Call for Papers: Creative Work in the Digital Age: AI, Power, and Transformation

Work and Occupations invites submissions for a special issue and accompanying research conference on the theme of Creative Work and New Technologies, with a focus on the growing role of artificial intelligence (AI). This special issue seeks to examine how advancements in digital technologies—particularly AI—are reshaping creative labor markets and the nature of creative work. We define creative work as the process by which works of art and creative expression come into being, "both material and ephemeral" (Skaggs and Aparicio, 2023), and creative workers as "all those people who come together to support primary artistic workers, for example, through roles in curating, managing, producing, and otherwise supporting the creation or performance of art" (Skaggs and Aparicio, 2023).

Due to the significant role that creative expression plays in creative work, the interface with technology has unique social scientific implications. One such implication includes the role of automation in replicating creativity. As digital technologies, especially AI, become integral to creative processes, they are transforming how creative work is produced, managed, and valued. AI-driven tools are increasingly capable of performing tasks once considered exclusive to human creativity, such as content creation, design, music composition, and more.

While these technologies open new possibilities for creative innovation, they also present challenges. Another implication of the technological transformation of creative work includes how AI and other digital platforms will alter skills dynamics within the creative labor market. The rise of automation may lead to deskilling in certain areas, while in others, creative workers may need to reskill or upskill to adapt to new tools and workflows.

All of these changes affect not only how creative work is organized but also the professional identities, status, and job security of creative workers. AI can disrupt traditional notions of worker autonomy, alter relationships with creative output, and shift power dynamics in the workplace. AI may reinforce or mitigate existing disparities in creative fields, at the same time as shift production and consumption dynamics in creative labor markets and within broader society.

Themes and Contributions:

This special issue seeks to examine a broad range of topics, focusing on how technology is transforming the power structures, processes, and outcomes of creative work. We invite scholars to submit abstracts on various topics that explore the intersection of AI, technology, and creative work. Potential areas of inquiry include:

- AI and Worker Control & Autonomy in Creative Labor Markets
  How do AI-powered tools influence the control that creative workers have over their work processes and outputs? Does AI enhance or reduce creative autonomy, and what are the implications for workers' agency in decision-making?

- Creativity, AI, and Alienation
  As AI systems take on increasingly creative roles, how does this affect the relationship between workers and their creative products? Are there new forms of alienation emerging as AI handles traditionally human-driven creative tasks?
- Skills Dynamics: AI-Driven Deskilling, Reskilling, and Upskilling
  How is AI reshaping the skills requirements within creative creative labor markets? What are the effects of AI on deskilling, and how can workers leverage AI to enhance their skills and creative potential? What does this mean for professional status and labor market dynamics?
- AI and Social Equity in Creative Workforces
  How do AI and digital tools impact issues of representation, inclusion, and opportunity within creative industries? To what extent can AI either reinforce existing disparities or create new avenues for equity in creative work?

Submission Process:

We invite authors to submit an abstract of up to 1,000 words outlining their proposed contribution. The abstract should clearly specify the research question, theoretical framework, methodology (if applicable), and expected contributions to the study of AI and creative work. This issue invites proposals from a diverse array of social science disciplines/fields, including sociology, economics, political science, anthropology, and management.

Selected authors will be invited to present their work at a virtual research conference on June 12-13, 2025. This conference will provide authors the opportunity to receive feedback from peers and guest editors. A subset of conference presenters will be invited to submit full drafts for peer review and potential inclusion in the special issue of *Work and Occupations*.

Important Dates:

- Abstract Submission Deadline: December 1, 2024
- Notification of Acceptance for Conference: January 1, 2025
- Virtual Research Conference Date: June 12-13, 2025
- Submission of Full Papers for Special Issue Consideration: August 1, 2025

For inquiries about the special issue or to discuss potential submissions, please contact the guest editors, Joanna Woronkowicz (jworonko@iu.edu), Doug Noonan (noonand@iu.edu), and Rachel Skaggs (skaggs.131@osu.edu).

We look forward to receiving abstracts that explore how AI and digital technologies are reshaping the organization of creative work and the broader implications for power, autonomy, and skills transformation.

References

Skaggs, R., & Aparicio, T. (2023). Workers and Work in the Arts: Definitional Challenges and Approaches to Collective Action Among Arts and Creative Workers. Work and Occupations, 50(3), 436-444. https://doi.org/10.1177/07308884231162957