
DOES FREE TO READ MEAN FREE TO TRAIN? THE OA-AI CONUNDRUM

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THE SCHOLARLY KITCHEN BLOG

Guest Post – The Open Access – AI Conundrum: Does Free to Read Mean Free to Train?

By **STEPHANIE DECKER** | APR 15, 2025

15 COMMENTS

| TIME TO READ: 6 MINS

- Last spring I published a blog about the strain that the combination of OA and AI on academic publishing
 - I'd been reading The Scholarly Kitchen for some time as part of my role as the OA lead at the British Academy of Management
 - I'm not a technophobe
 - I've been working on AI since 2020 when we designed an AI tool for digital archives
 - I will use some AI-generated slides
 - I always opt for OA when I can when publishing academic articles
 - But I can see that we are facing a collective action problem as a profession
-

WHY



I've already done 6 reviews and have another
1 to do
(3 journal, 4 conference)

I have rejected at least 2 review requests



Quality of scientific papers questioned as academics 'overwhelmed' by the millions published

Widespread mockery of AI-generated rat with giant penis in
one paper brings problem to public attention



Grounded AI

Citation checking for scientific publishers



Times
Higher
Education

At BAM, we were concerned about OA impact on revenue that support our charitable activities.

Since then, revenues from OA + subscription deals have been slightly higher than previous years.

(We did not significantly increase volumes, only somewhat due to demand.)

We must break the link between publisher revenue and article volume

Volume-driven publishing pushes up costs and threatens research integrity. We need new agreements with healthier incentives, says Anna Vernon

Published on July 22, 2025

Last updated July 22, 2025

Anna Vernon

As funding tightens and universities re-evaluate what [counts as impactful research](#), the urgency of reforming scholarly publishing and its costs has become overwhelming.

That is what the UK's academic and research communities are working together to achieve. The [next generation open access programme](#) developed in partnership with the sector by Jisc, the UK higher education's technology body, offers a blueprint for how collective negotiation and new models can drive meaningful change.



Source: happyphoton



**Times
Higher
Education**

In the UK, OA is not paid for by the “taxpayer” but by students through debt

AND by Chinese parents who send their kids to study at UK business schools, supporting the entire system

Publishing deals are ‘unsustainable’, warn northern universities

UK academia faces ‘pivotal moment’ as deadline approaches for cash-strapped universities to negotiate deals with leading publishers

Published on June 12, 2025

An aerial panorama of Sheffield city centre

Last updated June 12, 2025

Jack Grove

Twitter: [@jgro_the](#)

Academic publishers must move towards a “fairly and transparently priced” model of open-access research because the current system has become “financially unsustainable”, a group of leading British research universities has warned.

In a statement published on 12 June as [negotiations with the world’s five largest academic publishers](#) continue, the N8 Research Partnership, which represents eight large research-intensive universities in the north of England, calls for fundamental reform in how scholarly research is published, claiming existing deals [due to expire this year](#) have become financially unviable.



Source: iStock/Teamjackson

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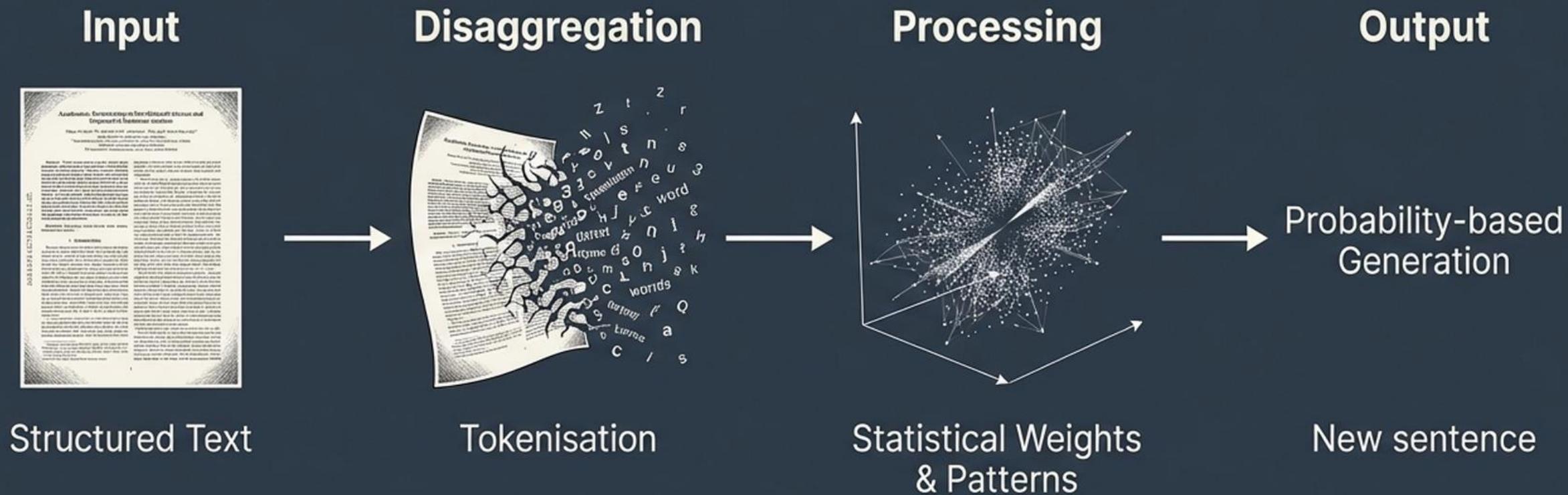
No derivatives allowed.

CC now working on *Signals* “to reflect different dimensions of reciprocity”, referring to *social norms* and *collective action*

Loophole:

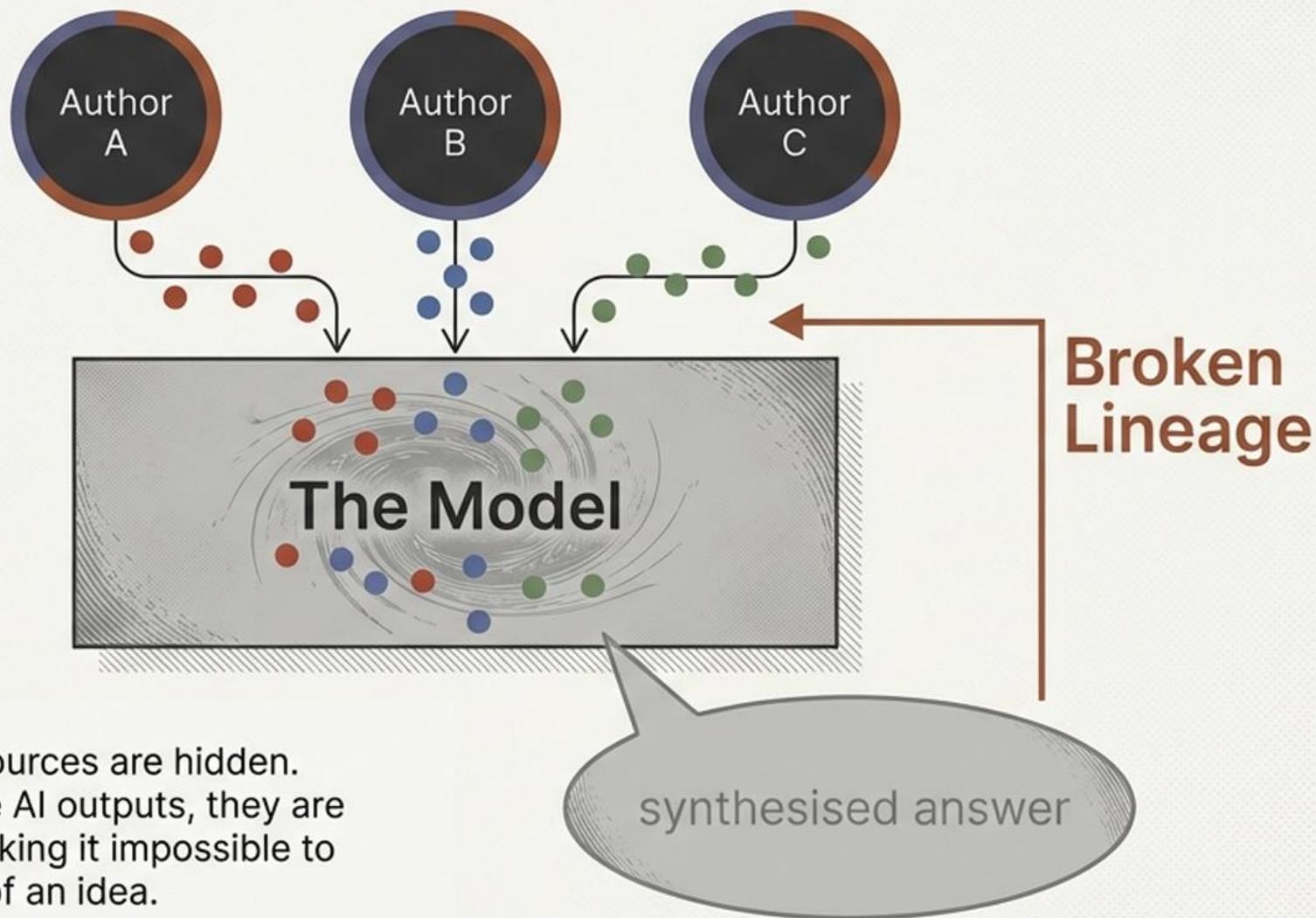
These licenses handle ‘copying’ or ‘remixing’, but they do not explicitly address ‘training’. Researchers opt for OA to maximise human readership, arguably not to provide free training data for commercial AI.

Why ‘Training’ Doesn’t Fit Traditional Copyright Definitions



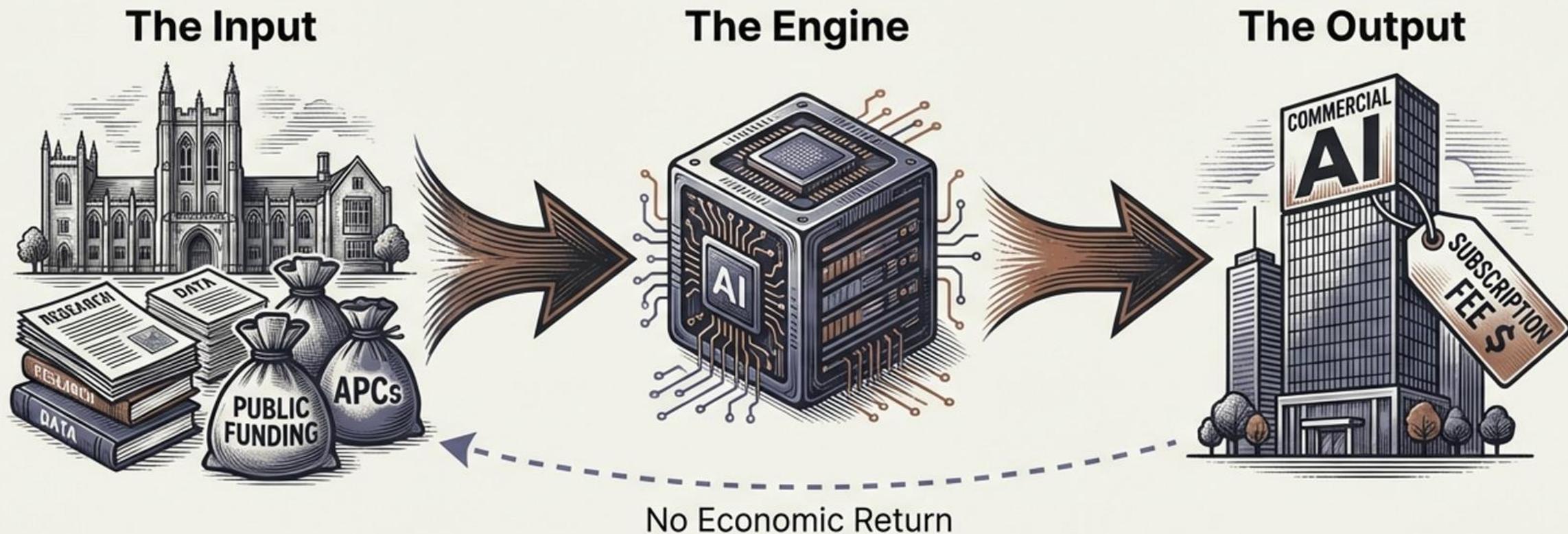
“Text is converted into statistical patterns – which does not fit into traditional categories of copying, distribution, or adaptation.”

Threat 1: The Era of ‘Citation Laundering’



The Consequence: Original sources are hidden. When human researchers cite AI outputs, they are “laundering” the citations, making it impossible to trace the intellectual history of an idea.

Threat 2: Value Extraction Without Reciprocity



Inequity: Commercial AI companies **extract significant economic value from OA content** (funded by the public or authors) without returning value to the academic ecosystem. As Neil Postman noted, “We always pay a price for technology.”

External **Your research is invisible to AI**



○ Hello.cv <team@helloprof.cv>

Today at 15:07

To: ✓ Stephanie Decker (Strategy and International Business)

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Hello Stephanie Decker

Imagine if, instead of being buried in PDFs, your work could answer questions directly, 24/7. Not just to students, but to anyone curious, anywhere in the world.

When corporate companies, grant providers, grad students, journalists ask AI about your field, they get up to date info and not outdated summaries.

Today, your Google Scholar profile just sits there. No one can ask it questions. No one can discover the depth of your work through AI search.

AI is becoming the new search engine for expertise. And academics are invisible.

We built something to fix this. Your own .cv domain. LLM optimized. SEO optimized. Analytics. Branded URLs. Digital Chat Twin.

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More tomorrow.

Alex Garnepudi

External **LeapSpace: AI that empowers researchers**

Summarise



○ Elsevier LeapSpace <promotion@discover.email.elsevier.com>

Thursday, 22 January 2026 at 09:06

To: ✓ Stephanie Decker (Strategy and International Business)

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LeapSpace: AI that empowers researchers

Responsible AI, supporting
research excellence



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Why choose LeapSpace

- **Comprehensive, publisher-neutral insights**, uniting abstracts and full text from trusted scholarly sources across disciplines
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Prism: OpenAI's Play for Scientific Cognition

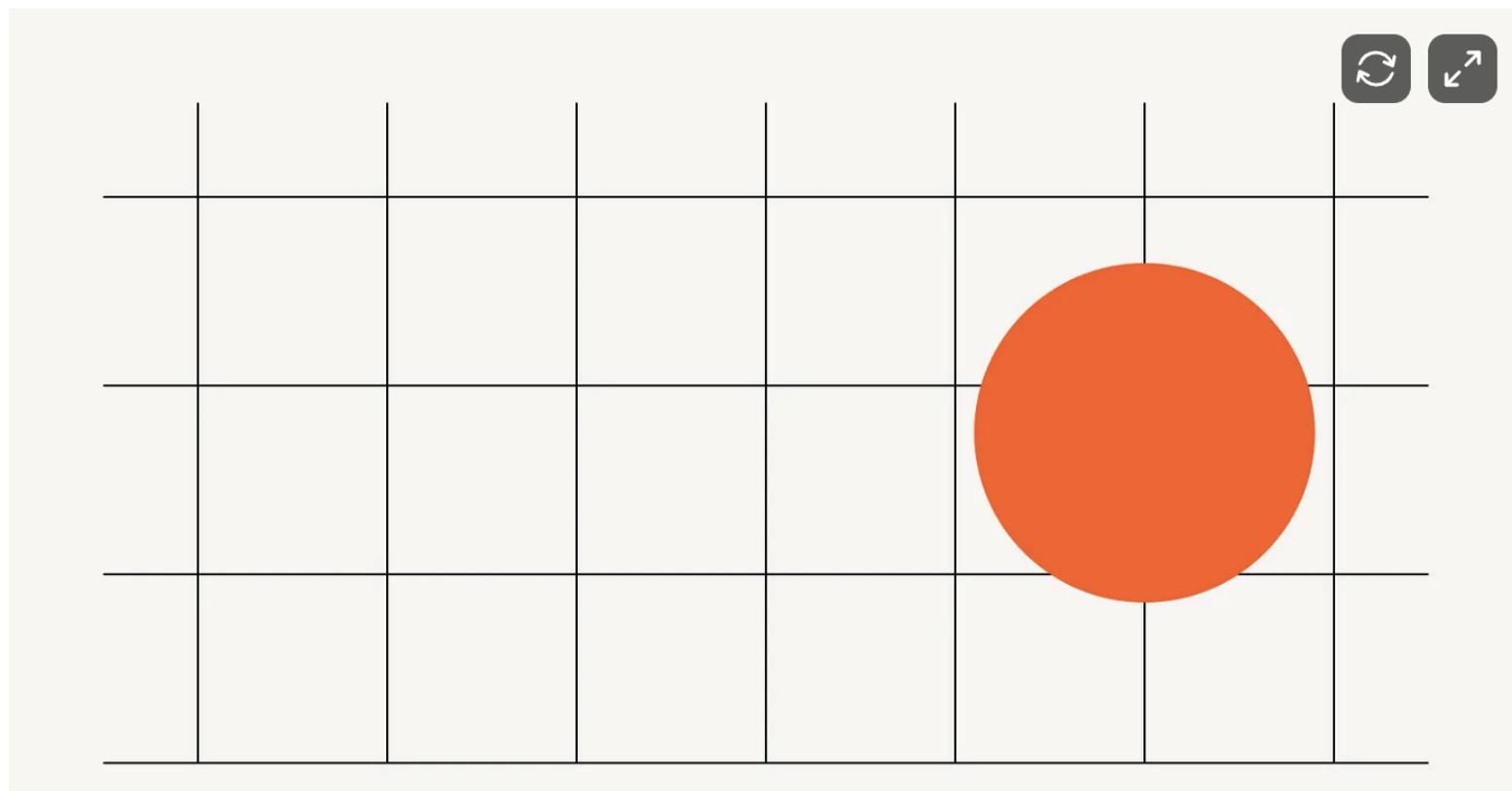
Why a free LaTeX editor isn't about LaTeX at all

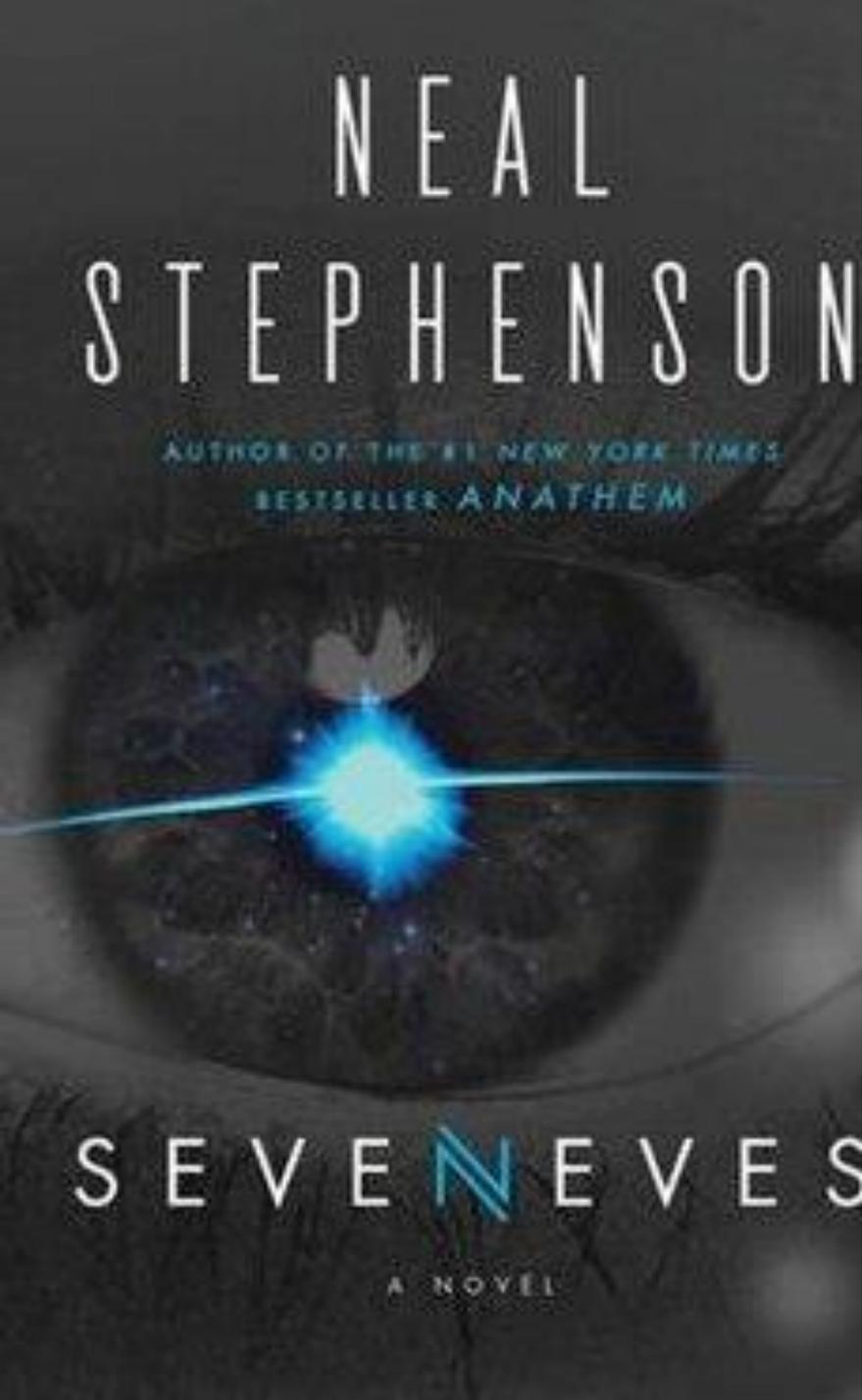


ADAM

JAN 28, 2026

Prism wants to be Claude
Code for scientists





EPILOGUE

In his novel *Seveneves* (2015), Neal Stephenson coined the term "**Amistics**" for the study of how societies decide which technologies to adopt and which to reject.

- ⇒ The intentional selection of technologies a culture allows into its life
- ⇒ Every new technology provides options but amputates others
- ⇒ They apply "Amistics" to make deliberate choices about their technological development (specifically rejecting social media)

(shortened Google AI summary)