James Patterson, Margaret Atwood among thousands of writers urging AI companies to honor copyrights

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Author James Patterson appears at an event to promote his joint novel with former President Bill Clinton, "The President is Missing," in New York on June 5, 2018, left, and Author Margaret Atwood appears at the Glamour Women of the Year Awards in New York on Nov. 11, 2019. Patterson and Atwood are among thousands of writers endorsing an open letter from the Authors Guild urging AI companies to obtain permission before incorporating copyrighted

work into their technologies. Credit: AP Photo

James Patterson, Suzanne Collins and Margaret Atwood are among thousands of writers endorsing an open letter from the Authors Guild urging AI companies to obtain permission before incorporating copyrighted work into their technologies.

"Millions of copyrighted books, articles, essays, and poetry provide the 'food' for AI systems, endless meals for which there has been no bill," the letter reads in part. "You're spending billions of dollars to develop AI technology. It is only fair that you compensate us for using our writings, without which AI would be banal and extremely limited."

The letter is addressed to OpenAI, Meta, Microsoft and other AI producers. The Guild announced Tuesday that other signers include the Pulitzer Prize-winning novelists Jennifer Egan, Michael Chabon and Louise Erdrich, as well as authors Jonathan Franzen, Celeste Ng, Nora Roberts and Ron Chernow.

"If creators aren't compensated fairly, they can't afford to create," Roberts said in a statement. "If writers aren't paid to write, they can't afford to write. Human beings create and write stories human beings read. We're not robots to be programmed, and AI can't create human stories without taking from human stories already written."

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