

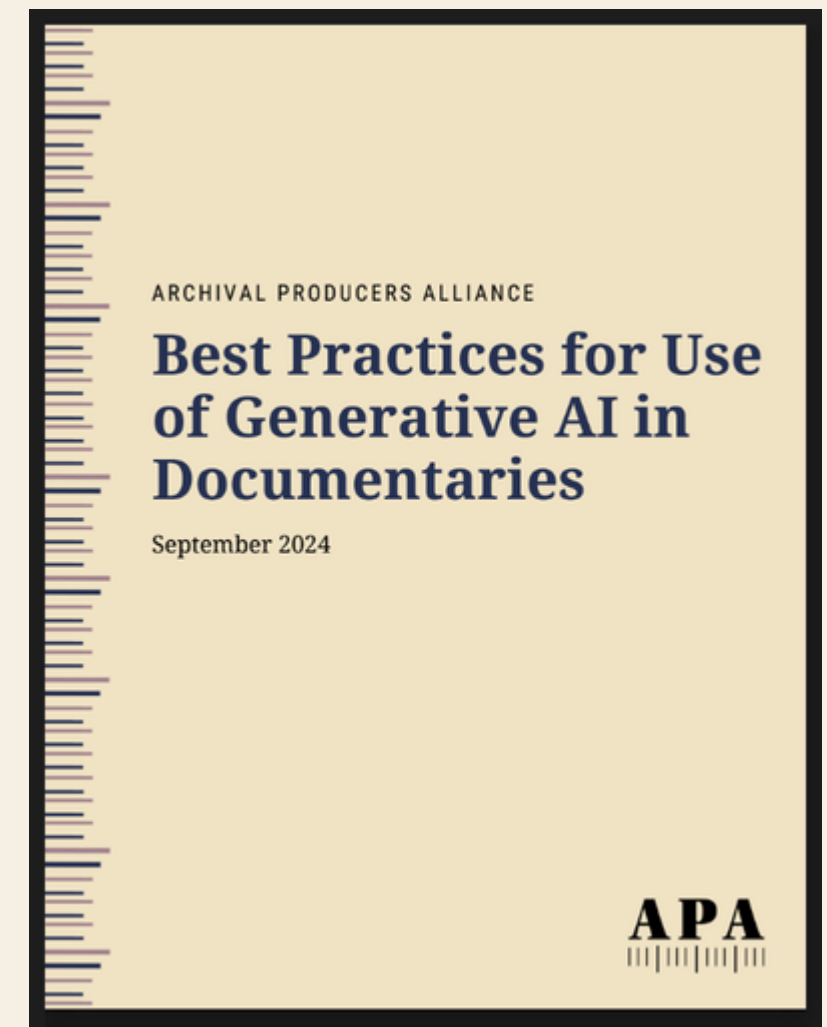
GenAI Best Practices Tool Kit

April 2025

The APA GenAI Tool Kit is a companion to APA's report, Best Practices for Use of Generative AI in Documentaries. Each tool offers tips and resources for non-fiction media makers who are considering using GenAI in their productions.

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Please share this document freely, and reach out with any suggestions.

**For the latest version of the Tool Kit please visit the [APA website](#).

1 – Ten Questions Before You Start

Useful Questions to Consider Before Using Generative AI in Your Documentary

QUESTION 1

What are my compelling reasons for using GenAI tools to create and/or alter elements in my project?

QUESTION 2

Does my distributor or presentation partner permit the use of GenAI and, if so, do I know what standards and documentation they require?

QUESTION 3

Who is responsible for tracking GenAI creation through the production workflow — and how will the data be captured on a cue sheet?

QUESTION 4

If I create a human simulation — sometimes known as a deepfake — have I considered talent contract implications and cultural sensitivities?

QUESTION 5

Does my schedule allow time to check facts including confirming the accuracy of AI-generated elements?

QUESTION 6

If I'm considering using GenAI to alter archival materials (including using generative fill, generative extend, colorization, etc.) have I confirmed that my license agreements allow me to do so?

QUESTION 7

Does my budget include funds for legal advice from counsel with expertise in this area of law?

QUESTION 8

Do I know how, and if, GenAI materials will impact my production's E&O insurance?

QUESTION 9

Am I following guidelines for the use of GenAI elements, such as the Best Practices outlined in APA guidelines?

QUESTION 10

How will I disclose to viewers when, where and how I incorporated AI-generated elements used in my project?

2 – Transparency Tips

Practical Ways to Disclose the Use of
Generative AI in Documentaries.

Additional Info on Creating Transparency

Transparency standards for using generative AI in documentaries are still evolving. The key is that audiences are not confused about what is authentic vs. what is synthetic.

The best method of transparency for a film will vary depending on the distribution platform, how AI is being used, and how much risk for audience confusion the use of AI presents.

It may be worth thinking of the means of transparency as part of the unique visual language of the film.

** In addition to the method(s) listed on the following page, we recommend also including your AI usage within end credits – just as you would for music, archival, etc. For examples, please see the APA's [GenAI Crediting Guidelines](#).

2 – Transparency Tips

Practical Ways to Disclose the Use of
Generative AI in Documentaries.

Additional Info on Creating Transparency

**While not prescriptive or exhaustive, this list offers some ideas for how to be transparent:

For Internal Transparency:

- Ensure that strong tracking and communications systems are set up so that everyone on the production team can easily tell what is synthetic and what is not.

For External Transparency:

- Include lower thirds, bugs, or other types of watermarking on the synthetic material itself.
- Apply a distinct style to alert the audience to GenAI use, such as a unique frame around the material, change of aspect ratio, colorization, etc.
- Have a character or narrator acknowledge the use of AI in voiceover or on screen.
- Include top of show and/or end of show language that indicates GenAI materials were used. But keep in mind that films are often excerpted—for educational purposes, publicity, or otherwise—and viewers may not “tune in” to the beginning or end of a given program. Therefore, we suggest this not be the only means of transparency.
- Acknowledge the use of GenAI in promotional materials, such as trailers and press releases
- Consider creating a Web extra or supplement about GenAI use in the film. For an example, see the Web extra for ["American Historia: The Untold History of Latinos"](#).

3 – GenAI Tracker / Cue Sheet

Get to Know Our Downloadable Templates

Our downloadable template has three tabs:

- **Visual AI Cue Sheet/Tracker**

To track on screen AI use in a project — e.g. photographs, moving image, fine art, and in graphic

- **Audio AI Usage - Source Material**

To track the source material (e.g. journal, letters, interview transcripts for the lines that an AI voice model speaks in a project)

- **Audio AI Voice Models - Source Material**

To track the audio source recordings used to build/train each underlying AI voice model, if applicable

These spreadsheets are provided in both Google Sheets and Excel formats. They can be used to track GenAI for legal purposes, internal record-keeping, and to aid in fact-checking.

Attorneys may only require the "Streamlined" Tracker. However, using this robust tracker will assist production with long-term record-keeping, and in cases where GenAI is questioned by distributors, copyright holders, audiences, critics, or other interested parties.

[Link to Google Sheet Tracker](#) | [Download Excel Tracker](#)

**These forms are only meant as a guide—make adjustments where necessary, according to the needs of your show. The information you track will be useful later in creating deliverables.

4 – Workflow Tips

How to Assign Roles & Responsibilities Related to GenAI into Your Production Workflow.

Tips for working with Generative AI at each stage of production

Every team structure operates differently, especially since integrating GenAI into documentary workflows is so new.

The APA suggests having a team member be explicitly responsible for tracking and documenting GenAI use throughout the production. This responsibility could be that of the Producer, Archival Producer, Editor, Art Department, Post Production Supervisor (if brought on early enough), or someone else.

The APA encourages the person tasked with tracking GenAI to collaborate with other team members to ensure transparency of GenAI usage across the production. Ideally, this person will be empowered to communicate any ethical or legal concerns surrounding certain GenAI uses to the larger team.

Ideally, this person will be empowered to communicate any ethical or legal concerns surrounding certain GenAI uses to the larger team. The more transparent the system, the earlier issues can be addressed.

It is important to note that GenAI uses vary widely - there is a difference between "ingested" GenAI materials, for example, and GenAI "enhancement" such as up-resing, colorization or audio enhancement that may be used in post-production.

While we recommend thorough tracking of materials that are fully generated, enhancements might be assessed on a case-by-case basis— accounting for whether or not they change the meaning or implications of the underlying media.

Utilizing GenAI tools can be enormously helpful during development. They can facilitate creating pitch materials when resources are often limited. However, it is important to track these elements carefully as they can inadvertently end up in the final project and be mistaken for non-AI material. One suggestion for mitigating the risk could be to add temporary watermarks to the synthetic materials used for this purpose.

See the following pages for a more detailed breakdown pertaining to each stage of production

4 – Workflow Tips

How to Assign Roles & Responsibilities Related to GenAI into Your Production Workflow.

Pre-Production

- When considering use of GenAI, planning during pre-production can help set a strategy for use – addressing aesthetics, distribution and legal issues upfront.
- Consulting the APA’s [Best Practices for Use of Generative AI in Documentaries](#) can be helpful at this early stage.
- Directors/producers/writers are encouraged to consider whether there is a compelling reason to use synthetic media rather than primary source material. They will also want to understand their software's potential for algorithmic biases and how human discernment will remain part of their process, as well as be aware of new underlying materials being introduced that may require additional clearances.
- Creative leads are encouraged to think about how they plan to be transparent with their audience about any GenAI use (through top-of-show language, watermarks, etc.), and ways that doing so might elevate the storytelling or visual language.
- Finally, it is worth discussing planned GenAI usage with legal counsel and/or a film’s distributor (if known) to be aware of any standards that need to be met.

4 – Workflow Tips

How to Assign Roles & Responsibilities Related to GenAI into Your Production Workflow.

Production / Editorial

- It's helpful for editors and/or assistant editors to log and label all assets that have been created or altered by GenAI.
- One suggestion is to keep these elements on a dedicated track in the edit system timeline to facilitate the generation of GenAI-only EDLs.
- Another is to place a temporary watermark on any synthetic elements right away, so there is no confusion about what is and is not generated.
- Additionally, it is important that editors communicate about any in-app AI tools they use (e.g., auto-fill, horizontal fill, generative extend etc) to enhance archival materials or create new elements.
- Not all of these technologies are labeled as GenAI, and it's important that creative teams familiarize themselves with which features are utilizing these technologies.

4 – Workflow Tips

How to Assign Roles & Responsibilities Related to GenAI into Your Production Workflow.

Post-Production

- During post-production it is important to integrate the GenAI tracking system with the broader post-production workflow.
- Close communication between everyone on the team responsible for tracking third-party elements – including legal counsel – will help ensure that all generated elements are accounted for, documented, and reviewed by necessary parties in preparation for obtaining Errors & Omissions insurance. To this end, the APA recommends that any AI tools used for GFX, VFX, Motion, Sound Design, Music or elsewhere during Post be logged in accordance with the broader AI tracking system established by the production.
- The APA suggests that an attorney familiar with the legal landscape around GenAI review all uses of generated material – including the license contracts of any underlying materials that were substantively altered by AI. This will help ensure that there are no unwelcome surprises upon completion or delivery of the film. Depending on the number of generated elements, the assets could be included in the general legal review, or there could be a separate GenAI review with the lawyer. [[See our GenAI cue sheet](#)]
- It is also recommended that the legal counsel review how the Production is being transparent about their Generative AI use, such as through top-of-show or end-of-show language, watermarks, credits, etc.

4 – Workflow Tips

How to Assign Roles & Responsibilities Related to GenAI into Your Production Workflow.

Distribution / Engagement / Outreach

- During this stage, clear communication with the distributor and impact producer (if there is one) will be important.
- Given the novelty of this technology, directors and producers may also want to prepare talking points for press and audiences explaining their reasoning in using GenAI.
- When filmmakers are out front about GenAI use with audiences, in the press, etc – there has been wide acceptance; but when not transparent there is often strong pushback from audiences.

5 – Crediting Suggestions

APA Crediting Suggestions for Documentaries Using GenAI

GenAI & End Credits

Third party materials (including music, footage and still images) are typically listed in a film's end credits. The APA recommends that synthetic materials should be treated in much the same way. Providing credits for generated images or audio, and indicating when archival materials are modified with generative technologies, are a key part of maintaining transparency with viewers. Below are suggestions for formatting end credits.

Here is information filmmakers may want to include in their end credits:

- The source materials used to train an AI model, such as a voice model
- The software and version used to generate an audio-visual element
- Software used to alter archival elements (such as use of GenAI software to extend, up-res, colorize or otherwise alter a primary source).
- Including GenAI elements in a film may also necessitate crediting the people who created that material. These could be written in their own section about artists directly involved with GenAI elements or with similar types of roles.

****Pro Tip:** Tracking this information ahead of time in a Cue Sheet will make writing credits easy at the end!

5 – Crediting Suggestions

APA Crediting Suggestions for Documentaries Using GenAI

Examples of end credit language (all examples below are fictional):

- Two minutes of footage of Marilyn Monroe as a child were created with [Generative AI tool] [version #]. The relative accuracy of clothing, time and place were confirmed by [name of historian/expert] from [credential, such as University, company or publication].
- All photos of General Sherman were created with Generative AI, based upon [number of] paintings by [artists] from the 19th century.
- Twelve shots of Pangaea were created using Generative AI, based on satellite imagery from [Source] of the closest approximate location on Earth.
- Generated images of Shakespeare’s cast were altered by [name of graphic designer] under advisement from [name of historian].

Example Language for crediting GenAI artists and experts:

- GenAI Graphic Designer - John Doe
- Synthetic Voice Engineer - Jane Doe.
- GenAI elements confirmed for accuracy by - Jane and John Doe from XYZ University History Department

**Please note that while crediting is an essential part of providing transparency, APA suggests it not be the only method employed. The nature and extent of the disclosure will vary based on the likelihood of audience confusion, the modality of the use, and other case-by-case factors that should be discussed with a film’s team and with legal counsel. For additional ideas of methods of transparency, please see Section 2 of the APA guidelines, or Tips for Transparency.

6 – External Resources

Tracking Changes in Generative AI Policy
and Impacts on an Ongoing Basis

Legal Cases Trackers

- [ChatGPT is Eating the World](#): Tracks pending legal cases regarding AI
- [Database of AI Litigation \(DAIL\)](#): Database from George Washington Law School that presents information about ongoing and completed litigation involving artificial intelligence, including machine learning.
- [WIRED Copyright Case Tracker](#): Tracks every copyright battle involving the AI industry—along with some visualizations that will be updated as the cases progress.
- [European Union AI Law Tracker](#): Summarizes the EU’s proposed regulatory framework for AI. Although still evolving, it may affect any production that uses AI or sources AI services from the EU.

Standards

- [BBC Standards for AI Transparency](#)
- [Partnership on AI \(PAI\) recommendations and 10-step guide](#)
- [PBS Standards for GenAI](#)
- [Standard Setting Bodies](#) - This list highlights both technical and ethical standards (via Starling Lab)
- [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) and Your National History Day \(NHD Project\)](#)
- [SAG-AFTRA – Artificial Intelligence Resource Center](#)
- [UK Government Digital Service AI Guide](#)
- [Standard Setting Bodies](#) - This list highlights both technical and ethical standards (via Starling Lab)
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Data Provenance

- [Content Authenticity Initiative](#): Works to create a cross-industry system for providing media transparency to allow for better evaluation of content.
- [Starling Lab](#): An academic research lab innovating cryptographic methods to meet the technical and ethical challenges of establishing trust in our most sensitive digital records.
- [Project Origin](#): A collaboration between media organizations to combat disinformation by verifying source authenticity of video/audio

Related Organizations

- [Knowing Machines](#): Research project tracing the histories, practices, and politics of how machine learning (AI) systems are trained to interpret the world.
- [Partnership on AI](#): A consortium of tech companies, nonprofits, and media organizations that develop best practices and frameworks for responsible AI.
- [Witness Media Lab](#): Organization that develops, models, and supports innovative approaches to sourcing, verifying, and contextualizing eyewitness videos and ensuring that footage taken by average citizens can serve as an effective tool for human rights.
- [The Synthesis](#): A monthly column from the International Documentary Association exploring the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and documentary practice.
- [Ada Lovelace Institute](#): This explainer is for anyone who wants to learn more about foundation models, also known as 'general-purpose artificial intelligence' or 'GPAI'.

6 – External Resources

Tracking Changes in Generative AI Policy
and Impacts on an Ongoing Basis

Impacts of Generative AI

General Reading:

- [The Unbelievable Scale of AI's Pirated-Books Problem](#) (The Atlantic, March 2025)
- [Inside the Race to Protect Artists from Artificial Intelligence](#) (Scientific American, June 2024)
- [How to Stop Your Data From Being Used to Train AI](#) (Wired, October 2024)
- [The Tricky Truth about How Generative AI uses your Data](#) (Vox, July 2023)
- [Mapping the issues and uses of AI for journalism](#) (Report by Public Service Medias: Alliance for Facts)

Algorithmic Bias:

- [OpenAI's Sora is Plagued by Sexist, Racist and Ableist Biases](#) (Wired, March 2025)
- [How AI reduces the world to stereotypes](#) (Rest of the World, October 2023)
- [Google apologizes for 'missing the mark' after Gemini generated racially diverse Nazis](#) (The Verge, February 2024)

AI and the Environment:

- [Explained: Generative AI's environmental impact](#) (MIT News, January 2025)
- [The Climate and Sustainability Implications of Generative AI](#) (MIT, March 2024)

AI and Labor

- [How GenAI is Already Impacting the Labor Market](#) (Harvard Business Review, November 2024)
- [In a Volatile Landscape for AI and Labor Rights, Journalists at ABC Secure a Win](#) (Columbia Journalism Review, February 2025)

Beyond USA

- [Spain imposes fines for not labeling GenAI](#) (Reuters, March 2025)

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