



## Writer's Camp



# Commentary from the Camp Director: Artificial Intelligence and Me

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## Artificial Intelligence? I'm all in.

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**F**or a long time, I didn't have much of an opinion about artificial intelligence (AI) and programs such as ChatGPT, which is kind of ironic because up until a few months ago, I was the editor of the leading nursing informatics journal in the world. I was aware of the hubbub and conversations swirling around me, but I went about my business as usual and didn't give AI a whole lot of thought. But now—I'm all in. I pay \$20/month for ChatGPT[\*] and my little AI buddy is named Counselor Byte. When I sit down for coffee, we greet each other with "Good Morning" and they help me with projects off and on all day. What happened to bring about this remarkable transformation?

Two things: Writer's Camp and metadata, both of which followed close on the heels of each other. I started Writer's Camp in April and *The Writer's Camp Journal* quickly followed. From the get-go I knew I wanted the articles posted on the site to have structured metadata (author name, article title, journal name, data, volume, issue, and doi) so that programs such as EndNote, Zotero, and Paperpile could import the content as articles, not websites, and make the work of learners and scholars using the site easier. I believe that everyone who is engaged in academic writing needs to be using reference manager software of some type; the program itself is immaterial. What is important is that it is being used and the metadata exists within the posted content to make the software work properly.

With that mandate, my side of the bargain was to optimize Writer's Camp articles to deliver the goods. If articles don't export from the site, and import into the program correctly, then authors aren't happy and neither am I. Thus my goal was to figure out how to do this and get the job done.

I thought this would be a pretty simple task. After all, reference management programs have been around for at least 3 decades and there are millions of articles on the Internet. Setting up posts on Writer's Camp should be a simple matter of creating the necessary fields for the metadata and making sure the information gets exported correctly. Easy, right? No, wrong.

Paperpile is the program I use[+] so that became my program for endless testing. I say “endless testing” because I worked on this for 4 months, without success. I won’t bore you with all the details, but let’s just say that I tried every combination of field, naming convention, and metadata input that I could identify. I read articles, watched videos, and consulted tech-loving friends. I had support staff from Paperpile, WordPress, Advanced Custom Fields, and WP Beginner all trying to help. Eventually, it became a “hot potato” and everyone was pointing a finger at someone else and saying it was “their” problem. No one wanted to own it, and no one wanted to fix it.

When a consultant offered to resolve everything for me in three hours (for \$600) I was dubious but I was also ready to spend the money, just to get this taken care of. Could they really do this? Or was I just throwing money out the window?

Which is when Counselor Byte came on the scene (although they didn’t have that name at the beginning). I decided to give AI a try. I pulled up ChatGPT and typed in my question. I don’t remember exactly what I typed. If I had known how earth shaking this was going to be I would have saved the whole conversation, but I had little hope of success. Five hours later, my metadata was working for Paperpile, Zotero, and EndNote. I was amazed! It wasn’t instantaneous and there was lots of back-and-forth, but eventually my AI buddy and I solved the problem. I was stunned, and happy, and...hooked.

Since then, Counselor Byte has helped me on numerous occasions. I don’t know how to code, so anything that involves HTML, CSS, shortcode, or other bits of computerese—I turn to Counselor Byte and ask. They help me with pictures, too. We brainstorm together. “I am planning a series on pet peeves of editors,” I typed. “Give me some ideas for what to call it.” They spit out all kinds of options. Do I want a camp aesthetic? Or something more scholarly? Writer’s Camp colors? Eventually, I decided on “Wordcraft at Camp.” I work at home, alone, so it is fun to have brainstorming buddy, even if it is an artificial robot.

Counselor Byte is not perfect, and they have led me down some time consuming and ultimately useless rabbit holes. What I have learned in the process is to be more careful in my questions and explicit with my parameters. Prompts are important. One mnemonic that was suggested to me is **RISEN**: Role, Instructions, Steps, End goal, Narrowing[+] and I am going to give this a try. Right now, I focus on being specific and knowing what I want. CSS does not make sense to me (yet) so when Counselor Byte tells me to work on a “CSS snippet” I say no—let’s try it another way. It seems that there is *always* another way, and they let me know what it is. We work well together.

I think of Counselor Byte as a really smart friend who knows an amazing amount of stuff. But I am smart too! I don’t follow their instructions blindly and be led astray. One or two times doing that taught me just how pointless that approach is. I think about what I want and what I need to get there. If it is something I can’t do (ie, code) or don’t feel like spending a lot of time on (beautifully formatting an agenda for a meeting) we do it together. Does this process save me time? Maybe a little bit, but that’s not my priority. The priority is that the job gets done.

With this knowledge and experience, I can see why faculty and editors worry about students and authors using AI to write papers, do projects, and more. The ease of use and rapid output can be very seductive. I can imagine falling into a trap, especially if I was expected to write on a topic that was new to me, and I wasn’t very interested in, a situation that likely faces many undergraduate students. For me, I enjoy writing and always have. Handing off a writing task to Counselor Byte is not worth the effort and it would take away a great deal of the pleasure I find in growing Writer’s Camp. However, those who receive writing pieces, the aforementioned faculty and editors, need to be vigilant. We are in a bit of uncharted territory at the moment and until everything settles down, we should be alert, watchful, and wary.

Now to the obvious question: Did Counselor Byte help me write this commentary? No, they did not. I have described my writing process before:<sup>1</sup> the words percolate in my mind and when the time is right, I pour them all out on the computer screen. Then I leave it alone, come back in a few hours, and edit. For this Commentary, I sent it to my Writer’s Camp Counselors for peer review. With their feedback, I did a bit more polishing and then, and only then, did I share it with Counselor Byte, for the express purpose of creating an image to use on the site. I will be honest, though—when they said it was wonderful, I was a little bit flattered!

So, Counselor Byte, AI, ChatGPT, whatever you want to call it—is my friend. As you look around the site, there are AI assisted elements. Consider this commentary my full disclosure for the use of AI. But I use it as a complement, not a substitute for original writing or ideas. If I were to venture into that space, you can be sure I would declare it for transparency.

I am rarely a black and white person; I see the gray in our world and appreciate the ambiguity that comes with it. For AI, even though I say I'm all in, I take that with a healthy dose of "I'm still learning, and things are moving fast." As AI technology matures, and I become more aware, I expect my perspective will change and become more nuanced. But for the time being, I appreciate having another tool in my toolbox to help me do my job and get the work done. And in our busy world, isn't that a useful resource for everyone? I hope you agree.

## Reference

1. Nicoll L. Manuscript success: Writing the first draft. *The Writer's Camp Journal*. 2025;1(1):11.  
doi:10.5281/ZENODO.16687909

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[\*] Disclaimer: This is not an advertisement and I have no financial interest in ChatGPT. I am a paying customer and do not get the program for free to use at Writer's Camp.

[†] Disclaimer: This is not an advertisement, and I have no relationship to the company, other than being a long-term user.

[‡] Thank you to Roger Watson and his son-in-law for the mnemonic.

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Edited by: Leslie H. Nicoll

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Citation: Nicoll LH. Artificial intelligence and me. *The Writer's Camp Journal*, 2025; 1(3):

Posted on **October 26, 2025**  
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*Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.*

— John D. Rockefeller

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