgium. We ought to analyse the matter at a large scale. For lack of resources and because of the limitation of pages required in this master thesis, it was not within my reach in this study.

Moreover, in a year or two, when/if AI is more integrated into the book industry, it would be sensible to perform quantitative research studies. For example, to survey the book consumers' opinions/preferences about the integration of AI in the creative writings industry and other creative and cultural industries.

Again, a limitation was put on the content studied here. This research focused on consumers written books. The potential effects of AI can also be considered in relation to comic books as a form of leisure reading or manga. Those topics required to have a deeper insight into the implication of GAN's on the visual's arts.

Given the debate surrounding IA's technology, there are a myriad of avenues for research to explore. It would be intriguing to investigate how the printed book industry is being stunningly resilient to technological and societal evolutions. To conduct further research into the ethical considerations of AI in creative content, or to scale the environmental impacts of AI in a specific sector would be terrific.

One of the avenues of research is the environmental impact of artificial intelligences systems. After reviewing my work, it appears that I have not be able to delve into this peculiar dimension of the issue. As Franck Skirole mentioned in our discussion, the uncertainty of the longevity of the Internet. Because of the huge amount of electrical power those installations, the Internet, and even more AI systems, require, there is a phenomenal impact on the environment. It would be pertinent to investigate this dimension of AI.

Furthermore, about academic and scientific writings, there is an essential dimension to these fields of production that I have not addressed in this paper. Scientific work relies on peer review. At a time when generative artificial intelligence is being used in the co-creation of written works, it is appropriate to inquire about the impact of AI.

Finally, I would also have liked to have looked more closely at the issue of copyright and licensing. Creative Commons Licensing was not suited to generative artificial intelligence when it took the world of arts and culture by storm. They have only recently adapted their licensing with CC Signals (Creative Commons, 2025). The association is currently gathering initial feedback from the cultural community to improve it. This development should not be overlooked in the debate.

Overall, we are at the cusp of a revolution, and some approaches are still very theoretical, but I can't wait to see how events develop. Still, the question persists: "how will humans ultimately position themselves with regards to the disruptive technology of generative artificial intelligence?"

Recommendations

When it comes to recommendations, I consider it imperative to address the general public first. Throughout my research, I observed differing opinions among individuals. I therefore noted that some people with extremely negative views of this tool were sometimes those with little knowledge of generative artificial intelligence. Furthermore, alarmist and sometimes shocking media headlines designed to attract readers' attention do not improve the overall picture.

First, I stressed the importance of increasing AI literacy in the audience. Without proper understanding of the artificial intelligences, even if there is a democratisation of the phenomenon, the audience cannot react properly to the issues at stake. Trying out AI could also lead to a realisation of the opportunities it can offer.

There is a need of enhancing critical thinking among the population. Our world is bursting with news and developments, and most of the times we are being influenced by sensational media. Each actor of the book value chain needs to build its own perception of the artificial intelligences. Don't be gullibly swayed by social media "authority figures".

To build critical thinking, experiment. Be wary but experiment. AI is a tool, neither good nor bad. It is our utilisation of the technology that define its behaviour. Everyone should experiment by themselves, to avoid a complete disinterest. Due to the consensus that AI is here to stay, we ought to learn how to responsibly benefit from it. Experimenting the various applications of it would prevent a misplaced or disproportionate agitation around the technology.

I believe that the responsibility also falls to the publishing houses, to develop some technical knowledge of AI to some extent. While it may be an exceedingly costly measure to harness AI professionals' tools for the small and medium-sized publishing houses, there exist AI models which are profoundly accessible to everyone.

For those who abhor the very idea of working with artificial intelligences, I would recommend to not force themselves. Due to this prejudicial thinking, a remotely "bad" experience with the generative AI's results may outweigh any good experience. I mean "bad" experience as either "full of errors" or "against the user's thinking". Thus, to book writers I would rather emphasize the necessity of improving their author's brand, at least through social media. We live in a world where visibility happens on platforms and social networks. While attending book fairs and fans meetings are formidable ways to solidify the bond between the readers and the authors, limiting your interactions to those events might not be enough to enhance your reader's engagement and to distinguish yourself from the high competition. Concerning the editors reluctant to integrate AIs in their processes, I would remind you that artificial intelligences are tools as is the internet and the likes.

Moreover, I would suggest encouraging responsible exploration of AI's capabilities while prioritizing the integrity of the creative process. Associations of authors and editors are developing codes of conduct in regard of an ethically responsible use of AI in their work. In Belgium, the Partenariat Interprofessionnel du Livre et de l'Édition numérique (PILEn) published a « AI Charte ». I would invite members of the book value chain to take their principles into consideration.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

To conclude this master thesis, let us review the full process step by step. First off, the initial observations were made through scientific literature available at the time in December 2023. At that time, little scientific work had been published on the influence of generative AI tools on the book industry. First, I aimed to analyse the European book market as a whole. That is why I visited trade fairs in London, Paris, Brussels and Mons. After studying the literature and attending seminars and conferences on the subject, I decided to adopt a qualitative approach with the aim of studying the influence of generative artificial intelligence on the professions of authors and publishers. Subsequently, given that my study sample consisted exclusively of respondents from Belgium, my research refocused on French-speaking Belgium. The research question was ultimately as follows: how does generative AI influence authors and publishers of written books in French-speaking Belgium?

The decision to conduct a qualitative study was based on the lack of information available on the subject. The main objective of this research is to understand the extent to which generative AI applications are being integrated into writing and editorial processes. It also aims to analyse the perceptions of Belgian authors and publishers, as well as external consultants, towards this technology and to highlight its use.

Throughout my research, I identified three main themes around which I crystallised my interview guide. Firstly, authors and publishers in seminars and studies pointed out that there were opportunities to use AI. They demonstrated that the involvement of AI as an assistant helped them with repetitive tasks or even with the creative process. Second, following the boom in books written entirely or with the collaboration of artificial intelligence in 2023, it was timely to ask whether the technology could, in their opinion, become an author or publisher instead. The final topic discussed focused on ethical considerations. Authors and publishers alike seem concerned about the use of their content without consent to train AI. Furthermore, there is debate about whether generative AI has any place in the art of writing. And calls for a legislative framework in these specific cases were in full swing.

Seeking to obtain a broader range of insights, I sought to interview individuals with different backgrounds. Those surveyed included authors, publisher, AI experts, and consultant for associations working with Belgian book industry stakeholders. The results of these interviews were mixed. Nevertheless, some similarities emerged. Everyone recognises generative AI as a tool. However, perceptions differ as to its place in the writing process. Two-thirds of authors prefer not to use it in their creative process. By contrast, the third are experimenting with generative AI as an aid to their creative process, while respecting the principles of transparency and originality. However, some authors question the authenticity of works written using AI tools. In editorial processes, the integration of generative AI seems welcome, albeit always as

an assistant. Most participants recognise AI's ability to excel in certain marketing tasks or in light editing such as corrections and layout.

As for the debate surrounding the ability of generative AI to replace the professions studied in this research, the majority of respondents answered with a resounding no. However, some acknowledge that machines are beginning to improve and are generating increasingly convincing and readable stories and texts. While one respondent believes that AI will completely replace the profession of author in the near future, others are more nuanced. They admit that generative AI could become an author of readable 'airport novels.' They add that everything will depend on consumer demand and the decisions made by large commercial companies. Based on the results of my survey, generative AI does not create anything new, so it cannot be original, whereas it is the very nature of an author to bring something new and to create. For publishing professions, once again, artificial intelligence is not considered ready. Most respondents argue that human supervision of machines is essential.

As for the results of my hypothesis on ethical considerations, they are inconclusive. Some participants feel that the rules and principles are well defined. One participant advocates that the AI Act should go further and offer solutions, not just broad principles to be observed. The last participant considers the AI Act a necessary step for the protection of copyright and consumer rights. Beyond the considerations identified before the interviews, respondents emphasise issues of authenticity. While some see a loss of authenticity in the use of AI as an assistant, others argue that as long as the writer directs the machine, there is no loss of authenticity. Even when using generative AI, as long as transparency is maintained and a critical attitude is adopted towards its responses, it remains the ideas and intentions of the author.

Even so, one interviewee pointed out that when you look at the Belgian market as a whole, there aren't many signs of generative AI being integrated in French-speaking Belgium. In interpreting the results, I therefore assume that the challenge of analysing the Belgian book market stems from its unique characteristics. The Belgian book market is divided into three different linguistic territories and consists only of small and medium-sized publishing houses and a few subsidiaries of large foreign groups. This market is therefore quite fragmented and modest in size.

Through the analysis of the results and the subsequent reflections, I conclude that generative artificial intelligence does not yet have a clearly measurable impact on French-speaking Belgian authors and publishers. The uses and perceptions of this technology are still in the exploratory phase. It should be noted, however, that the capabilities of generative AI are of greater concern to the book sector in terms of ethical considerations and the legislative framework than in terms of its supposed threat of replacement.

The present study is valuable for academic research on the assimilation of disruptive technologies in creative and cultural professions. It documents the evolution of the

phenomenon at a given moment in time, which will serve as a preamble for analyses of possible future research. Indeed, the study presented here has several limitations. These include limitations inherent in the qualitative research method, such as the presence of potential biases and a small sample population for analysis. These limitations open up numerous avenues for further research on the subject covered in this thesis. In particular, I recommend a quantitative study of publishing houses and authors in order to accurately quantify the integration of generative intelligence tools and their uses. Alternatively, an analysis of readers' perceptions of this phenomenon would allow us to examine the demand for, or at least the interest that readers might have in, these practices. Given that the results appear inconclusive at this stage, it would also be appropriate to review the situation in the coming years.

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