

CONFERENCE

Product Showcase

Yseop's Copilot

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Artificial intelligence (AI) as a concept and, perhaps, goal has been with us for decades. Machines that can think ([artificial general intelligence, or AGI](#)) still exist only in science fiction. However, recent developments in large language models (LLMs) and enhanced computer capability to contextualize the meanings of words and to generate (dynamically produce) text have moved AI to the forefront of consciousness in all information-based industries, medical writing included. [It is expected](#) to become a permanent, powerful, and pervasive fixture in how we interact in and with the world of publishing.

It is not surprising, then, that the AMWA 2023 conference had a strong focus on AI-based productivity applications, some still at the beta stage or in development. Company representatives and a venture capitalist I met seemed eager to hear about writing community concerns and desired features in AI applications. The issues that I discuss here, except where noted, were raised by presenters and participants at the Product Showcase hosted by [Yseop](#) on its new Copilot application.

Yseop's first products addressed financial report writing. They are expanding their line to clinical study reports (CSRs), considering medical writing a fast-growing and competitive industry. The company name is the French word for *poetry* spelled backwards and is pronounced "easy op." This product interacts with Microsoft Word but is distinct from Microsoft's proprietary [Copilot](#) AI app.

As the presenters explained, expert systems—alternative terms include symbolic AI, rules-based AI, and deterministic AI—manipulate structured data, primarily converting tables to text, to produce a reasonable first draft, which can then be checked and edited. Generative AI, on the other hand, relies on prediction, with responses derived from probabilities based on pretrained models. The aim in using generative AI is to process nontabular materials. Yseop's Copilot comprises an expert system plus generative AI based on an LLM using open-source data. Clients host their own data behind a secure wall, which provides data protection.

Proprietary applications differ from open systems in the setting of constraints and parameters (eg, producing only CSRs) and training the system on synthetic or on client-owned or -selected data. It generates a specific type of document using specified input, addressing concerns of data traceability and reliability. The goal is to speed up the regulatory submission process through faster report writing. Yseop presented data indicating not only time saved on CSRs but also fewer manual errors.

Yseop's longer-term goal is to cover as much of the submission process as possible with separate products, referred to as automation packs. Clients would buy packs à la carte as needed, with a possibility of bundling for larger clients also mentioned.

For designated software to be acceptable in highly regulated industries such as biopharmaceuticals, the producer must address data traceability, reliability, and security, as noted above. Further issues related to AI-based software adoption included

- verification of the integrity of the data set;
- ensuring that desired changes made to the data set are reflected in the generated text;
- responsibility for verification of output;
- version control with single or multiple authors;
- editing at the section and the report level;
- compliance with submission guidelines;
- interface ease of use, including how intuitive it is and how much training is needed;
- types of files that can be accommodated;
- software programs that the application can interact with, eg, MS Word, rich text, PDFs;
- customization options, for example, style guides;
- use of languages other than English for report generation and/or translation;
- potential customers for the product; and
- packaging and pricing of applications and components.

Copilot is at least initially being developed for [larger companies](#). This points to questions outside the scope of the

software presentation regarding access and economics. Will small and medium-sized enterprises have equal access to generative AI products in the short term? In the longer term? If not, will this affect their ability to compete and grow their markets? Will freelance work be devalued or eliminated?

Also not discussed, at least not within my earshot, were possible noneconomic impacts. This is not surprising, given the newness of this technology. [McLuhan](#) articulated that mediated communication fundamentally alters how we relate to the world, so perhaps next year, when we will have gained more experience with generative AI, this will be the dinner table topic of discussion.

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