

Book review of Dwivedi, Y. K., & Helal, M. Y. I. (2026). *Research with AI: A Simple Step-by-Step Practical Guide*. London: Independent Publishing. 258 pp. ISBN: 9798250894678

Reviewed by

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Academia is currently facing an uneasy moment of reflection in relation to generative AI. The rapid appearance of new tools has created a sense that almost every stage of academic work can now be partially automated. This development is not necessarily negative. However, it also brings a serious risk: the emergence of what the authors describe as the “synthetic researcher.” This figure represents the scholar who privileges speed, output, and technical efficiency over empirical depth, critical judgement, and sustained engagement with the research context. In research, the slower and less visible parts of the process are often precisely the most important ones.

It is in this context that *Research with AI: A Simple Step-by-Step Practical Guide* makes a timely and useful contribution. The book enters a debate that is often presented in overly simplified terms. On one side, there are enthusiastic accounts of AI as an almost universal academic solution; on the other, there are restrictive positions that tend to ignore how widely these tools are already being used. The strength of this book lies in its refusal to adopt either extreme. Instead, it offers a grounded and practical discussion of how researchers may work with AI while still preserving the epistemic and ethical foundations of scholarly work.

The structure of the book follows the lifecycle of a research project. Rather than presenting a scattered catalogue of possible AI applications, the authors guide the reader through fourteen chapters, beginning with the formulation of research ideas and ending with long-term professional development and tool selection. The result is a clear and accessible roadmap that will be particularly useful for doctoral students, early-career researchers, and academics who feel under pressure to engage with AI but are unsure how to do so responsibly.

The opening chapter, “What AI Means for Research Today,” establishes the conceptual foundation of the book. The authors frame AI as a form of “cognitive scaffolding,” a metaphor that is both convincing and productive. AI is not presented as a substitute for the researcher, but as a support structure that may assist the development of scholarly thinking. This distinction is important. Scaffolding can help with construction, but it is not the building itself.

Chapters 2 and 3 move to the early stages of research design. Chapter 2, “Setting Research Goals and Choosing the Right Questions,” shows how AI-supported brainstorming may help researchers broaden, clarify, and refine initial ideas. At the same time, the authors are careful not to suggest that AI can replace the researcher’s intellectual ownership of the research question. Chapter 3, “Building a Conceptual Framework and Clear Hypotheses,” develops this point further through the notion of “because logic.” AI may help identify patterns in literature and data, but the responsibility for establishing causal reasoning, theoretical boundaries, and testable hypotheses remains firmly with the researcher.

The following chapters deal with the more practical stages of research work. Chapter 4, “Finding and Organizing Literature with AI Support,” discusses how AI can support the search, screening, and organisation of large bodies of literature. Chapter 5, “Deep Reading and Critical Evaluation of Sources,” is particularly valuable because it insists that AI-supported research must not become superficial research. The authors remind readers that academic work depends on careful reading and on the ability to understand sources as part of a wider chain of evidence. Chapter 6, “Managing References, Citations, and Avoiding Plagiarism,” addresses a very concrete problem: the need to detect, verify, and correct AI-generated inaccuracies, including fabricated references and misleading bibliographic information.

Chapter 7, “Research Ethics, Bias, Transparency, and Responsible Use,” is another important part of the book. The authors approach ethics as an ongoing practice embedded in everyday research decisions. Their argument

that transparent disclosure of AI use can strengthen, rather than weaken, the validity of research is both timely and persuasive.

The book then moves more directly into empirical research. Chapter 8, “Designing Methods and Planning Data Collection,” addresses the role of AI in methodological planning and data collection design. Chapter 9, “Working with Data for Cleaning, Coding, and Analysis,” links AI-supported data work with the FAIR principles of data management: findability, accessibility, interoperability, and reusability. This connection is especially useful because it places AI within an established framework of research quality rather than treating it as a separate technological shortcut.

The writing and publication stages are covered in Chapters 10 and 11. Chapter 10, “Writing the Research Paper through Drafting and Revision,” rightly presents writing as more than a communicative exercise. Academic writing is described as a test of logic, structure, and argumentation. Chapter 11, “Publishing, Peer Review, and Responding to Reviewers,” is one of the more pragmatic chapters as it explains how analytical tools may help researchers approach peer review comments in a more structured and less emotionally reactive way. This is useful, especially for less experienced researchers.

The final chapters broaden the discussion to wider academic work. Chapter 12, “Managing Research Collaboration in the AI Era,” considers the challenges of collaborative research when different team members use different AI tools and workflows. Chapter 13, “Creating a Personal Research Workflow and Long-Term Skill Growth,” offers a longer-term perspective on academic development, suggesting that researchers will need to build sustainable, personalised workflows rather than simply follow short-lived technological trends. Chapter 14 concludes the book with a practical directory of current AI tools, organised according to their function within the research process.

One of the strongest aspects of the book is its consistent use of the “cognitive scaffolding” metaphor. AI may support the researcher, but it cannot provide the intellectual substance of the research. It may assist with organisation, pattern recognition, drafting, and revision, but it cannot replace judgement, interpretation, responsibility, or the researcher’s engagement with the field. This is a useful distinction, especially at a time when many researchers feel pressure to be faster, more visible, and more productive.

The methodological sections are especially relevant. By linking AI tools with the FAIR principles, the authors avoid presenting AI as a shortcut and instead position it within a framework of responsible data management. This is important because the danger of AI in empirical research is not only that it may produce incorrect outputs, but also that it may encourage researchers to move too quickly through the difficult interpretive stages of analysis. The book repeatedly reminds the reader that quality control remains a human responsibility. The discussion of publication and peer review is also grounded in the realities of academic life. Responding to reviewers requires emotional discipline, strategic communication, and the ability to separate useful criticism from tone or frustration. For researchers working in applied fields, such as tourism management, where academic rigour must often be balanced with fast-moving industry developments, this pragmatic approach is particularly valuable.

The final directory of tools is likely to be one of the most frequently used parts of the guide. Its usefulness lies not merely in listing tools, but in organising them into functional categories. This helps the reader understand where a tool may be useful, where its limits are, and how it fits into the broader research workflow. In a field where new applications appear almost daily, this type of structured orientation is extremely valuable.

The authority of the book is strengthened by the background of its authors. Yogesh K. Dwivedi's long-standing work on digital technology adoption gives the volume credibility in an area often dominated by overly confident but weakly grounded advice. His perspective helps move the discussion beyond technical tricks and towards a broader understanding of how technologies are adopted, normalised, and integrated into professional systems. Mohamed Y. I. Helal's focus on digital transformation in complex service environments, including tourism, further contributes to the applied relevance of the book. Together, the authors are able to treat AI not simply as a set of tools, but as part of a wider transformation of academic work.

Overall, *Research with AI: A Simple Step-by-Step Practical Guide* succeeds because it is both practical and cautious. Its central message is clear: AI may help researchers work more efficiently, but scientific integrity must remain more important than speed. The book does not ask academics to reject AI, nor does it invite them to outsource their thinking to it. Rather, it encourages a form of technological ambidexterity: the ability to experiment with new tools while maintaining the standards of critical reasoning, transparency, and methodological rigour that make research trustworthy. For scholars trying to navigate the changing landscape of academic work, this is a timely and valuable guide.