



From CoPilot to AutoPilot: The new world of Agentic AI

Joy Cadwallader jrc@aber.ac.uk

Slides by Simon French sif4@aber.ac.uk

Academic Engagement Team, Hugh Owen Library

AI: what has the Library been doing?

- [AI Library Guide](#)
- The University's [AI Guidelines](#)
- AI Literacy Tutorial: Blackboard > Organisations
- Promotion via the [Librarians Blog](#)
- Teaching: embedded in information literacy in the curriculum and optional workshop

What is Agent-Like AI?

Agentic AI refers to AI systems that don't just respond to prompts but can take the initiative on a given task, they can:

Make decisions

Carry out multi-step tasks to achieve a goal.

Plan, act, and adjust their actions based on what happens.

Somewhat alarmingly, they do all of this *semi-autonomously*!

How is it different from Generative AI?

Generative AI

Creates content (text, images, code).

Responds to a prompt.

Low autonomy.

Helps you write, summarise, or explain.

You do the actions.

Agentic AI

Completes tasks and takes actions.

Works towards a goal.

Higher autonomy; plans steps.

Helps you organise, retrieve, or submit things.

It does the actions.

Agent-like AI we will be focusing on today

Deep Research

These are multi-step research systems that plan, browse, read, and synthesize sources into reports:

- ChatGPT Deep Research
- Gemini Deep Research (Google)
- Perplexity Deep Research

Currently they can only access online or Open Access resources. They cannot reach behind paywalls. Yet!

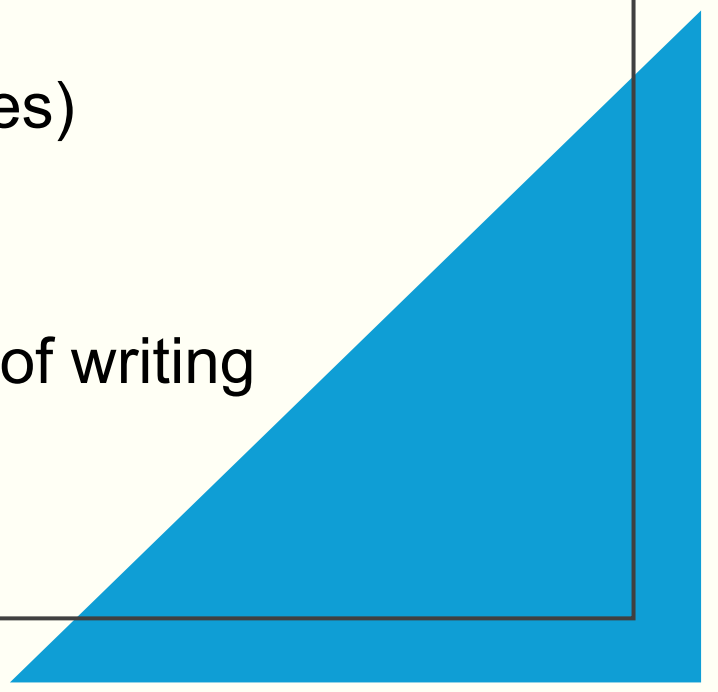
Agent-like AI we will be focusing on today

AI-Powered Browsers

- These combine traditional browsing with built-in AI assistants
- Let you ask questions, summarise content, and automate tasks directly in the browser
- They “understand” context from your tabs, history, and pages you’re viewing
- They mark a shift from searching for information to getting answers and completing tasks

Perplexity Comet is being heavily marketed to HE students.

Agentic AI differs from ordinary generative AI because it can plan, take steps, and use tools to complete a task. If asked to produce an essay (and, obviously, we would never recommend this to students!) it could, with very little user input, do the following:

- Interpret the question
 - Create a plan or outline
 - Gather information (if connected to authorised resources)
 - Draft each section
 - Critically evaluate and revise its own work
 - Change the format, add references, or adjust the style of writing
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Let's look at an example: using the ChatGPT Deep Research agent

I asked it the following essay question:

Drawing on at least three primary texts from different periods and a wide range of critical and theoretical sources, analyse how contemporary AI systems have reshaped the practices of reading, authorship, and interpretation in English literature.

It then asked clarifying questions:

Could you please clarify the three primary texts you'd like to focus on, or should I choose representative works from different periods (e.g., Shakespeare, Austen, and a contemporary author)? Also, do you have specific critical or theoretical lenses you'd like this analysis to engage with (e.g., poststructuralism, reader-response theory, digital humanities)?

I said:

Please could you add Margaret Atwood as a contemporary author. Investigate through the lens of reader-response theory. The essay should be 2000 words long and citations and references should be formatted in the MHRA style. It is for a first year undergraduate assignment.

ChatGPT said:

Great, I'll begin work on a 2000-word essay for a first-year undergraduate assignment that analyses how contemporary AI systems have reshaped reading, authorship, and interpretation in English literature. The essay will draw on at least three primary texts from different periods—including Margaret Atwood as the contemporary author—and apply reader-response theory. All sources will be cited in MHRA style.

I'll let you know when it's ready for review. Feel free to keep chatting with me in the meantime!

This was (some of!) its 'thought' process

AI, Reading, and Authorship Through Reader-Response Theory

I'm analyzing how contemporary AI systems are reshaping reading, authorship, and interpretation in English literature, particularly through Margaret Atwood's works, with a focus on reader-response theory and relevant academic sources.

Searched for AI reading interpretation literature

I'm pulling together various sources, including PDFs and research papers, to understand AI's role in literary analysis and reader response theory.

I'm piecing together that "journal.sagepub.com" might be behind a paywall. The title suggests it explores AI and reader response theory.

I'm looking for potential strategies to explore and assess various approaches.

Searched for AI reader response theory

Imagining the role of AI in authorship, exploring how the death of the author concept connects to critical reader freedom.

Searched for digital reading practices and AI in literature.

I'm piecing together potential sources for literature and e-reader interactions, such as examining their roles in the narrative process.

Searched for e-readers and reading performance.

I'm thinking about the preferences between e-readers and print, particularly how artificial intelligence influences literary analysis and interpretation, emphasizing the intersection of technology and literary insights.

I'm converting Fish and Iser's reader-response theory into plain language. This focuses on interpreting texts and emphasizes subjective meaning.

Searched for reader-response theory Iser Fish Rosenblatt

Considering sources like Wikipedia for research but maintain skepticism. Social writing platforms like Pressbooks seem credible, progressing to defining their reliability.

I'm noting how AI transforms reading habits, shaping a new way to learn. It's intriguing to see how technology fosters innovation.

I'm looking at how AI is shaping reading habits, with AI-driven recommendations and e-libraries boosting efficiency and access, while also raising digital over-

I'm examining citations from the IIP series, focusing on AI-generated texts and reader-response theory. Evaluating lines 372-380, 389-396, and 427-434 for depth and relevance.

I'm curious about how AI and human narratives compare in "Of love & lasers: Perceptions of narratives by AI versus human authors (2024?)."

I'm compiling a blend of sources including academic texts, newspapers, and digital humanities to build a robust analysis of AI's impact on literature through reader-response theory.

Mapping out how generative AI can reshape reader perceptions of iconic authors like Austen and Shakespeare, especially through sentiment analysis.

Research completed in 9m · 16 sources · 59 searches

AI and the Literary Imagination: Reading, Authorship, and Interpretation in the Digital Age

The rapid advance of contemporary AI – from generative chatbots to adaptive learning platforms – is reshaping how we read and respond to literary texts. In this essay, we examine how AI technologies are changing practices of reading, authorship and interpretation in English literature, using reader-response theory as our guiding lens. We will draw on canonical texts from different periods – Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), and Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* (1985) – to illustrate these changes. A reader-response approach emphasizes that meaning is not fixed in the text but is co-created by the reader’s engagement. As readers now encounter AI-generated analyses and even machine-authored texts, their roles as active participants in meaning-making become more complex. We consider a wide range of critical and theoretical sources – from classic reader-response critics (Rosenblatt, Iser, Booth) to contemporary studies of AI in literature and education – to show how AI invites readers to assert their own interpretive authority in new ways.

Works Cited

Margaret Atwood, “*Murdered by My Replica?*” *The Atlantic*, 26 August 2023 (online).

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Wolfgang Iser, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Text* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1974).

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S. P. Prasad, Abhishek Jha and Shafaque Zehra, “Blind to the Machine: Reader Response Theory in an Age of Artificially Intelligent Authors,” *Fortell* 49 (July 2024), 165–177.

AI-Powered Browsers – What can they do?

Content Summarization: AI can condense long articles, documents, and videos into short summaries or bullet points to speed up research, and provide accurate citations for resources.

Automated Task Completion: Agentic browsing lets AI handle multi-step tasks for you, like filling in forms, booking things, or comparing products.

Enhanced Search and Research: Ask natural-language questions and get relevant, structured answers that use the context of your tabs and browsing.

Content Generation and Writing Help: Built-in AI tools can draft emails, rewrite text, create code snippets, or generate images directly in the browser.

Personalization & Smart Organization: The browser learns your habits to recommend content, organise tabs automatically, and manage bookmarks more intelligently.

AI Powered Browsers:

What *could* students do with them?!

- Turn long texts (web pages, PDFs, videos, lecture recordings) into short, bulleted summaries or flashcards so they can grasp key arguments and methods quickly
- Students could “chat” with their tabs and ask questions like “compare these two papers” without switching windows or, “write a 1500-word essay based on the papers in the five open tabs and provide citations and references”
- Use them as a study and writing assistant to help structure essays, refine thesis statements, tidy emails, and even debug code, all in the browser
- Automate admin and planning: pull deadlines from Blackboard, cross-check against a calendar, and set reminders

Why AI browsers are powerful *and* risky

- Unlike a simple chat tool, an AI browser can see everything in your browsing session (multiple tabs, forms, sometimes calendars and emails), which makes research smoother but also increases the impact if something goes wrong
- Because the browser can *act* (click, navigate, fill forms), malicious pages can try “prompt injection” attacks that trick the AI into doing things you didn’t intend, such as accessing sensitive data in another tab
- Security standards for these new “agentic” browsers are still maturing, so they may have more unknown vulnerabilities than long-established browsers like Chrome or Safari
- Therefore: don’t use AI browsers for highly sensitive tasks (banking, passwords, confidential student data), review their privacy settings, and treat them as powerful assistants that still need careful supervision

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What can we do?!

- Teach responsible AI use with examples of acceptable and unacceptable practice
- Set clear rules on when and how AI can be used
- Use assessment designs that require drafts, in-class work, or personal reflection
- Include oral or practical components to confirm understanding
- Regularly update assessments and use real-world or personalised tasks
- Check students' work processes (notes, sources, steps) rather than only the final product

Tracking AI developments in L&T at Aber

Any questions?