

The Ethics of Human Influence in the Age of AI

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I. Introduction

You know, there's something grotesquely ironic about the way we're all clawing through the digital age like rats in a sewer, chasing ideas that no longer seem to belong to anyone. We've entered a world where your voice, your face, even the twitch of your creative fingerprint can be scraped, sold, and repackaged without so much as a knock on your mental door. Intellectual property? Ha! That phrase is starting to feel like a ghost—once alive and kicking, now drifting through courtrooms and terms of service agreements like an apparition no one wants to acknowledge. The monsters we used to write about—the ones that lurked under the bed—have climbed into our servers. And worst of all? They're wearing our names, using our words, and smiling with our smiles. If we don't wrestle back the right to *own our own minds*, we may wake up and find we've all been written out of our own stories.

Reader, do you believe that AI generated this? Was it easy to identify or confusing? What if you were told that Stephen King had written it? Would you think that? These are questions that encompass the entirety of this paper. Who, if anyone, owns these words? Do humans deserve compensation for their mere intellect? And are government institutions, such as the United States Patent and Trademark Office, able to adapt? These are the overarching questions this paper seeks to address.

II. Thesis and Research Focus

This paper argues that the terms 'intellectual property,' 'authorship,' and 'ownership' are inadequate in the age of Artificial Intelligence. AI is being refined and improved based on content that is guided by human intellect. Current legal frameworks are inadequate for recognizing human intellectual influence and implementing proper compensation models due to their heavily bureaucratic nature. Legal entities should leverage community-backed decentralized technologies such as Story Protocol to open a path toward transparent systems and help reduce the social and ethical inequalities emerging from rampant AI development. For the sake of this paper, we will focus on a key leader in the AI/AGI space: OpenAI.

III. History

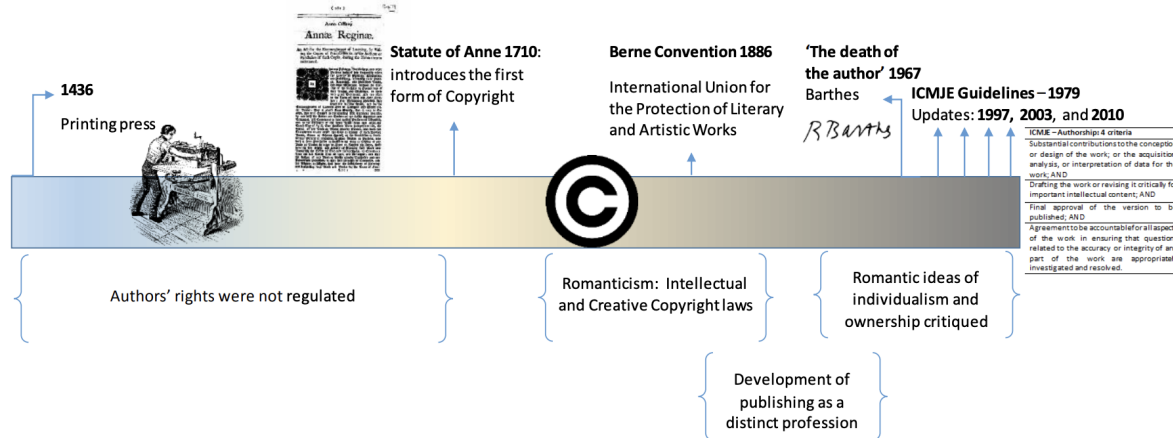
The term “Authorship” has circulated for quite some time, starting in the 1400s when authors' rights were granted under the printing press. This early stage laid the groundwork for later philosophical ideas about ownership.

A key influencer for the terms ‘intellectual property’ and “ownership” today is attributed to the philosopher John Locke. In his work, the *Second Treatise of Government*, he makes it evident that man is entitled to the compensation for his labor—that is, what his hands have created and body endured is subject to due compensation (Locke, 1689). Paired with ownership being a God-given right that cannot be infringed upon, when an individual removes a natural resource, using it along with his labor for what is needed by him, it then becomes his property. This property is then unanimously associated with the term ownership. Although Locke’s framework was profound for the 17th century, it only encompassed the human creator as a single point of origin.

Over time, however, cultural shifts began to redefine how authorship itself was perceived. It wasn’t until the 1700s that we saw a dramatic shift in the way authorship is portrayed. The portrayal deviates into a romanticized direction, often accompanied by the notion that the author must have placed everything on the line in exchange for their creative works, a notion that remains prevalent today (Tang, 2025). This was a result of the Romantic Movement, which placed heavy importance on the individual author (Figure 1.1).

While these historical developments solidified early ideas about authorship and ownership, they emerged in a world that could not foresee the profound disruptions brought by digital technology and artificial intelligence.

Figure 1.1: The origins of authorship



Note. Reprinted from *An Evolving Concept in Scientific and Medical Publishing* (p. 2), by Editage Insights, n.d.,

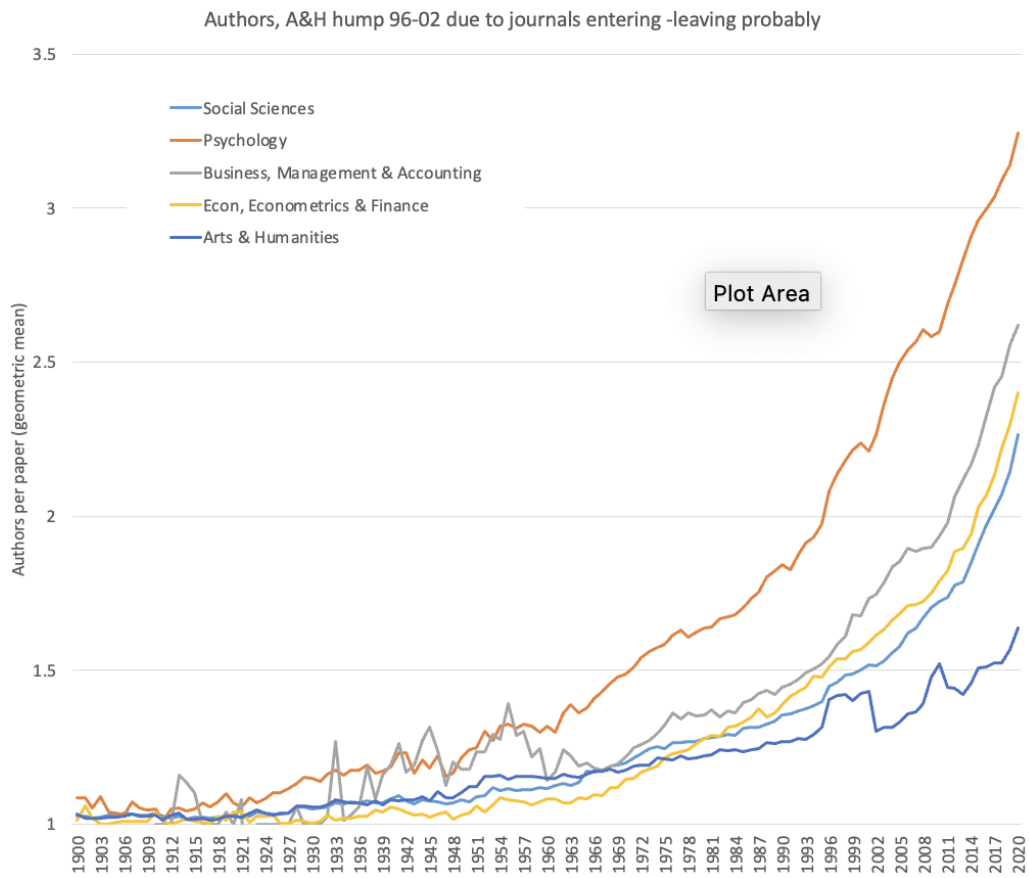
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IV. Redefining Core Terms in the Age of AI

The formal establishment of intellectual property rights in the United States encompasses copyright, patents, trademarks, and trade secrets. Copyright law is the most applicable for this paper, as it intends to grant authors rights over their creations, including “expressing” an idea and derivatives (United States Copyright Office, 2011). The last revision to the Copyright Act was fifty years ago and is associated more with corporations than with individual creators (Tang, 2025). This is insufficient in our rapidly evolving technological society, where creation is instantly accessible to individuals with access to artificial intelligence tools such as OpenAI’s ChatGPT model.

The outdated belief that authorship must involve great sacrifice of an individual no longer holds in today’s technological, AI-driven society. Becoming an author is easier than ever, and the individualised nature of an authors sacrifice is being changed as many publications are now having numerous authors (Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2. Global Trends in Research Co-Authorship, 1900–2020



Note. Created by the author using data from Research co-authorship 1900–2020: Continuous, universal, and ongoing expansion (Thelwall & Maflahi, 2022). Retrieved August 9, 2025, from <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.17064419>

The term “intellectual property” was locked into law long before it could account for the reality of our technological era and the way creation happens today. Sticking with this outdated language risks creating major ethical gaps for creators. A better way forward can be seen through the idea of a human guide—someone with the skill and experience to direct an AI model toward a specific outcome. Right now, authorship is still tied to a single creator, which hasn’t made sense since the rise of the Internet of Things (IoT). In the AI age, ownership needs to expand to recognize and reward the input of multiple creators. Redefinition of key terminology when discussing intellectual property rights is a key to fostering

transparency, as research shows that vague terminology decreases fairness and clarity (University of Baltimore Law Library, 2025)

To address this conceptual gap, a new framework needs to be adopted, one that accounts for the human role in shaping AI outputs without relying solely on traditional measures of physical creation.

V. Why Human Intellectual Influence Deserves Compensation

Human Intellectual influence is a major contributor to final results. In the age of AI, the issue that needs to be tackled isn't bringing out final results; the issue is guiding the AI skillfully to create a unique outcome & having that be tracked to give the right compensation to the human influences. This requires human effort and time, two factors that allow for AI to be rightly guided in the outcome. Because of this tradeoff of effort and time, human influences deserve compensation for their intellectual influence on the outputs of AI.

VI. Case Study: OpenAI's Current Lawsuits

As of 2025, OpenAI has at least 20 pending copyright infringement lawsuits, ranging from *The New York Times* to the Authors Guild (AI Infringement Case Updates, 2025). Many of these lawsuits share a common allegation: that OpenAI scraped the internet, using copyrighted data from numerous authors to train AI models such as ChatGPT, resulting in significant economic ramifications. The Authors Guild states:

“These authors’ livelihoods derive from the works they create. But OpenAI’s LLMs endanger fiction writers’ ability to make a living, in that the LLMs allow anyone to generate—automatically and freely (or very cheaply)—texts that they would otherwise pay writers to create. Moreover, OpenAI’s LLMs can spit out derivative works: material that is based on, mimics, summarizes, or paraphrases.”

In the complaints filed by the Authors Guild and *The New York Times* in 2023, the term *infringement* appears repeatedly, indicating that the primary legal issue stems from the infringement of authors' rights in training AI models (Figure 1.3).

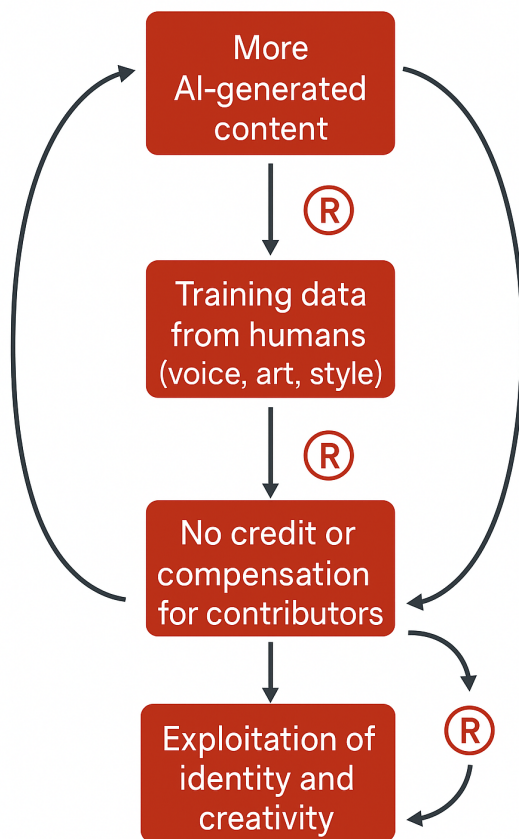
Figure 1.3: Common terms in the Authors Guild and New York Times lawsuits against OpenAI.



Note. Visualization generated in Voyant Tools using text from *The New York Times Company v. OpenAI, Inc., et al.* (2023) and *Authors Guild et al. v. OpenAI, Inc., et al.* (2023).

This raises an ethical concern with ChatGPT models, creating an urgent need for legal entities to implement a proper compensation model—or risk undermining fair compensation for human influence in AI outputs. If left unaddressed, this will perpetuate a cycle of exploitation and infringement on human contributions (Figure 1.4).

Figure 1.4: Cycle of exploitation of identity and creativity through AI-generated content



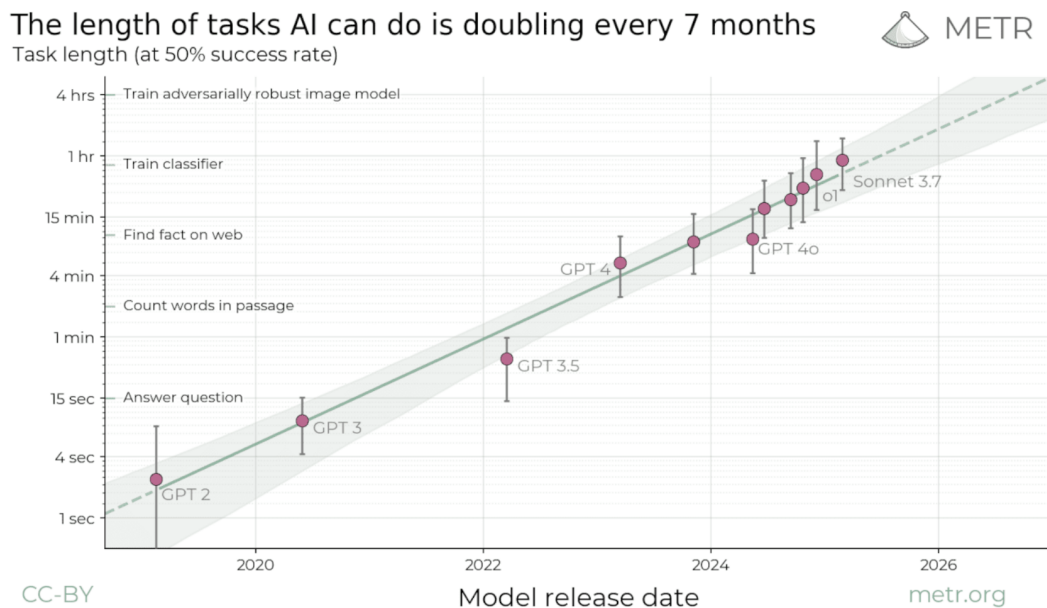
Note. Adapted from a flowchart generated by ChatGPT, August 8, 2025.

VII. Failures of Legal Entities

To understand the failure of current legal acts and frameworks in the age of AI, it is necessary to compare the rapid advancement of ChatGPT models with the timeline of copyright cases. While copyright lawsuits in the United States take on average 832 days to reach trial (Fortney & Hansen, 2024), AI models—particularly those like ChatGPT—are advancing on a cycle of months, not years (Figure 1.5). This contrast highlights the slow, bureaucratic nature of the legal system versus the fast-paced, iterative development of AI, underscoring that current legal structures are not equipped to adapt to the rate of

technological progression. This is a substantial increase within such a short period. Hinting at the progression rate that AI will have on society, it is substantial, without legal entities being able to adequately adapt.

Figure 1.5: AI task length doubling every month



Note. Created by the author using data from Measuring AI ability to complete long tasks (Metr, 2025).

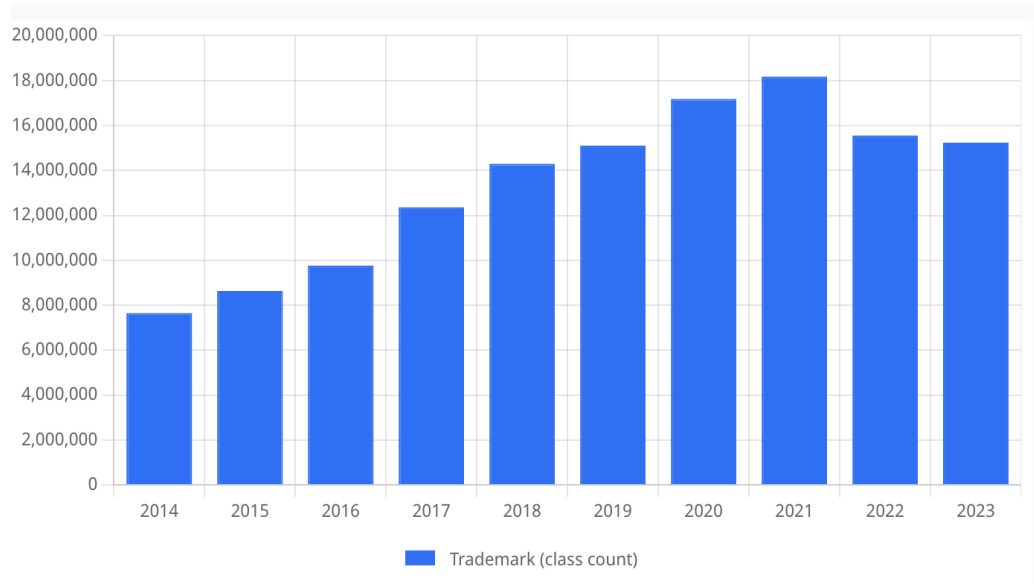
Retrieved July 22, 2025, from

<https://metr.org/blog/2025-03-19-measuring-ai-ability-to-complete-long-tasks/>

Due to the fast-paced nature of artificial intelligence, it's reasonable to understand that heavily regulated legal entities will struggle to adapt. Data retrieved from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) shows that trademark filings increased in 2020 and 2021 (Figure 1.7). This can be attributed to the mass adoption of consumer artificial intelligence models in the public sphere. WIPO has made a public declaration that we're dealing with an "output problem"—whether AI-generated content should be eligible for copyright protection. This problem, as of 2025, has yet to be resolved due to the major

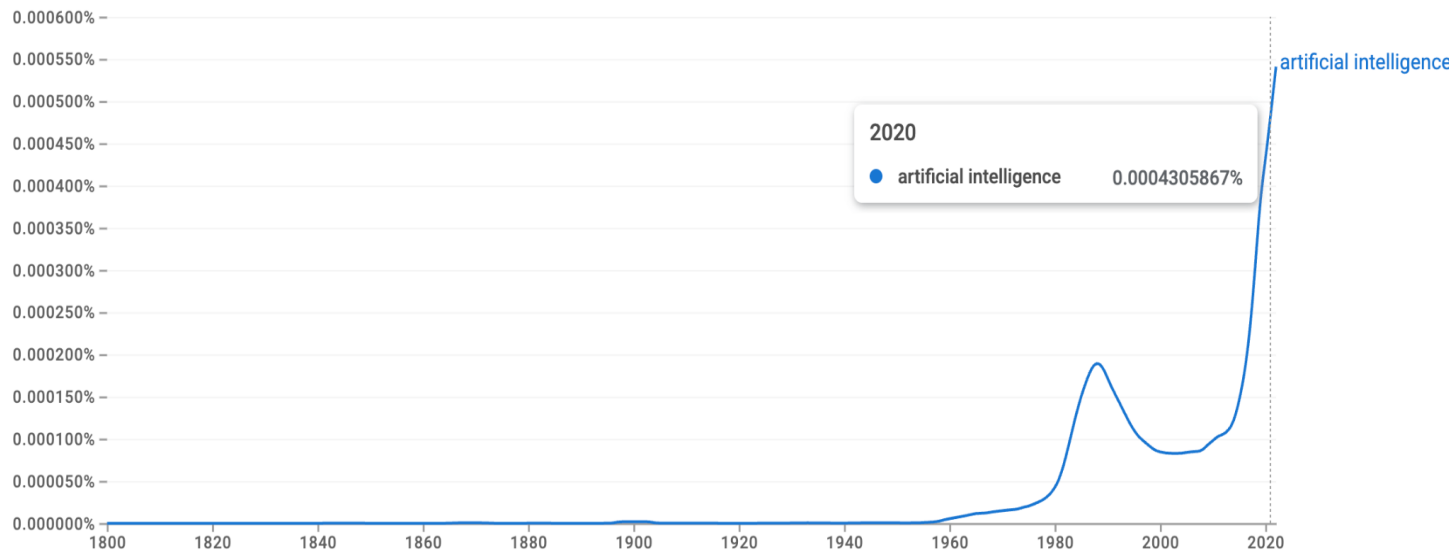
complexities of the output generated by artificial intelligence models, and is in dire need of a feasible recommendation.

Figure 1.6: Trademark class count, Total Applications



Note. Created by the author using data obtained from the WIPO IP Statistics Data Center (World Intellectual Property Organization [WIPO], 2025).

Figure 1.7: Frequency of the term “artificial intelligence” in published books, 1800–2022



Note. Created using Google Books Ngram Viewer data for the term *artificial intelligence* (Google, n.d.).

Retrieved August 9, 2025, from

https://books.google.com/ngrams/graph?content=artificial+intelligence&year_start=1800&year_end=2022&corpus=en&smoothing=3

VIII. A New Model: The Guide and the Conduit

Before we begin with a recommendation, it's important to create a model for understanding the relationship between human beings and artificial intelligence. The term ‘Artificial Intelligence’ is a copy of human intelligence. Because it's a copy, there is always an imitation that is done in replicating human beings.

In the age of AI, the use of one's labor is less about physically bringing about an output and more about guiding—a high-level form of intellect. We set forth the example of a guide (human) and conduit (AI) to broadcast the active role of the human in AI outputs. Guides are known for high levels of expertise, ones that understand the issues to be able to point in the right direction, but these directions are the

accumulation of years of intellect, which is typically hard to quantify. Although a guide may not produce direct output, it heavily influences the results. This denotes that the guide has a leading part within the process, using their intellect to guide, meaning that the guide and the conduit (AI) have become associates when interacting, which brings forth an output. Human beings serve as an “intellectual influence” on the outcome.

However, because humanity encompasses both a physical, mental, and sensory reality, it follows that the conduit has fewer due rights, as it does not participate in bringing the physical manifestation of its “intellect” into the physical world. Conduits do not need to be sustained with food or water in the same way that guides must. This makes it clear that, because the guide needs sustenance in a physical form, they must be compensated for their part in guiding the output.

‘Intellectual property’ and ‘intellectual property rights’ today must include intellectual influences, regardless of whether said influencer physically brought about an output. The key influencer’s intellect is enough to affect the final outputs being formed in a digital medium. This leads us to the recommended solution: implementing the proper technology.

IX. Implementing Blockchain and Peer-Centered Technology

Blockchain technology made its first real-world use case in 2009 in response to the financial crisis, a period of deep economic instability, uncertainty, and skepticism in trusted financial institutions (Nakamoto, 2008). Seeking to solve these issues by leveraging technology, specifically having a method for an untampered and unchangeable ledger that would record transactions without the need for an institution. Rather, the computers themselves, through the use of peer nodes, seek a unanimous agreement from various nodes to reach a consensus, acting similarly to a healthy ethical community.

Although this solution is preferable over formal means, which are often institutionalized, rigid, and hierarchical, it is not acceptable when dealing with the progression of AI. It lacks an important factor for

our particular use cases, protecting human intellectual influence in the age of AI. Because of this, the recommendation is to leverage blockchain technology that considers community and the human element to be the foundation of their technology, alongside blockchain classic capabilities. A lead player that stood out is Story Protocol. Story Protocol seeks to close the gap by bringing the intellectual property into a more tangible domain by allowing human creators to record their works seamlessly, thus prioritizing human intellectual influence & contributions while leveraging technological advances. It also allows for an incentive model that includes compensation for remixed works, that is, works that have been influenced many times. This is done with a derivative model. Furthermore, the usage of blockchain aims to conserve energy by using a proof-of-stake methodology, which is more environmentally friendly than previously used technological proof systems.

These technological alternatives that are rooted in a human-first framework will aid in solving the human intellectual influence that AI threatens. Story allows for transparency paired with the ability for individuals to track, and seemingly license their works for proper compensation.

X. Quadruple Bottom Line Analysis

Analyzed through the lens of the Quadruple Bottom Line, adopting the Guide and Conduit along with leveraging peer-centered technology, recognizes that the intellectual influencer brings more than just economic value. It ensures that creators—intellectual influencers—are properly compensated for their influence on the final output, preserving their livelihoods. Acknowledging guides establishes an ethical way to reward human beings for their effort and time. Paired with peer-centered technology, such as Story, allows for environmental protections to be in place by using the Proof of Stake (PoS) protocols that heavily reduce energy consumption (Bappy et al., 2024). Finally, it allows purpose to flourish by restoring technology to its primary role: aiding human beings to innovate more easily and more quickly, not to replace them.

XI. Conclusion

AI is challenging intellectual property rights, authorship, and ownership through outdated terminology that no longer fits our technologically driven society. To meet these rapid shifts, legal institutions such as WIPO must adopt community-backed technologies with humans at their core, such as Story Protocol, to prevent severe ethical repercussions and foster transparent systems. As the barrier to creating outcomes disappears, proper compensation for human intellectual influence becomes the only path forward to sustain innovation and avoid deepening inequality. The Guide and Conduit model clarifies the evolving roles between humans and AI, showing that artificial intelligence is a tool meant to aid humanity, not to widen ethical and economic divides. If legal entities fail to adapt and acknowledge this reality, humanity will not just fall behind, it will be written out of its own story.

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